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Quetta

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Rangers called

Mob vandalises several churches, homes in Jaranwala over blasphemy allegations

Caretaker PM vows strict action against culprits; Dozens arrested; There was a plan to disturb peace by inciting public sentiments, says Mir; PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif, PPP's Bilawal Bhutto condemn incident.

Monitoring Desk

LAHORE: Multiple churches were attacked on Wednesday in Jaranwala tehsil of Faisalabad over blasphemy allegations. Media reports stated that a mob of over 100 people stormed a local Christian neighbourhood in Jaranwala and set ablaze at least one church, the Salvation Army Church, one of the oldest in the area. The

United Presbyterian Church, Allied Foundation Church and Sheerowala Church situated in Isa Nagri were also reportedly ransacked. Locals accused the police of standing by as spectators as hundreds of people, armed with sticks and batons, vandalised the churches besides ransacking and even burning homes in the residential area. As panic spread in the

area, traders shut down shops and a strike was called. The situation remained tense despite policemen led by the Jaranwala SP being present on site. The mob also blocked the area surrounding Cinema Chowk. The police attempted to give assurances of action against the blasphemy accused but the mob remained adamant that they would hang the accused them-

selves. The mob was reportedly incited using loud-speakers of mosques in the area over reports of alleged desecration of religious scriptures by three Christians, suggested videos and messages posted on social media by people of the area. An FIR was lodged against the persons accused of blasphemy under Sec-

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FAISALABAD: View of site after a mob enraged over blasphemy allegations set on fire several churches and a number of houses belonging to Christians in Jaranwala tehsil of Faisalabad.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

CM, Opposition leader send name of members of parliamentary committees to Speaker BA

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo and leader of Opposition in Balochistan Assembly, Malik Sikandar Khan Advocate have sent the name of members of the parliamentary committees of the government and Opposition respectively to the Speaker provincial assembly, Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali.

Three names each of the two committees have been sent by the Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition for selection of the caretaker Chief Minister.

The members of government's parliamentary committee are included: Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran and Zamarak Khan Achakzai.

Similarly, the names of the Opposition's committee sent to the Speaker are

included: Maulana Abdul Wahid Siddiqui, Younas Zehri and Nawaz Khan Kakar.

Meanwhile, objecting to the names of Opposition committee sent by the Opposition leader, the parliamentary leaders of Balochistan National Party and Pashtoonkhaw MAP have also written letters to the Speaker urging him to include their names in the opposition's committee.

The BNP leader Malik Naseer Shahwani and PkMAP's Nasrullah Zairay mentioned that the names of JUI members have been included in the Opposition's committee by Malik Sikandar, which is technically not fair. They urged the Speaker Jamali to include their names in the Opposition's committee. Meanwhile, both the parliamentary leaders also met the Speaker and handed over the letters to him in this regard.



QUETTA: Chairman Red Crescent Society Balochistan meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Those appointing Kakar as caretaker PM are unhappy themselves: Akhtar Mengal

Independent Report QUETTA: The President of Balochistan National Party (BNP) and former Member National Assembly, Sardar Akhtar Mengal has stated that those appointed Anwarul Haq Kakar as caretaker Prime Minister are displeased over the decision, and the time would come when they would moan over it.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal said that the former Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif had not consulted the coalition leaders on the name of Anwarul Haq Kakar for the slot of caretaker Prime Minister.

He said that the population of Balochistan had been shown as 2 crore 14 lakh, the meeting of Council of Common Interests (CCI) waited for Chief Minister for six hours. The number of seats of Balochistan were to be increased on the basis of new population census. However, the CCU's meeting

was made justification of delay in the general elections.

The BNP chief stated so while speaking to a private TV channel on Wednesday.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal said that we express our opinions and decisions openly while leaders of big political parties keep mum under the need of necessity.

He also said that it happens to be the responsibility of caretaker Prime Minister to monitor the government, and undertakers turn democracy into graveyard.

He said that while there was no discussion on the name of Anwarul Haq Kakar for caretaker, however, the name of Abdul Malik Baloch had come from the National Party. He said that Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch is head of a political party, so he would contest election. It was difficult for him (Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch) to become caretaker Prime Minister, he maintained.

Case registered against Imran on misplacement of cipher

ISLAMABAD (Online): Case has been registered against PTI chairman on the matter of misplacement of cipher.

Anti terrorism wing of FLA has registered the case. DIG level officers appointed in Anti terrorism wing are holding inquiry. Imran Khan had made mention of misplacement of cipher during an interview.

This matter took the steam when the US magazine intercept in its August 9 publication claimed that a copy of cipher which Imran Khan had mentioned is held by it.

Jl announces countrywide protest against spike in petroleum prices

LAHORE (INP): Jamat-e-Islami (JUI) Emir Sirjul Haq on Wednesday gave a call for holding countrywide protest against the whooping increase in petroleum prices on Friday.

Haq said the caretaker government had endorsed the unjust policies of the outgoing coalition government by increasing the prices of petrol and diesel. Calling it an injustice to the poor people of the country, he said the rulers were putting pressure on them to please the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He urged the caretaker government to provide relief to the masses.

