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PTI suspends hunger strike outside parliament for few days



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Friday announced to suspend its hunger strike camp outside the parliament. PTI's Secretary General Omer Ayub said that the decision was made on the direction of the PTI founder. He said Imran Khan had directed the party members to prepare for the Independence Day celebrations in their constituencies. The party's secretary general, however, said the symbolic hunger strike would begin after a hiatus of few days and a formal announcement would be made in this regard. He merits mention that PTI had organised its hunger strike camp on July 23 to press the powers that be for Imran Khan's release.

Saudi Arabia to raise issues of Muslim world at global forum, says Fazlur Rehman



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F) President Maulana Fazlur Rehman stressed Pakistan and Saudi Arabia joint cooperation to raise issues of Muslim community in the global world. Talking at the National Assembly, he apologised for hurling of members to the Saudi Arabia delegation including Imam Masjid Nabawi sitting in the gallery. JUI-F president emphasised for Harman Sharif sacredness, bilateral ties, muslims unity instead of internal matters. He stated that Saudi Arabia was supposed to lead muslim world, and highlight issues of Muslim World including Gaza, Kashmir, Burma and Palestine to resolve them.

Excise department introduces new rules for vehicle registration in Islamabad



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
The Excise and Taxation (E&T) department Islamabad has made significant changes in the rules of vehicle registration and number plates in the federal capital, affecting fees and penalties for non-compliance. The spokesperson said the E&T department has introduced new regulations regarding vehicle registration and number plates. The registration of vehicles with non-standard number plates will now be canceled. While, vehicle owners will need to pay a re-registration fee to comply with the new standards. For vehicles with engines up to 1,000 cc, the re-registration fee is set at Rs5,000. While, vehicles with engine sizes between 1,000 cc to 2,000 cc will also incur a re-registration fee of Rs 10,000. However, owners of vehicles with engines above 2,000 cc will face a higher fine of Rs20,000. Motorcycles are also subject to these changes, with a re-registration fee of Rs1,000. If a vehicle is found to be in violation of the new rules more than once, the penalty will increase significantly. Repeat offenders will be required to pay five times the original fee. These new measures aim to standardize vehicle registration and ensure compliance with updated regulations. Vehicle owners are urged to update their registration and number plates to avoid hefty fines.

'Generals, bureaucrats have taken control of country', laments CJP Isa

Supreme Court halts removal of Wildlife Board chairperson and blocks transfer to Interior Ministry



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
The Supreme Court of Pakistan has intervened to prevent the removal of Rana Saeed as Chairperson of the Wildlife Board, while also suspending the notification that placed the Wildlife Board under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry. During a hearing concerning commercial activities in the Margalla National Park, Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked, "The generals and bureaucrats have taken control of the country's system, and the Attorney General is unaware of the proceedings." According to Express News, the Supreme Court summoned

Cabinet Secretary Kamran Ali Afzal and Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, as well as the owner of the private Monal restaurant, Luqman Ali Afzal. The chief justice directed that the matter be brought to the attention of the prime minister. The court was informed that the chairperson of the Wildlife Board had been removed from her position, and following a court order, the Wildlife Department was placed under the Interior Ministry. Chief Justice Isa questioned this move, stating, "The Interior Ministry's role is to maintain law and order. The government's actions appear to be an attempt to override the court's decision to protect national assets. What is the relationship between the owner of the private hotel and the Cabinet Secretary? Is the Cabinet Secretary not the brother of the hotel owner? The Cabinet Secretary got the summary to remove the Wildlife Board chairperson approved by the prime minister." After a brief recess, Attorney General Awan appeared in court, and the judges pressed for an immediate response regarding the transfer of the Margalla Hills National Park to the Interior Ministry. The court also sought details about the Pine City housing project located within the Margalla Hills.

Punjab govt announces Rs100m reward for Arshad Nadeem



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has announced a prize of Rs100 million for national hero Arshad Nadeem. She said the gold medalist had earned this prize for himself and country and his fellow countrymen could not be more proud.

throw in Javelin final to win the gold medal at the Paris Olympics 2024 on Thursday. The last time Pakistan stood on the Olympic medal podium was on Aug 8, 1992, when the national hockey team defeated the Netherlands 4-3 to win a bronze medal at the Barcelona Olympics. This is the first Olympic gold for Pakistan in any discipline in the last 40 years.

