

# Independent

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Information Minister says

## Govt decides to ban PTI, initiate treason case against Imran, Alvi, Suri

Attaullah Tarar says government will file a review petition against Supreme Court's reserved seats verdict; Cites May 9 riots, foreign funding for case against PTI; Blasts PTI for creating false narrative around cipher controversy.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar on Monday announced four major decisions of the federal government of banning Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, filing of review petition in reserved seats case, references against PTI founder and others for subverting the Constitution and strict legal action against handful of overseas Pakistanis for anti-state activities.

He announced the decision at a press conference which mainly highlighted the activities of the PTI and

its leadership to weaken sovereignty of the country and harm its integrity at the international level.

The press conference also featured audio and video clips that allegedly showed involvement of the PTI and its leadership in the "anti-state" activities.

The minister said: "This is a fact and on the record that the PTI has been involved in the anti-state activities and to this end, the government and its allies have decided to initiate legal proceedings to ban the PTI under Article 17 of the Constitution which empowers the federal gov-

ernment to ban any such a party."

Tarar justified the action of the government against the PTI which, he alleged, obtained foreign funding to attack the state institutions on May 9, default the economy by sabotaging Pakistan's negotiation with the International Monetary Fund, resettle the terrorists in the country and hire lobbying firms to get a resolution passed against the country in a foreign country's Parliament.

All these activities of the PTI were established, he said, adding "in view of the foreign funding case,

May 9 riots, and the cipher episode as well as the resolution passed in the US, we believe that there is very credible evidence present to have the PTI banned."

He said a series of events that set off in a form of chain, gave a clear understanding of the anti-state agenda of the PTI which first brought terrorist back into the country and then attacked on the state institution to undermine its sovereignty.

On the one hand, they were giving shelter and safe heavens to the terrorists and on the other hand they resorted to attack the army

installations including the Corps Commander House in Lahore, he said asking the PTI's founder who gave him the authority to bring back disgruntled elements in settled areas. The minister said the party used the prohibited funding to hire lobbying firms that worked to damage the integrity of the country. The minister said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had given a verdict that the PTI had received prohibited funding, recalling how delaying tactics were used to prevent further proceeding in the case during the tenure of the PTI government.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar addressing a press conference.

## Political parties unite against PTI ban, calling it an attack on democracy

JJ, JUI, APP, QWP, and BNP condemn government's decision

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: The federal government's recent decision to ban the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has ignited backlash from other political parties, who view the move as a serious affront to democracy.

It should be noted that the federal government has decided to file a review appeal against the decision of the Supreme Court on reserved seats and ban Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Federal Information Minister Atta Tarar an-

nounced plans to file a review appeal with the Supreme Court concerning the ban on PTI and certain electoral seats.

Maulana Fazlur Rahman, chief of Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI), has asserted that to address the ongoing political crisis, the establishment must distance itself from politics. He emphasized that using force against political entities will only exacerbate the existing turmoil.

Fazlur Rahman noted that if all institutions ad-

here to their constitutional boundaries, the country can begin to heal. He urged authorities to recognize that the current hybrid system has failed, insisting that the key to resolving the nation's issues lies in holding transparent elections.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal, chief of the Balochistan National Party (BNP), has expressed strong opposition to the government's decision to ban the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of Tajikistan, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir presenting his diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Envoys of seven nations present diplomatic credentials to President

ISLAMABAD (APP): The envoys of seven countries including Zimbabwe, Tajikistan, Rwanda, Argentina, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Botswana presented their diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari during a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday.

The President received credentials from the Ambassador-designate of Zimbabwe, Titus

Mehliswa Jonathan Abubasutu, the Ambassador-designate of Tajikistan, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir; the High Commissioner-designate of Rwanda, Ms. Harerimana Fatou; the Ambassador-designate of Argentina, Sebastian Sayus; the Ambassador-designate of Myanmar, Winna Han; the Ambassador-designate of Cambodia, Sok Chea;

and the Ambassador-designate of Botswana, Dr. Batlang Comma Serema.

Later, the envoys also held separate meetings with the President.

Talking to the envoys, the President said that Pakistan had great investment opportunities and foreign countries should benefit from its investment-friendly environment. He highlighted that foreign investors should explore investment opportunities in Pakistan's agriculture, livestock, Information Technology, energy and mining sectors.