The JI chief also asked people to join his party's peaceful protest against the petroleum prices.

The caretaker government on Tuesday increased the price of petrol by Rs17.50 per litre, taking the price to a record high of Rs290.45 per litre. The price of high speed diesel was also increased by Rs20 per litre. After the increase, high speed diesel will be available at Rs293.40 per litre.

SC wraps up chairman PTI plea for recounting

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has wrapped up chairman PTI petition seeking court's orders for recounting in the constituency NA-131 Lahore being in-fructuous.

The petition came up for hearing before a two members bench of SC presided over by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial Wednesday.

The CJP while addressing Babar Awan counsel for PTI chairman remarked during the hearing of the case the appeal plea seeking recounting has become in-fructuous.

The counsel for chairman PTI said yes sir it has become in-fructuous.

He said if I am permitted I may obtain new directives from chairman PTI on this matter. The CJP replied national assembly has been dissolved. What can be done on this matter when national assembly has been dissolved. Therefore, we should wait for new election. The counsel for PTI chairman said we are waiting for new election impatiently.

NA Speaker lauds role of journalists in strengthening democracy

Says free, responsible Media along with Public friendly politics and legislation key to development of country

ISLAMABAD (Online): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf said that the role of media community to further the cause of democracy is pivotal for socio-economic development of country.

He also said that both journalism and politics are intertwined and it is incumbent upon both stakeholders to cooperate with one another for country's progress. He also said that the real power of Media is Journalists and reporter as these are foot soldiers.

He expressed these views while addressing members of Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA) in Parliament House Islamabad today.

National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf also said, "PRA role is to bring Parliament and people closer." He also said that maintaining sanctity of parliament is a collective responsibility and PRA members have utmost importance in this regard. He said that media representatives and journalist community have central role to highlight positive image of Parliamentarians and Parliament.

While mentioning about record legislation in

Continued on page 2



ISLAMABAD: PRA President, Sadique Sajid presents appreciation shield to Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf for his support to PRA and for welfare of journalist community at Parliament House.

Balochistan located in such region that faces dangers of earthquake, floods and drought every time

Independent Report QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that Balochistan is geographically situated in such a region which faces threats of earthquake, flood and drought every time. He noted with concern that the natural disasters cause heavy human and financial losses to the poor segments of the society. It is a collective dilemma that we have not succeeded in overcoming the natural calamities even in the present developed era.

This and similar views were expressed by the Governor while speaking to the Chairman of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Balochistan, Takti Shafiq Langove, who called on him here at the Governor House on Wednesday.

The Governor stressed that this is requirement of the time that PRCS Balochistan create new opportunities coming out of its traditional limited circle. He said that there has been key role of PRCS Balochistan to combat the natural disasters.

The Governor said that unfortunately Pakistan is included in 10 countries, which can be affected the natural calamities anytime.

He stressed that we would have to take better and effective precautionary measures for tackling any emergent situation in future.

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SIFC to continue working uninterrupted for fast-track foreign investment: PM

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar thanks Saudi Govt for consistent support to Pakistan's economic stability; Saudi Envoy felicitates Kakar on assuming office, conveys best wishes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that the recently-instituted Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) would continue to work as before to lay the foundations to fast-track foreign investments, particularly from Saudi Arabia.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, who called on him, highlighted energy, infrastructure, agriculture, IT and manpower as potential sectors of co-

operation.

The Saudi ambassador congratulated the prime minister on assuming office and conveyed the best wishes and greetings on behalf of the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques, as well as Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, and the people of Saudi Arabia.

The prime minister said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoyed historic and deep-rooted ties.

He thanked the Saudi government for its consistent support for Pakistan's

economic stability and development.

He particularly mentioned the large number of Pakistanis working in Saudi Arabia and requested the Saudi side to continue to extend all possible facilitation to them.

Ambassador Nawaf reiterated that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were bound together in a fraternal relationship, which was characterized by mutual trust and understanding, and close cooperation on all bilateral and regional issues of common interest.

US looks forward to working with PM Kakar, his team

WASHINGTON (APP): The United States, noting the appointment of Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar as Pakistan's interim prime minister, has reaffirmed its support in areas of mutual interest, including the conduct of free and fair elections, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.

Responding to a question from the correspondent of a private Pakistani television channel at his daily press briefing, the spokesperson said that the U.S. looks forward to working with the interim prime minister and his team.

"We, of course, will continue to partner with Pakistan on areas of mutual interest, including our interest in Pakistan's economic interest, prosperity, and security, and the conduct of free and fair elections and the respect for democracy and the rule of law."

Kakar was sworn in on Monday as the prime minister to head a caretaker government that will oversee parliamentary elections during the country's most challenging period in the economic field.



ISLAMABAD: Students are being briefed by the representative of Pak Air force about Aircrafts during "3rd International Property and Construction Industry Expo" in connection with the Independence Day at Pak China Friendship center in Federal Capital.