The chief minister also announced that the Punjab government would build a sports city in Mian Channu - from which Arshad hailed - so that the youth would be able to take part in athletics under the Olympian's guidance.

Arshad Nadeem shattered the Olympic record with a humongous 92.97m

Govt takes steps to uplift agriculture sector: PM



Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the government has taken various initiatives to improve the agriculture sector. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 2nd International Food and Agriculture Exhibition in Karachi today, Shehbaz Sharif said agriculture exports of Pakistan have reached over three billion dollars and it is time we fix our next target to seven billion dollars of agriculture exports. He said the government is also taking initiatives to provide facilities to the farmers. He added that over 18,000 tubewells in Balochistan are being shifted to solar power besides other steps. He said providing easy loans to the farmers in the rural areas will also help increase the agricultural production in the country. Earlier, the prime minister also distributed awards among agriculture exporters with prominent achievements.

Pakistan rejects claims of supplying Shaheen missiles to Iran

FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch condemns Indian media's ongoing propaganda against Pakistan.



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Pakistan's Foreign Office has categorically denied reports claiming that Islamabad is planning to supply Shaheen ballistic missiles to Iran. In a weekly briefing, FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch stated that there is no truth to these allegations. During the briefing, Baloch highlighted Pakistan's active participation in regional and international matters. She mentioned that the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign

Minister represented Pakistan at the extraordinary OIC meeting addressing the situation in Palestine. At the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister underscored the importance of continuing uninterrupted humanitarian aid to Palestine. On the occasion of ASEAN Day, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister conveyed congratulations on behalf of Pakistan, further strengthening diplomatic ties. Pakistan had observed Kashmir Exploitation Day earlier on August 5, marking five years since India's revocation of Article 370 in the Muslim-majority region. Baloch reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to providing diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri people and condemned the Indian media's ongoing propaganda against Pakistan. She reiterated Pakistan's stance that the Kashmir issue should be resolved according to United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Malik Mazhar Mahmood Unveils 23-point Manifesto For Chairmanship of PEC

MAJOR REFORMS PROMISED BY PEC CHAIRMAN CANDIDATE TO REVERSE ENGINEERING BRAIN DRAIN

Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Enger. Malik Mazhar Mahmood, (Additional Secretary Health) a prominent candidate for the Chairman of the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) election for the term 2024-2027, has unveiled a comprehensive 23-point manifesto aimed at transforming the engineering sector in Pakistan. The manifesto focused on innovation, sustainability, professional development, and making the PEC politics-free. The event took place at Palais Hotel on Friday, drawing a large gathering of engineers from across the country. With over 30 years of experience in solution-based development within the engineering sector, Malik Mazhar Mahmood has been a pivotal figure in implementing reforms for the welfare of engineers in Pakistan. His extensive background and commitment to the profession

make him a strong candidate for the position of PEC Chairman. Addressing the manifesto launch ceremony, Malik Mazhar Mahmood unveiled 24-point reform agenda aimed at revolutionizing the engineering sector. Key highlights of his manifesto include ensuring a Politics-Free PEC, introducing a Digital Transformation to streamline PEC services, and promoting Academia Collaboration to better align educational curricula with industry needs. The agenda also focused on achieving Global Certification and Recognition for Pakistani engineers, launching a robust Continuing Education & Professional Development program, and promoting Public-Private Partnerships to create job opportunities. Mahmood also planned to introduce a Young Engineers Program and initiatives to support Women in Engineering, while strengthening Ethical Engineering Practices and establishing Innovation and

R&D Centers. Other proposed reforms include enhancing Community and Member Engagement, promoting International Collaboration, and improving transparency and professional standards within PEC. The agenda further includes strengthening the regulatory framework, promoting technology transfer, and regularly reviewing engineering curricula. Mahmood also emphasized the importance of expanding PEC's global outreach and instituting an endowment fund to support educational initiatives. Moreover, Mahmood's also highlighted the agenda plan for a comprehensive online portal to streamline PEC services and improve accessibility. He is dedicated to bringing about meaningful change in the engineering sector, ensuring that the PEC remains a body that truly represents and serves the interests of engineers across Pakistan. The PEC Chairman candidate has announced a comprehensive plan to reverse the brain drain of engineers and bring them back to serve the country. He emphasized that academia should not support the specific groups that have contributed to the council's decline over the years. "Everyone should cast their vote without any pressure, as your vote can change the system," Mahmood stated. He highlighted that the country has approximately 300,000 engineers, yet they face significant challenges, including unemployment and industrial decline. Mahmood pointed out that if the PEC had played its role during the IPP contract agreements, the current energy crisis could have been avoided. He stressed that the PEC has strayed from its mission due to ongoing political interference and that there is an urgent need to restore it as a functional.