The President stated that Pakistan wanted to broaden cooperation with all friendly countries in diverse fields, especially trade, investment, and culture.



KARACHI: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President, Haleem Adil Sheikh talking to media persons during press conference regarding electoral fraud in NA-238 East Karachi at the Election Tribunal established in the Sindh High Court, in Karachi.

## PTI founder arrested in Jinnah House attack case

LAHORE (INP): The Investigation police have formally arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former prime minister Imran Khan, in connection with the Jinnah House attack case on May 9. The police reached Adiala Jail to execute the formal arrest. According to the police, the PTI founder will be investigated under sections related to inciting against the state.

The police stated that PTI founder Imran Khan has been arrested in 12 cases related to May 9 riots, including the Jinnah House attack. The police requested the

Rawalpindi court to transfer the suspect to Lahore, but the court denied the transfer due to security concerns. The police announced that the PTI founder would appear via video link before the Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court on Monday (today), where a request for his remand will be made for further investigation regarding the Jinnah House attack.

Earlier, an 11-member police team from Lahore arrived at Adiala Jail to investigate three cases from May 9th registered against the PTI founder. After completing their investigation, the team departed.

## CM takes notice of Norriabad accident, loss of lives

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah while taking notice of the Nooriabad road accident and loss of lives had directed to provide medical treatment to injured persons in the accident. According to the Spokesman for CM House, MPA Imdad Patafi called the CM and informed him about the accident.

Seven people had been killed and seven others injured in the accident.

The CM directed Imdad Patafi to offer condolences to the families of the deceased.

## PM hails appointment of Sheikh Abdullah as Deputy PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday extended warm felicitations to UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister.

He also extended heartfelt congratulations to the Crown Prince of Dubai, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum on his appointment as Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of the UAE.

## 6 labourers killed in accident between trucks on M-9 Motorway

HYDERABAD (APP): At least six men, including other four persons, were injured in an accident with a truck on the M-9 Motorway near Lunikot, Jamshoro district, on Monday. The Jamshoro police informed that four persons, who were traveling in the mini truck transporting fruit from Tando Allahyar to Karachi, died on the spot while 2 others breathed their last in Liaquat University Hospital. The police added that the deceased were laborers in the fruit and vegetable market in Tando Allahyar.

## Gov't committed to invest in modern skills, professional education for youth: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said the government was committed to investing in modern skills and professional education for the youth.

In his message in connection with the World Youth Skills Day, the prime minister said the greatest strength of Pakistan was its talented youth and equipping them with modern skills was the need of the hour to secure the future of the country.

He highlighted that the government was equipping its youth with modern education, equal development opportunities as well as modern professional training to compete with the



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori presenting bouquet to Consul General of France Alexis Chahtahtinsky during a ceremony on eve of national day of France.

## Imposing a ban is no child's play: PTI leaders lambast govt's decision

ISLAMABAD (INP): Leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have strongly condemned the proposal to ban their party, stating that such a move is not a child's play. The statement was made during a press conference by opposition leader Omar Ayub, PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan, and Shibli Faraz in Islamabad on Monday.

Khan addressed the media, saying, "Today, the government announced its intention to ban PTI, and we strongly condemn this statement. It is a clear contempt of the Supreme Court, which has granted us relief. The Supreme Court has affirmed PTI's right to exist."

He added, "The PDM government is making such statements to divert atten-



KARACHI: Security officials stand alert to avoid any untoward incident as security has been tightened during the Shiite religious mourning procession in memories of martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A), grandson of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in connection of 8th Muharram-ul-Haram, at M.A Jinnah road in Karachi.

## Govt hikes petrol price by Rs9.99 per litre

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced a whopping increase in petroleum prices for second fortnight of July 2024.

A notification issued by the government said the petrol price was increase by Rs9.99 to Rs275.60 per litre.

Similarly, the price of high-speed diesel was jacked up by Rs6.18 per litre, with new price fixing at Rs283.63 per litre.

The new prices will come into effect from July 16, 2024 till July 31, 2024.

## PM Shehbaz consults Nawaz on PTI ban

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif had second round of meeting in Murree on Monday.