Reform committee set up for reforms in jails of Balochistan: IG Prisons

Independent Report QUETTA: The Inspector General of Prisons Balochistan, Shujaiddin Kasi has informed that reform committee has been set up for bringing reforms in the prisons of the province.

Speaking to a private TV channel on Wednesday, the Inspector General of Prisons said that the reform committee comprises senior officers of the Prisons department.

The committee would give recommendations to put jails of the province on modern lines. Moreover, a plan is also under consideration to make the condemned prisoners educated and skilled, the Inspector General of Prisons maintained.

Moreover, plan of testing lab is also under consideration for medical examination of the prisoners in all prisons of the province, he added.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Abdul Aziz Uqaili presiding over a meeting to review progress of development projects of Gwadar.

Mirza Afridi says: Amid impacting climate crisis, collective responsibility important to avert impending disasters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman, Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi Wednesday said climate change had cast its shadow on Pakistan, and it was collective responsibility to transform our attitudes and behaviours to avert the impending disasters.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the first ever Pakistan Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR 2023) held here at Pak-China Friendship Center.

This is Pakistan's first ever Expo on disaster risk reduction which provides an opportunity to all stakeholders to Collaborate and Innovate for a resilient Pakistan.

The Expo was inaugurated by the deputy chairman as chief guest on the occasion.

The event will continue till 18th August and provide an opportunity for collaboration amongst National, International, Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations to pave way for a disaster resilient Pakistan.

The Expo convened a gathering of experts, officials, and stakeholders converged at the heart of

Pakistan's capital city for the "Disaster Risk Reduction" Expo, organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF).

In his keynote address at the opening ceremony of the expo, Mirza Afridi lauded the collective efforts to engage universities in disaster risk reduction measures.

He underscored the pressing need for concrete and advanced technological measures to combat the ever-growing challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters.

"Our response to the calamities that have shaken the world in recent years demands innovative solutions," he emphasized.

"The youth possess invaluable ideas that can guide our path towards disaster resilience, and it is imperative that we adapt and integrate their insights."

Acknowledging the essential role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Pakistan, the deputy chairman expressed his gratitude for their unyielding commitment to aiding calamity victims.

He reiterated the importance of collective support, asserting, "Every sector of society must rally behind the NDMA to fortify our nation against the impact of disasters."

Offering the expertise and guidance of the parliamentary body, Mirza Afridi affirmed, "The Senate is ready to provide the necessary guidance and collaboration that the NDMA requires."

He applauded the accomplishments of Chairman NDMA and his team, highlighting their commitment to safeguarding lives and communities.

The deputy chairman drew attention to the cascading effects of disasters on infrastructure, citing the breakdown of roads, bridges, and communication channels.

"The tireless efforts of these NGOs provide a beacon of hope and support to those affected by various catastrophes," he stated.

The deputy chairman recognized the indomitable spirit of the NDMA team, praising their unwavering dedication even in the face of adversity.

He reiterated the importance of collective support, asserting, "Every sector of society must rally behind the NDMA to fortify our nation against the impact of disasters."

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ISLAMABAD: Former Provincial Minister Mir Sarfraz Chakar Domki and Agha Shakeel Durrani called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Violent extremism struggle for power transgressing many red lines: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Federal Minister and Senior PPP leader Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said that violent extremism was a struggle for power, and that many red lines had been crossed by the proliferation of hateful narratives.

Senator Rehman stated this at the launch of the research report 'Beyond the Red Line: Contemporary Trends in Conflict Discourse in Pakistan' by Communications Research Strategies (CRS) here, a news release said.

The report was prepared under the 'Conflict

Discourse Mapping', a project by CRS, with support from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Experts from various sectors attended the event. Senator Sherry Rehman was the chief guest, while the panelists included Dr Adnan Rafiq, Member - Planning Commission of Pakistan, Amber Shamsi, Director - Center for Excellence in Journalism IBA and Fasi Zaka, a senior development expert.

In his welcome note Aniq Zafar, CEO - CRS, while thanking the chief guest commented, "We harbor the sincere hope that the insights gleaned from

this meticulous investigation will serve as the bedrock for evidence-informed policymaking, effective interventions, and strategies designed to counteract violence and extremism. In this endeavor, we stand united, knowing that the path forward requires collective determination and shared vision".

Commenting on the report, Senator Rehman said that hateful narratives had gone beyond extremist and violent groups, and are instead being shaped by political forces as well through currency of anger and hate as can be seen in online trolling.

Ashrafi condemns Quran's desecration, attacks on Christian worship places

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Wednesday unequivocally denounced the desecration of the Holy Quran, and the attacks on Christian worship places and residences in Jaranwala.

Condemning the recent acts of violence and disregard of religious sentiments, he announced the formation of a joint delegation of prominent figures from the PUC and International Interfaith Harmony Council (IIHC) to redress and pacify the situation in Jaranwala.

Ashrafi, who is also IIHC President, said the incident of the Holy Book's desecration, which was highly regrettable and condemnable, had evoked a strong reaction, eventually causing heightened tensions in the area.