CASS Discusses Ongoing Crisis in Jammu and Kashmir Under Indian Siege

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, conducted a special session under its Catalyst Conversation Series on "Chinars in Chains: India's Siege of Jammu and Kashmir" with Mr Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman, Kashmir Institute of International Relations, to discuss the current situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd), Senior Director at CASS, set the stage for the discussion and highlighted that the full integration of IIOJK into the Indian Union has been a central element of the BJP and RSS's Hindutva agenda. He noted that abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A on 5th August 2019 by the Modi government were followed by severe security measures including curfews and communication blackouts in the disputed territory. Air Marshal Habib also observed that the Indian Supreme Court supported the government's actions, which included the enactment of laws aimed at changing the region's



demographics by allowing an influx of non-Kashmiris. He shared that five years on, the Muslim majority in IIOJK continues to face marginalisation and repression, with the international community largely remaining silent on these issues. In his Keynote Address, the Distinguished Speaker Mr Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman, Kashmir Institute of International Relations, discussed the considerable socio-political

and economic upheavals in Jammu & Kashmir since the revocation of Article 370 and 35A, marking five years of continued distress and despair. Mr Wani highlighted that Jammu & Kashmir remains under direct control from New Delhi, lacking an elected government, which he described as a severe democratic deficit. He noted that the region operates akin to a 'police state', with heightened levels of incarceration and

constant surveillance. About 19,000 people, including political and human rights activists, were detained, impacting over 8 million Kashmiris who faced shortages of essentials and medical supplies due to the lockdown. He further pointed out the economic turmoil within the region, stating that businesses have suffered immense losses while poverty, hunger, and unemployment have risen, starkly contradicting claims made by the Modi government. Mr Wani observed that in the recent Lok Sabha elections, the electorate in IIOJK expressed their dissatisfaction through their votes. Despite the BJP's carrot and stick policy, it failed to secure a candidate for the three constituencies in the occupied Kashmir Valley, and their proxy candidates were also defeated, indicating that the Kashmiris' support lies with those who champion their rights. Mr Wani was of the view that significant settler-colonial policies are in place.

Children's Literature in Pakistan 1947 to the Present



Iftikhar Uddin Anjum

Children's literature in Pakistan is a fascinating and evolving field that reflects the nation's complex history, cultural diversity and the educational needs of its younger population. Since 1947, when Pakistan emerged as an independent nation, the development of children's literature has been shaped by various socio-political changes, the influence of religion and the shifting priorities of educational institutions. This article traces the journey of children's literature in Pakistan from its inception in 1947 to the present day, examining its evolution, key contributors, prominent themes and the challenges it faces. The period following Pakistan's independence was one of nation-building and cultural consolidation. The focus during these years was on creating a distinct national identity, separate from British colonial influence and Indian culture. However, the development of children's literature was not a primary concern during this time, leading to a reliance on pre-existing literature from British India and translations of Western classics. One of the earliest contributors to children's literature in Pakistan was Mirza Azem Baig Chughtai, known for his work in Urdu literature. He wrote simple stories for children, often published in popular magazines, that emphasized moral lessons and Islamic values. These stories were among the first attempts to create a literature that catered specifically to Pakistani children, reflecting the cultural and religious ethos of the new nation. During this period, most children's literature was didactic in nature, aimed at instilling moral and religious values. The stories were often simplistic, with clear distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil. They were primarily published in Urdu, the national language, but there was also a significant presence of literature in regional languages like Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the country. The 1970s and 1980s marked a significant period of growth for children's literature in Pakistan. The rise of a more educated middle class, coupled with the increasing importance of education, created a demand for literature that could both entertain and educate children. This period