The party sources said Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz was also present in the meeting where consultation was undertaken to ban Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The PM informed the party president about contacts and consultations with other allies including President Asif Ali Zardari on the issue.

## Karachi police issue security plan for 9, 10 Muharram

KARACHI (INP): Karachi Police have unveiled a comprehensive security plan to ensure the safety and security of the public during processions of 9th and 10th of Muharram. According to the details, a total of 17,947 police officers will be deployed across the city during Muharram.

During 9 and 10 Muharram, a total of 1,049 processions will take place, while a total of 4,664 majalis will be held in Karachi.

Additionally, 987 traffic police officers and personnel will be on duty to maintain order and facilitate smooth traffic flow during the processions and majalis in the city.

Earlier in the day, the Peoples Bus Service announced the suspension of its operations on specific routes during 9 and 10 Muharram.

## Governor Sindh's message on the occasion of Ashura

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori has said in his message on the occasion of Ashura that the 10th of Muharram "Ashura" is a historic, spiritual, and important lesson for Muslims all over the world.

The Ashura was the day of the great sacrifice and martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the beloved grandson of the holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

him). This day reminds us of Imam Hussain's message and the historic role, he observed. He said that the great sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A) established the tradition of sacrificing one's life for the exaltation of Islam and the achievement of the highest goals in Islamic history, which is also a bright example for those who follow the righteous path in every era of history.

## KPK Governor for easy loans to youth under NBP schemes

KARACHI (APP): The Governor of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has stressed the need for providing easy loans to the unemployed youth under NBP schemes here on Monday.

Speaking to National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) President Rehmat Ali Hasnie during his visit to NBP head office, he said that NBP was an important

national institution. He said that the institution should take steps to provide better facilities to its customers.

Kundi said that facilities should be provided to pensioners and widows so that they did not face difficulties. Faisal Karim Kundi said that special arrangements should be made for senior citizens to sit in the branches.



KARACHI: Governor Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi being briefed by President National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) Rehmat Ali Hasnie on NBP affairs at NBP Headquarters.

## Commissioner briefed on Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance program

KARACHI (APP): A team of medical experts from Aga Khan University, working for the program Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance (CHAMPS) initiated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation met with Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi on Monday

to discuss ways to improve child health and prevent child mortality and briefed him on the program's objectives and activities.

The team, representing the CHAMPS (Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance) pro-

gram, included Dr. Abdul Momin Qazi, Director of Health, Government of Sindh, and Dr. Saqib Sheikh.

The Director of Health informed the Commissioner that the Aga Khan University is conducting a study in Karachi to improve child health and prevent child mortality by enhancing pediatric care. The team will conduct a survey in two districts of Karachi, Korangi and Malir, to assess the health status of children and identify areas for improvement.



## Strict action will be taken on sharing hate material on social media: Minister

FAISALABAD (APP): Provincial Minister for Information Azma Bukhari said that Ashura would be observed under complete harmony and strict action would be taken on sharing hate material on social media.

Presiding over a meeting at DC Office here on Monday, she took a briefing about Muharram arrangements and said that the government was committed to facilitating the masses during Ashura days. In this connection, Sharbat Sabeel would be arranged on the routes of mourning processions in addition to ensuring tight security arrangements for processions and

participants in majalis, she added.

She said that CCTV cameras would be used for monitoring security arrangements. "Muharram is a sacred month for Muslims and the government would try its optimum best to observe Ashura in a most befitting manner under tight security arrangements," she added.

She said that activities of social media would also be monitored strictly especially during Ashura days and no one would be allowed to share hate material or promote sectarianism in the country.

He also directed police officers to verify

each information before taking any steps. In this connection, hot spots should be monitored strictly in addition to keeping a close liaison with religious scholars of all schools of thoughts and members of peace committees, she added.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Abdullah Nayar Sheikh briefed the minister about administrative and security arrangements in Faisalabad and said that 387 CCTV cameras were made functional across the district to monitor Muharram security in addition to keeping vigil eye on the movement of suspects.



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Health and Chairman Cabinet Committee for Law and Order Khawaja Salman Rafique being briefed about security arrangements during Muharram ul Haram at Control Room of Home Ministry.