He underlined the principles of Islam that laid full emphasis on social peace, cohesion and security. The Muslim majority and the State owed absolute responsibility to safeguard the rights and safety of non-Muslims.

In a passionate call for unity and mutual cooperation, Ashrafi urged local religious leaders and authorities to have an effective collaboration and liaison to usher in positive changes in the society.

Ashrafi called for establishing a high-level committee to investigate the incident and ensure a comprehensive and impartial inquiry in that regard.

He urged the government to ascertain the losses of the Christian community and take a decisive action against the culprits. Similarly, those involved in the Holy Book's desecration must be brought to the book, he added.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of students are struggling to board in Blue Line Bus Service as due to the extremely high prices of fares, it is now impossible for the students and Common people to use any other medium of transport across the country.

Mistress violence on another maid in Islamabad, case filed

ISLAMABAD (Online): Another girl employee became a victim of the pharaoism of her mistress in federal capital of Islamabad. A case has been registered against mistress.

According to details, a case of violence against a housemaid came to light in Sector G-15 of Islamabad and after which a case was registered against the mistress. The case was registered in Tarnol Police Station on complaint of

employee's mother.

It was said in the case that maid had injuries on her face and head and the mistress had burnt her with hot spoon. When she went to meet her daughter she was locked in room and a video was recorded. Woman alleged that mistress recorded her statement of will. It should be noted that a case of violence against the wife of Civil Judge wife Soma Bibi was registered in the past few days and after.

CDA pursues upgradation of urban amenities, infrastructure

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is taking concrete steps for ensuring the provision of urban facilities to the city dwellers and maintenance of infrastructure including the installation of street lights, road carpeting and resolving water-related issues, neglected in the past.

"Special attention is being given to the completion of the remaining development works in the sectors I, G, H and D series, provision of civic facilities, and facilitating the home builders in these sectors in pursuance of the directives of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal," an official

told APP.

"The work of installation of streetlights in the main roads and within the sectors to ensure proper lighting management in Sector I-11, I-10, I-14 and Sector I-16, D-12 and other sectors is in full swing," he added.

To a question, the official said, "After a few months of delay due to legal complications, the authority has started work to install street lights in Sector D-12."

He said that the work on this project was initially halted when a contractor, who failed to secure the contract, filed a case in court.

ICC celebrates Independence anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Citizens Committee (ICC) here on Wednesday celebrated the 76th anniversary of the country's independence, recalling the objectives of the Pakistan Movement which led to the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims of the Indian sub-continent.

It highlighted the objectives of the independence movement and paid tributes to those who sacrificed their lives in getting a separate identity for Muslims of the sub-continent, a news release said.

The event, presided over by ICC President Syed M. Siddiq Hasan, was attended by the members of the Executive Committee and distinguished guests from various walks of life.

The national anthem was played followed by a cake-cut ceremony to mark the event in a befitting manner.

The gathering of the notables passed a unanimous resolution on the occasion, pledging to work for the betterment of the motherland.

The resolution said, "We were fortunate enough to get an identity of our own 76 years ago as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This independence was achieved after countless sacrifices of our ancestors and as a result of which we can live freely in our own homeland."

Zong 4G & HANDS collaborate to empower youth thru digital edu.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G, a pioneering force in Pakistan's telecommunications landscape, has forged a strategic partnership with the Health and Nutrition Development Society (HANDS) to empower the youth through digital education.

An advanced digital lab at the FAS Noor Muhammad School in Karachi, outfitted with cutting-edge computer systems and technology, will be established under the collaboration which is aimed at enhancing students' technical prowess and access to the digital world, said a news release.

The partnership's core objective is to empower the youth by harnessing digital technology to create new avenues for learning, thus equipping the next generation with invaluable skills that can be used in their careers.

Designed to cater to 91 students, with more than 50 per cent of the strength being girls, the facility is destined to emerge as the epicenter of digital learning for the surrounding.

By granting unrestricted access to myriad computational resources and cutting-edge educational tools, Zong 4G and HANDS are bridging the

digital divide, empowering young minds with indispensable knowledge imperative for excelling in the digital world.

HANDS, an eminent non-profit organization dedicated to fostering positive transformation across various domains, including livelihood, health, education, infrastructure, and disaster management, will synergize with Zong 4G to advance its mission.

Both entities are resolutely committed to contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the integration of technology-driven solutions into their initiatives.

"Zong 4G is resolute in leveraging technology for constructive societal impact. Our collaboration with HANDS seamlessly aligns with our vision as we endeavor to empower Pakistan's youth through education and digital literacy. We firmly believe that this digital lab will play a pivotal role in shaping the destinies of these young learners," said the Zong 4G spokesperson in a news statement. Dr. Sheikh Tanveer Ahmed, CEO of HANDS said, "Our collaboration with Zong 4G marks a significant stride in our ongoing endeavors to uplift marginalized communities.

By granting unrestricted access to myriad computational resources and cutting-edge educational tools, Zong 4G and HANDS are bridging the

digital divide, empowering young minds with indispensable knowledge imperative for excelling in the digital world.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate, Mirza Muhammad Afridi addressing the first ever National Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction-Pedrr 2023 organized by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in Islamabad.