also saw the emergence of several notable writers who made lasting contributions to the field. Hakim Mohammad Saeed, a prominent scholar and philanthropist, was a key figure in the development of children's literature during this time. He founded the Hamdard Foundation, which published a wide range of children's books and magazines, most notably Naunchal, a magazine that became a staple for young readers across the country. Saeed's work emphasized the importance of knowledge, ethics, and patriotism and his contributions helped to establish a more structured and organized children's literature market in Pakistan. Another important figure from this period was Shafiq-ur-Rahman, a humorist and author whose books, such as Hamaqat and Kirmin, were widely read by both children and adults. His witty and humorous style made his works popular among younger readers, and he is credited with bringing a lighter, more entertaining touch to children's literature in Pakistan. The 1980s also witnessed the growth of educational television, which had a significant impact on children's literature. Programs like Ainak Wala Jin and Uncle Sargam became immensely popular, and their success led to the publication of related books and comics. This period also saw the rise of illustrated children's books and comics, which became an essential part of children's reading material. The 1990s and early 2000s saw further diversification and growth in children's literature in Pakistan. The expansion of the private education sector, the proliferation of media, and the advent of the internet created new opportunities for the production and dissemination of children's books. However, this period also brought new challenges, including competition from international media and the declining interest in reading among children due to the rise of digital entertainment. Ishtiaq Ahmed often referred to as Pakistan's answer to Enid Blyton, was a prolific writer during this period. His detective novels, particularly the Inspector Jamshed series, captivated young readers with their thrilling plots and relatable characters. Ahmed's books were not only entertaining but also educational, as they often included lessons on morality, ethics, and the importance of family. Another significant contributor to children's literature in the contemporary era is Musharraf Ali Farooqi, whose works have been praised for their creativity and literary quality. His book Tik-Tik, The Master of Time is a notable example of modern children's literature in Pakistan, combining fantasy and adventure

with strong character development and engaging storytelling. Farooqi's work represents a shift towards more sophisticated and nuanced narratives in children's literature, reflecting the changing tastes and expectations of young readers. The contemporary era has also seen the rise of children's literature in English, reflecting the increasing importance of English as a medium of instruction and communication in Pakistan. Writers like Anna Naz, Nadia Agha, and Saba Imtiaz have contributed to this trend, producing books that cater to the growing demand for English-language literature for children. Over the decades, several recurring themes have emerged in Pakistani children's literature, reflecting the country's cultural, religious, and social values. From the earliest days of independence, Pakistani children's literature has emphasized the importance of moral and ethical education. Stories often focus on the distinction between right and wrong, the importance of honesty, integrity, and kindness, and the consequences of one's actions. This theme is deeply rooted in the Islamic values that underpin much of the country's cultural identity. Another prominent theme is patriotism and the promotion of a strong national identity. Many stories are set against the backdrop of Pakistan's history, including the struggle for independence, the sacrifices of national heroes, and the importance of unity and national pride. These themes are often aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty to the country among young readers. Adventure and exploration have also been popular themes, particularly in the works of writers like Ishtiaq Ahmed and Musharraf Ali Farooqi. These stories often feature young protagonists who embark on exciting journeys, solve mysteries, or face challenges that test their courage and intelligence. Adventure stories not only entertain but also inspire children to be curious, brave, and resourceful. Pakistani children's literature also reflects the country's rich cultural and religious heritage. Stories often draw on traditional folktales, myths, and legends, as well as Islamic teachings and values. This theme helps to preserve and transmit the cultural and religious traditions of Pakistan to younger generations. Social Issues and Challenges In recent years, there has been a growing focus on social issues and challenges in children's literature. Topics such as poverty, gender inequality, education, and environmental conservation have begun to appear more frequently in children's books.