## Minister directs early financial assistance to rain affectees

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Public Health Engineering, Puthunyaar Khan on Monday directed for providing in time financial assistance to the people affected by the recent heavy rains. Following the directives, Secretary Relief KP, assured the minister that financial relief assistance will be provided to the affected people within the next few days. Former tehsil member, Masoom Wazir was also present on the

occasion.

Provincial Minister Pukhtunyaar Khan said the provincial government stands with the rain-affected people at this critical juncture.

The KP government will do its best to compensate for the losses of people incurred by the natural disasters.

He said no effort will be spared in reaching out to the affected people and the financial assistance will be provided to every affected family without any discrimination.

## Azma visits Allied Hospital-I, inspects facilities

FAISALABAD (APP): Provincial Information Minister Azma Bukhari Monday paid a surprise visit to Allied Hospital-I.

She inspected medical facilities available for patients in emergency and other wards, presence of doctors and paramedics.

She inquired after the patients in different wards. She also inquired from attendants about treatment, availability of medicines and other facilities.

She also checked the functioning of air-conditioners in wards and medicine stock in the hospital's store.

## Health minister visits field hospital, inspects facilities

LAHORE (APP): Punjab government. Thousands of people had been provided with best medical facilities at their doorstep across the province, he added. He said providing best medical facilities to people was the first priority, adding that facilities of lady doctor, free examination and medicine were also being provided in field hospitals.

Hafiz Mohammad Aleem, Chudhry Sarwar, Mehar Mudassar, Mian Rashid and Malik Saif ur Rahman were present.



SIALKOT: DSPCIA crime organizer Rana Mahmood ul Hasan is handing over the money recovered from the accused of robbery Rs. 18 lakh to owner Haji Imran at SCCL.

## Departments lauded for Muharram arrangements

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi has lauded the relevant departments for making effective arrangements for Muharram. He said that Capital Metropolitan, District Administration, Rescue 1122, Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP), and other relevant departments had made elaborate arrangements and that their efforts will play a crucial role in maintaining peace and order during Muharram.

He expressed these views while visiting various Imambargahs, command posts, and the

Supreme Command Post in Peshawar.

On this occasion, the Director General of Capital Metropolitan, Waheed Rehman, ADC Peshawar, AC Peshawar, AACs, WSSP, and other officials also accompanied him.

The provincial minister inspected various Imambargahs in the Qissa Khwani area and reviewed the facilities provided by the government. He met with the heads of the Imambargahs and was briefed on their issues.

He also visited the command post at Khan Raziq police station in Qissa Khwani and the Supreme Command Post in Kohati.



PESHAWAR: Journalists are holding protest to condemn the killing of senior journalist Malik Hassan Zaib, who was shot dead by two unknown assailants in the Akbar Pura village Nowshera district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), at Peshawar press club.

## PPC, KHUJ stage strong protest against killing of senior journalist

PESHAWAR (APP): The members of Khyber Union of Journalists (KHUJ) and Peshawar Press Club (PPC) on Monday staged a strong protest against the killing of senior journalist and reporter of Aaj News, Malik Hassan Zeb. The protest demonstration, attended by a large number of journalists with placards in their hands, chanted slogans in front of the Peshawar Press Club, opposite Railways Station

here and demanded arrest of the killers. Senior Vice President Imran Yousafzai in his speech demanded of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to take notice of the incident and direct early arrest of the killers for an exemplary punishment. He said despite CCTV footage of the incident which showed clear faces of the killers of the journalist, police have so far failed to make any progress in the case.

## 2 workers die while cleaning sewerage

FAISALABAD (APP): Two workers, including an employee of the municipal corporation, died when they were cleaning sewerage in Chak Jhumra police limits.

A Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Monday that 40-year-old Shakeel Masih, an employee of Municipal Corporation Chak Jhumra, entered into a sewerage at Chiniot Road but he became unconscious due to some toxic gas. Later, his coworker, Sohail Masih, 35, entered the sewerage to save him but he also fainted.

## ANF recovers over 86 kg drugs in 5 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations managed to recover over 86 kg drugs and arrested 11 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that 810 grams ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Bahrain at Karachi Airport.

## PDWP approves development schemes worth Rs5.56b

LAHORE (APP): The Provincial Development and Working Party Punjab (PDWP) in its 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the current financial year, approved two development schemes of SH&CME and Environment sectors at a cost of Rs 56.560 billion.