PMDC's council to discuss foreign graduates' concerns

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Pakistan Medical and Dentil Council (PMDC), Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj on Wednesday said that concerns of protesting foreign medical graduates will be placed before the council for making a decision.

Talking to the delegation of foreign medical graduates to listen to their concerns, he apprised them that it was the decision of the academic board to set passing marks at 70pc.

He said that the NRE exam was conducted by National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) transparently under the supervision of PMDC.

He added that the demand of the students would be considered but it could not be implemented on an exam which had already been held.

He assured them that the matter will be placed before the PMDC Council for further deliberation at the earliest.

The result was received from NUMS and was uploaded on the PMDC website the same day, he added.

The NRE exam was conducted in four cities of the country including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Karachi and Peshawar to facilitate the graduates.

He added that the PMDC academic board has been formed to look after all the examination matters of NRE, NEB and MDCAT.

He said that the purpose of conducting NRE exam is to ensure the selection of qualified doctors for patients in Pakistan.

This examination is to keep patient safety in mind as precious lives of people cannot be put in the hands of unqualified doctors or graduates.

He said that the PMDC is a responsible organization that believes in adherence to rules and regulations.

He added that the demand of the students would be considered but it could not be implemented on an exam which had already been held.

He assured them that the matter will be placed before the PMDC Council for further deliberation at the earliest.

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ISLAMABAD: A view of the newly made cabins at Fruit and Vegetables Market as the vendors are unhappy due to its quality and the size of cabins as the Anti encroachments cell demolished their cottages to install such new one, on monthly rental basis in Federal Capital.

PNCA to identify new talents for promoting culture: DG PNCA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) Muhammad Ayub Jamali has said that new talents would be identified and developed by organizing more cultural events and festivals.

Talking to APP, the newly-appointed Director General, PNCA said that it was the art that had the capacity to do away with barriers and bring people together while celebrating their diverse cultural background.

"PNCA is a national level cultural department

that aims to promote artistic activities and focuses on all forms of art, like visual and performing arts," he added. He said that PNCA would focus on the promotion of art and culture of all four provinces with the aim to promote the true image of the country.

He said that PNCA management was determined to highlight the country's national culture and heritage, adding that the council aimed to build an environment conducive to the flourishing of arts which were accessible to everyone.



ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador Alfred Grannas calls on Federal Secretary Health Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, Pak-German health collaboration discussed.

Pak-German health collaboration discussed

ISLAMABAD (APP): German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas called on Federal Secretary Health Iftikhar Ali Shallwani on Wednesday.

The two sides discussed in detail mutual collaboration between Pakistan and Germany in the health sector. The meeting reviewed the installation process of MRI machine at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) hospital Islamabad.

It was assured by PIMS and German supplier Siemens that MRI machine in PIMS will start functioning from 6th September 2023.

On this occasion representative of German Siemens company Zahid Ali was also present.

Federal Secretary Health expressed his gratitude to the German Ambassador. He said PIMS was the largest hospital in the federal capital which caters to 12 to 15 thousands patients every day.

He said that patients were facing problems as the MRI machine was out of order for some time.

The secretary said that he took notice of the situation and asked for installation of machine within August to mitigate suffering of the patients.

The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination remains committed to taking practical steps for facilitation of patients and provision of healthcare to the masses, he said.

Dr. Mukhtar honoured with Hilal-e-Imtiaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has conferred Hilal-e-Imtiaz upon Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC), Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed for his outstanding services in the field of higher education.

Every year, the government confers civil awards to people from different walks of life for their exemplary contributions to their respective fields.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, who has been associated with the higher education sector for the last three decades, has played a key role to formulate and implement reforms in the higher education, be it increase in the access to university education, strengthening quality assurance systems, development of infrastructure, and promoting national and international collaborations.

Police to take firm action against non- registered vehicles

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have intensified efforts to clamp down on non-registered and smuggled vehicles operating within the city.

In line with the directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, this campaign has been intensified to ensure road safety and proper vehicle documentation.

The citizens have been strongly urged to adhere to travel regulations by possessing valid car papers and prominently displaying number plates sanctioned by the Excise and Taxation Department. Chief Traffic Officer of Islamabad reiterated that strict compliance with this mandate is paramount.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters jumping and bathing in water channel of Rawal Dam in Federal Capital.

US will welcome Iran's decision to slow down N-plan, says Blinken

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he could not confirm a report that Iran slowed its pace of amassing near-weapons-grade enriched uranium but would welcome any Iranian steps to de-escalate its "growing nuclear threat."

Blinken also told reporters that Iran moving US detainees into house arrest was not related to any other aspect of US policy toward Iran, which he said reflected a strategy of deterrence, pressure and diplomacy.

On Thursday, sources said Iran may free five detained US citizens as part of a deal to unfreeze \$6 billion in Iranian funds in South Korea. Iran allowed four detained US citizens to move into house arrest from prison. A fifth was already under home confinement.

The Wall Street Journal on Friday reported Iran had significantly slowed the

pace at which it was accumulating near-weapons-grade enriched uranium and diluted some of its stockpile, moves that could help ease tensions with the US and revive broader talks over Iran's nuclear programme.

"Of course, we would welcome any steps that Iran takes to actually deescalate the growing nuclear threat that it has posed since the United States got out of the Iran nuclear deal," Blinken told a news conference, alluding to former US President Donald Trump's 2018 abandonment of that agreement.

Under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and six major powers, Iran had agreed to curb its nuclear programme to make it harder for it to obtain an atomic weapon — an ambition it denies — in return for relief from US, European Union and United Nations sanctions.

When asked if Iran's reported slowdown and the release of the detainees to house arrest was in any way linked, Blinken said they were different issues.

"The agreement that we're pursuing to bring home those who are wrongfully detained in Iran is an entirely separate matter that we want to bring to a successful conclusion, and that's what I'm focused on."

The deal announced last week has left out Shahab Dalili, 60, a US permanent resident who has been detained in Iran since 2016, even though his family have repeatedly pleaded with the Biden administration to include him in the deal or at least label him "wrongfully detained."

Dalili has started a hunger strike in the Evin prison in Iran where he has been jailed, his son said on Monday.



Taiwan's Vice President William Lai speaks during a welcome dinner in Asuncion, Paraguay, in this handout picture released.

UN chief urges deployment of police special forces and military support to combat gangs in Haiti

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations chief urged the international community on Tuesday to deploy a multinational force comprising "police special forces and military support units" to Haiti to combat gangs with sophisticated weapons and restore security to the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a 12-page letter to the U.N. Security Council obtained by The Associated Press

that "Addressing the security situation in Haiti requires a range of coercive law enforcement measures, including active use of force in targeted police operations against heavily armed gangs."

The letter was a response to a Security Council resolution adopted on July 14 asking Guterres to come up with "a full range of options" within 30 days to help combat Haiti's armed gangs including a non-U.N. multinational force. Guterres welcomed Kenya's offer to lead an international force as well as renewed pledges of support from the Bahamas and Jamaica, and the announcement by Antigua and Barbuda that it is considering contributing to the force. He urged more countries, especially from the Americas, to contribute and "build on this new momentum." Gangs have overpowered Haiti's police, with experts estimating they now control some 80% of the capital, Port-au-Prince.



Ukrainian soldiers stand with Ukrainian flag in Urozhaine, Donetsk Region, Ukraine in this screen grab obtained from a handout video released.

Russian strikes hit Ukraine areas far from front lines

Monitoring Desk
LVIV: Russian air strikes hit two western regions of Ukraine bordering Nato member Poland and other areas on Tuesday, killing three people in a factory and wounding more than a dozen, Ukrainian officials said.

Local media said the attacks were the largest air assault on the Lviv region since the Russian invasion in February 2022. The fatalities were reported in the north-western region of Volyn. Officials said an industrial enterprise in the regional capital Lutsk was struck in the overnight attack. Several people were also hospitalised, Governor Yuriy Pohulyayko said.

Swedish industrial bearings maker SKF said its factory in Lutsk was hit by a missile overnight, killing three employees. Footage released by Ukraine's state emergency service showed rescuers pulling a man from the rubble.

Fifteen people were also wounded in the Lviv region, Governor Maksym Kozlytskiy said. Six missiles damaged dozens of buildings and a kindergarten playground in and around the regional capital. Kozlytskiy said the youngest victim was 10 years-old.

Poland displays military might in big parade

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: Poland's biggest military parade since the Cold War took place in Warsaw on Tuesday, as the Nato-member country flexed its military muscle in what the government hoped would be both a message to Moscow and voters ahead of elections in October.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made boosting the armed forces a priority for Poland's ruling nationalists Law and Justice (PiS), and with the election campaign in full swing the immense display of military hardware provided a chance to burish their security credentials.

Syrian president doubles public sector wages as national currency spirals downwards

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Syria's president early Wednesday doubled public sector wages and pensions as the war-torn country's national currency spiraled further downwards, reaching a new low for the year.

President Bashar Assad issued the two decrees just before midnight Tuesday as the Syrian pound's value against the U.S. dollar declined to a new all-time low, down from 7,000 at the beginning of 2023 to 15,000 pounds to the greenback. At the start of the conflict in 2011, the dollar was trading at 47 pounds.

For over a year, Damascus has been restructuring its program of subsidies for gasoline, diesel for heating, and bread. At the launch of the restructure in February last year, Syrian Prime Minister Hussein Arnous said the move to scale back

US asks Iran to stop selling drones to Russia-FT

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: U.S. is pushing Iran to stop selling armed drones to Russia as part of discussions on a broader unwritten understanding between Washington and Tehran to de-escalate tensions, the Financial Times said on Wednesday, citing people briefed on the matter.

The U.S. is pressing Iran to stop selling armed drones to Russia, which Moscow is using in the war in Ukraine, as well as spare parts for the unmanned aircraft, the report said, citing an Iranian official and another person familiar with the talks.