Preside over by P&D Board Chairman Barrister Nabeel Ahmad Awan here Monday, the meeting approved the following schemes:

Establishment of Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and

Centre at the cost of Rs 56 billion. Investigation of sources of particulate matter for informed decision making in Punjab at the cost of Rs 560 million. P&D Board Secretary Dr Asif Tufail, Secretary Environment Raja Jahangir Anwar, Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan, Chief Economist Dr Nasir Iqbal Malik, P&D Board members, heads and other senior representatives of the relevant provincial departments attended the meeting.

# International News

## Gaza civil defence says 15 killed in Israel strike on Gaza school

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA STRIP: The civil defence agency in Hamas-run Gaza said Sunday that 15 people were killed in a strike on a school sheltering war displaced where the Israeli military said it had targeted "terrorists".

The strike on the UN-run Abu Araban site in central Gaza's Nuseirat camp was the fifth on a school-turned-shelter in eight days.

The Abu Araban school was housing "thousands of displaced people," civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP, adding that most of the dead were women and children.

Schools in Nuseirat were the target for two of the earlier school strikes as Israel keeps up its offensive against Hamas Palestinian militants who triggered the war with their October 7 attack on Israel.

The Israeli military said its air force "struck a number of terrorists who were operating in the area of UNRWA's Abu Araban school building in Nuseirat".

It said the building had "served as a hideout" and base for "attacks" on Israeli troops.

AFP TV images showed the three-storey complex standing, with clothes and bedding airing out over its railings. A wall bearing the UN logo had been blown out, and rooms inside were damaged.

On July 6, Israeli aircraft hit Al-Jawni school, also run by the United Nations relief agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), in Nuseirat. UNRWA said about 2,000 people were sheltering there at the time.

The following day, four people died in a strike

on the church-run Holy Family school in Gaza City, in the territory's north, according to the Civil Defence agency.

On Monday, Israel hit another Nuseirat school, again saying it was targeting "terrorists".

The next day, a hospital source said at least 29 people died in a strike at the entrance to Al-Awda school in the Khan Yunis area, southern Gaza.

Israel says Hamas uses schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure for military purposes. Hamas denies the accusation. France and Germany on Wednesday called for an investigation into the school strikes.

After the Al-Jawni strike, UNRWA spokesperson Juliette Touma told AFP that when the war began "we closed the schools and they became shelters."



US President Joe Biden delivers a statement a day after Republican challenger Donald Trump was shot at a campaign rally, during brief remarks at the White House in Washington, US.

## After assassination attempt, Trump and Biden seek calm, unity

**Monitoring Desk**  
MILWAUKEE: Donald Trump arrived on Sunday in Milwaukee, where he will be formally nominated as the Republican presidential candidate later this week after surviving an assassination attempt that has aggravated an already bitter US political divide.

President Joe Biden, a Democrat, ordered a review of how a 20-year-old man with an AR-15-style rifle got close enough to shoot at Trump from a rooftop on Saturday. Trump, as a former president, has lifetime protection by the US Secret Service.

Trump, 78, was holding a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania — a key state in the Nov. 5 election — when shots rang out, hitting his right ear and leaving his face streaked with blood. His campaign said he was doing well.

"That reality is just setting in," Trump told the Washington Examiner on Sunday. "I rarely look away from the crowd. Had I not done that in that moment, well, we would not be talking today, would we?"

One person in the crowd was killed and two others wounded before Secret Service agents fatally shot the suspect.

Both Trump and Biden on Sunday sought calm and unity.

Trump is due to accept his party's formal nomination at the Republican National Convention with a speech on Thursday. He pumped his fist in the air several times as he descended the stairs from his plane after arriving in Milwaukee. "This is a chance to bring the whole country, even the whole world, together. The speech will be a lot different, a lot different than it would've been two days ago," Trump told the Washington Examiner. Biden delivered a televised address from the Oval Office in the White House on Sunday.

## Judge dismisses Donald Trump's classified documents case

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: A Florida judge appointed by Donald Trump has dismissed the criminal case against the former president on charges of mishandling top secret documents, ruling that Special Counsel Jack Smith was unlawfully appointed.