The White House and Iran's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The news comes as Washington and Iran are trying to ease tensions and revive broader talks over Iran's nuclear program.



Libyan security forces stand guard in Tripoli, Libya.

Libya deploys security forces across Tripoli after clashes between rival militias left 27 dead

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Libyan security forces patrolled the streets and fanned out across Tripoli on Wednesday, a day after clashes between rival militias killed at least 27 people in the country's capital, authorities said.

The fighting was some of the most intense to shake Tripoli this year and in addition to the 27 deaths, over 100 people were wounded, Libya's Emergency Medicine and Support Center said.

The clashes erupted late on Monday between militiamen from the 444 brigade and the Special Deterrence Force, and continued into Tuesday evening. Tensions flared after Mahmoud Hamza, a senior commander of the 444 brigade, was allegedly detained by the rival group at an airport in Tripoli, according to local media reports. Hamza was later released as part of deal aimed at quelling the violence, the reports said. It was unclear how many of the dead were militiamen or civilians.

Libya's Interior Ministry said security forces were deployed to areas where the fighting was most intense, including the southern Fernaj neighborhood and the al-Shouk Road. A situation room was set up to monitor developments through Wednesday, a tentative calm had returned to the city.

The violence underscored the fragility of the war-torn Libya following the 2011 uprising turned civil war, which toppled and later killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

Thai lawmakers to vote on PM next week in bid to end deadlock

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Thai lawmakers will vote for a new premier next week, the house speaker said on Wednesday, after a court rejected a bid by election winner Move Forward to challenge parliament's blocking of its candidate.

The Constitutional Court dismissed the petition by allies of the party on a technicality, arguing its prime ministerial candidate, Pita Limjaroenrat, who was twice thwarted by parliament, was not among the complainants. Thailand has been under caretaker administration since March and parliament has been deadlocked for weeks over the formation of the next government, after the anti-establishment Move Forward met fierce resistance from conservative lawmakers allied.

German FM axes trip after plane breaks down

Monitoring Desk
BERLIN: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock was forced on Tuesday to scrap her trip to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji after her plane suffered recurring technical problems, the latest in a series of incidents to hit the German fleet.

"We tried everything but unfortunately it's logistically not possible to carry out my Indo-Pacific travel (plans) without the defective plane," the minister wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. "That is more than annoying," she added.

Baerbock had left on Sunday for the week-long trip but her plane had suffered an outage after refuelling in Abu Dhabi.

The minister was stranded for hours while the technical crew battled to fix a problem with the wing flaps.

Her delegation sought to get underway again overnight to Tuesday but the 23-year-old Airbus A340 had to go back to Abu Dhabi when the defect resurfaced.

"For security reasons, the plane had to return there," wrote the German air force on X. The aircraft had to dump fuel to land safely in Abu Dhabi again, it added.

Iran re-arrests reporter who interviewed Mahsa Amini's father

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: Iranian authorities have re-arrested a journalist who interviewed the father of the woman whose custody death sparked months of protests, just two days after her release from jail, activists said on Tuesday.

Nazila Maroufian walked out of Tehran's Evin prison on Sunday, posting on social media a picture of herself without a headscarf in defiance of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Indian movies vilifying Muslims spark fear ahead of polls

Monitoring Desk
MUMBAI: With free tickets and false claims, "The Kerala Story" is one of a slew of polarising films sparking concern Bollywood is churning out cultural propaganda to bolster support for India's ruling party ahead of elections.

The trailer for the anti-Muslim box office hit claims to depict "innocent girls trapped, transformed and trafficked for terror," while declaring it was "inspired by many true stories."

A fictitious tale of a Hindu woman who converts to Islam and then is radicalised, the movie is the second-highest-grossing Hindi film of 2023 so far.

Critics have accused it and other recent releases of peddling lies and stoking divisions, including by vilifying the Muslim minority, ahead of next year's national elections.

"I would suggest all political parties to take advantage of my film... Use it for your political gain," director Sudipto Sen said, in response to an AFP question about its political leanings.

Small Minnesota town will be without police after chief and officers resign, citing low pay

Monitoring Desk
GOODHUE: A small Minnesota town will soon be without a police department, an exodus spurred by low pay for the chief and his officers.

Goodhue Police Chief Josh Smith and one other officer are still on the force, but only until their resignations become official on Aug. 23, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported. Smith submitted his resignation at a City Council meeting on Aug. 9, while another full-time officer and five part-time employees resigned.



Members of FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams Washington Task Force 1 and Nevada Task Force 1 continue searching through destroyed neighborhoods in the Maui city of Lahaina, Hawaii, U.S.

Another incident of Holy Quran desecration takes place in Sweden

Monitoring Desk
NORRKOPIING: Another incident of desecration of the Holy Quran has taken place outside the Swedish Royal Palace in the capital Stockholm amid a heavy police presence, it emerged on Wednesday.

The incident, which took place on Monday, marked the second time in a matter of weeks that Salwan Momika, 37, and Salwan Najem, 48, have desecrated the Holy Quran, Al Jazeera reported.