The decision is a major victory for Republican presidential candidate Trump, who had been accused of endangering national security after leaving the White House.

The decision comes days after an assassin's bullets flew by him during a campaign rally, streaking the Republican presidential candidate's blood across his face and prompting his security agents to swarm him, before he emerged and pumped his fist in the air, mouthing the

words "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Hours after the incident, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said it had identified the shooter in the assassination attempt as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Pennsylvania, US media reported early on Sunday.

Federal Judge Aileen Cannon made her ruling after lawyers for the 78-year-old argued for a partial stay of proceedings to allow for an assessment of a Supreme Court ruling that a former president has broad immunity from prosecution.

"Former president Trump's motion to dismiss indictment based on the unlawful appointment and funding of Special Counsel Jack Smith is granted," Aileen wrote in her order.

## King Charles III to visit Australia and Samoa as he recovers from cancer

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: King Charles III is preparing to visit Australia and Samoa in October, an itinerary that will span 12 time zones and test the monarch's stamina as he recovers from cancer treatment.

The trip, announced on Sunday by Buckingham Palace, marks a watershed moment for the 75-year-old king, who has been slowly returning to public duties after taking a break following his cancer diagnosis in early February. The decision to undertake such a long journey will be seen as a sign of Charles' recovery, even though the program in Australia will be "limited."

## China, Russia start joint naval drills, days after NATO allies called Beijing a Ukraine war enabler

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China and Russia's naval forces on Sunday kicked off a joint exercise at a military port in southern China on Sunday, official news agency Xinhua reported, days after NATO allies called Beijing a "decisive enabler" of the war in Ukraine.

The Chinese defense ministry said in a brief statement that the exercise, sea strikes and air defense. Xinhua News Agency reported the Chinese and Russian naval forces carried out on-map military simulation and tactical coordination exercises.

## Dubai crown prince appointed UAE defence minister

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: The crown prince of Dubai has been appointed as minister of defence for the United Arab Emirates as part of a broader cabinet shuffle. Dubai ruler and UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum posted on X.

The 41-year-old Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, who has served as Dubai's crown prince since 2008, was also named as one of the UAE's deputy prime ministers.

## Italian tax police free 33 Indian workers from 'slave-like' conditions on farms

**Monitoring Desk**  
ROME: Italy's tax police said Saturday they had freed 33 Indian farm workers from "slave-like working conditions" in the northern province of Verona, while seizing almost half a million euros from the two alleged gangmasters. Police said the two alleged abusers, also Indian, persuaded their fellow nationals to come to Italy, paying €17,000 each to obtain seasonal working

## Seven students drown on summer holidays in Mexico

**Monitoring Desk**  
MEXICO CITY (INP): Seven students drowned in eastern Mexico after their vehicle was dragged into a fast-flowing river as they tried to retrieve a boat from its waters, local government sources said Sunday.

The victims, all between 21 and 23 years old, on Saturday were celebrating the end of the school year and summer holidays at a private residence on the banks of the river in the city of Coatzacoalcos.

## Syrians vote for their next parliament, which may pave the way for Assad to extend his rule

**Monitoring Desk**  
DAMASCUS: Syrians were voting for members of a new parliament in an election Monday that was expected to hold few surprises but could pave the way for a constitutional amendment to extend the term of President Bashar Assad.

The vote is the fourth in Syria since mass anti-government protests in 2011 and a brutal crackdown by security forces spiraled into an ongoing civil war and comes as an economic crisis grips the country, fueling demonstrations in the south.

Syria's 2024 parliamentary election excludes rebel-held northwest Syria and the country's northeast under U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The number of eligible voters hasn't been announced either, and

unlike presidential elections, the millions of diaspora Syrians — whose numbers have ballooned since the civil war — are not qualified to vote for the legislators.

Western countries and Assad's critics say the polling in government-held areas in Syria is neither free nor fair.

This year, 1,516 government-approved candidates are running for the 250-seat People's Assembly. Some 8,151 polling stations were set up in 15 voting districts in government-held areas, with results expected to be announced Monday night or the following day. In the last round of elections in 2020, the outcome was delayed for days due to technical issues, according to officials.

Assad's Baath Party won 166 seats, in addition to 17 others from allied parties.