Momika, an Iraqi refugee based in Sweden, has been involved in multiple such incidents, the last being on July 31, when he and another man desecrated the Holy Quran outside the Swedish parliament.

The act — permitted under Sweden's freedom of speech laws — took place at Mynttorget, a central square surrounded by government buildings and the palace, Al Jazeera said.

Momika and Najem engaged in a prolonged, theatrical and now familiar desecration of the Quran while using a megaphone to goad counterprotesters, the report said. It added that "several people in the crowd brought their own megaphones, and the two men were largely drowned out by counterprotesters".

Present among the crowd was a group wearing firefighter-themed outfits whose members chanted "extinguish the hate" while handing out plastic firefighter hats and encouraging onlookers to speak into their megaphones, Al Jazeera stated.

Nagorno-Karabakh residents say 'disastrous' blockade choking supplies

Monitoring Desk
TBILISI: Residents of Nagorno-Karabakh say it is getting harder to access food, medicines and other essential supplies as an Azerbaijani blockade of the breakaway region drags into its ninth month.

The U.N. Security Council will discuss the blockade on Wednesday, after a former International Criminal Court prosecutor this month said the blockade may amount to a "genocide" of the local Armenian population — an assertion that Azerbaijan's lawyers said was unsubstantiated and inaccurate.

Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but its population of 120,000 is overwhelmingly ethnic Armenian and the enclave's one remaining land link to Armenia, the Lachin corridor policed by Russian peacekeepers, was first disrupted in December.

Three residents of Karabakh said basic foodstuffs, fuel and medicine were almost exhausted.

"It's been a very long time since I've eaten any dairy produce, or eggs," Nina Shahverdyan, a 23-year-old English teacher, said in a video call with Reuters from the region's capital, which local Armenians call Stepanakert.

"It's been disastrous because we don't have gas. We have electricity blackouts."

Armenia's foreign minister, Ararat Mirzoyan, discussed the situation in Karabakh on Wednesday with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, and stressed the need to avert a "humanitarian disaster" there, Russia's TASS state news agency reported.

Karabakh's population has tightened its belt since the blockade, eating only what can be produced locally.

German cabinet okays landmark bill over legal cannabis use

Monitoring Desk
BERLIN: Germany's cabinet passed a contentious bill on Wednesday to legalize recreational marijuana use and cultivation, one of the most liberal cannabis laws in Europe that could potentially provide further momentum for a similar worldwide trend.

The legislation, which still has to pass parliament, would allow adults to possess up to 25 grams of the drug, grow a maximum of three plants, or acquire weed at cannabis clubs.

The centre-left government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz hopes the law will curb the black market, protect consumers against contaminated marijuana and reduce drug-related crime.

A key pillar of the plan, which removes the taboo around cannabis use, is also a campaign to raise awareness about the risks, which should ultimately curb consumption, said Health Minister Karl Lauterbach.

"With the current procedures we could not seriously protect children and young people, the topic has been a taboo," Lauterbach told a news conference in Berlin to present the law.

"We have rising, problematic consumption, we couldn't simply allow this to go on," he said. "So this is an important turning point in our drug policy."

However, opposition is fierce, with conservative policymakers in particular warning that it will encourage marijuana use and that the new legislation will create even more work for authorities.

"This law will be linked to a complete loss of control," Armin Schuster, conservative interior minister for the state of Saxony, told media group RND.

Even lawmakers from Scholz's own Social Democrats have expressed scepticism. Interior Minister of Hamburg, Andy Grote, told broadcaster NDR that experiences in other countries showed consumption would simply rise with legalization.

Seventeen troops killed in new Niger attack

Monitoring Desk
NIAMEY: Seventeen troops died in a jihadist ambush in Niger, the government said, in a reminder of the nation's deep security crisis as its military rulers face off against neighbours determined to reverse last month's coup.

An army detachment was "the victim of a terrorist ambush near the town of Koutougou" in the Tillaberi region near Burkina Faso on Tuesday, said a defence ministry statement published later that day.

It added that another 20 soldiers had been wounded, six seriously, with all the casualties evacuated to the capital Niamey.

More than 100 assailants, who were travelling on motorbikes, were "neutralised" during their retreat, the army said.

A jihadist insurgency has plagued Africa's Sahel region for more than a decade, breaking out in northern Mali in 2012 before spreading to neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso in 2015.

The so-called "three borders" area between the three countries is regularly the scene of attacks by rebels affiliated with the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda.

The unrest across the region has killed thousands of troops, police officers and civilians and forced millions to flee their homes.

Anger at the bloodshed has fuelled military coups in all three countries since 2020, with Niger the latest to fall when its elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, was ousted on July 26.

Alarmed by the cascade of takeovers, the West African bloc ECOWAS has warned of possible military intervention to reinstall Bazoum, who is being detained in the presidential compound in Niamey.

Military chiefs of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are to meet in Ghana on Thursday and Friday to follow through a decision by their leaders last week to deploy a "standby force to restore constitutional order" in Niger.