Anjad Rana

The political atmosphere in Bangladesh is often tense, with significant polarization between the Awami League (AL) and its primary rival, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Over the years, the political environment has been characterized by Political Violence. Clashes between supporters of the AL and BNP have been frequent. Harsh (strikes) and protests often turn violent. Critics accuse Sheikh Hasina's government of authoritarianism, particularly in silencing dissent, controlling the media, and using the judiciary to suppress opposition. Elections have been marred by allegations of vote-rigging, voter suppression, and a lack of transparency. The 2014 and 2018 elections were heavily criticized both domestically and internationally. While Bangladesh has seen significant economic growth, the benefits have not been evenly distributed. Income inequality, corruption, and unemployment remain challenges. If Sheikh Hasina were to step down or leave the country, the internal political situation in Bangladesh could become even more unstable. Sheikh Hasina has been the central figure in the Awami League. Her departure could lead to internal conflicts over leadership, potentially fracturing the party. The BNP and other opposition forces might see her departure as an opportunity to regain influence, possibly leading to increased political activity and protests. The transition of power might lead to a period of uncertainty, especially if there is no clear successor or if the transfer of power is contested. The political vacuum could result in increased violence as different factions, both within the AL and the opposition, vie for power. Political instability often translates into economic uncertainty. Investor confidence could be shaken, leading to potential economic downturns. Bangladesh's stability is crucial for regional stability in South Asia. Prolonged internal unrest could have implications for neighboring countries, especially regarding refugee flows, trade, and regional security. Her departure could lead to a period of political and economic instability. The future of Bangladesh in such a scenario would depend on how

Protests Against Forced Evictions in Dhaka's Slums

the transition is managed, the role of the opposition, and the response of the international community, the potential instability in Bangladesh, particularly in the hypothetical scenario where Sheikh Hasina steps down or leaves, requires a multifaceted approach. Initiate a national dialogue involving all major political parties, including the Awami League, BNP, and other smaller parties. This dialogue should focus on creating a consensus on key issues like election reforms, governance, and the rule of law. International organizations, respected national figures, or regional powers like India or the United Nations could mediate these discussions to ensure fairness and prevent deadlock. Strengthen the Election Commission to ensure it operates independently, transparently, and fairly. This could help restore public confidence in the electoral process. Ensure the judiciary remains independent from political influence, capable of upholding the rule of law and human rights without bias. Encourage and protect the role of civil society organizations in monitoring government actions, advocating for reforms, and promoting accountability. The Awami League should develop a clear and transparent succession plan, identifying potential leaders who can take over in case of Sheikh Hasina's departure. This could reduce internal power struggles. Consider forming a caretaker or interim government to oversee a transition period, especially if there are significant political tensions. This government should be neutral, with the sole purpose of ensuring a peaceful transition and organizing free and fair elections. Explore electoral reforms that could make the system more representative, such as proportional representation, which might reduce the winner-takes-all nature of the current system and encourage coalition-building. Implement or reinforce term limits for key political offices to prevent the concentration of power and promote leadership renewal. Develop policies aimed at reducing income inequality and addressing the needs of marginalized communities. This could include social safety nets, targeted economic development programs, and efforts to combat corruption. Focus on job creation, particularly for the youth, to reduce unemployment and prevent economic grievances from fueling political unrest. Reform the police to ensure they are a neutral force, not used for political purposes. Training in human rights and conflict de-escalation should be prioritized. Implement stricter measures to

prevent and punish political violence. This includes disarming militant groups affiliated with political parties and promoting peaceful political engagement. Engage with the international community to gain diplomatic support for a peaceful transition. This could include technical assistance in electoral processes, legal reforms, and institution-building. Strengthen ties with neighbouring countries and regional organizations to ensure that any internal instability does not spill over and affect regional security. Promote civic education programs that encourage democratic participation, peaceful protest, and informed voting. This could help foster a more engaged and informed electorate. Conduct campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of peaceful transitions, democratic values, and the dangers of political violence. Stabilizing Bangladesh in the event of Sheikh Hasina's departure requires a comprehensive approach that involves political reform, economic development, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. By addressing these areas proactively, Bangladesh can navigate potential challenges and maintain stability, ensuring a peaceful and prosperous future for its citizens. While Sheikh Hasina, the leader of the Awami League, has been the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for multiple terms, serving from 1996 to 2001, 2009 to 2014, and then re-elected in 2014 and 2018. Her leadership has been marked by significant economic growth, infrastructure development, and poverty reduction. However, her government has also faced criticism over issues like alleged human rights abuses, suppression of opposition, and concerns about the fairness of elections. To address the root causes of public agitation and unrest in Bangladesh, a combination of policies that tackle political, economic, and social issues would be necessary. Consider reinstating a neutral caretaker government system to oversee elections, ensuring they are perceived as fair by all parties and the public. Transfer more decision-making power to local governments, allowing communities to have a greater say in their own affairs. This can help address regional grievances and reduce the concentration of power at the national level. Implement strict anti-corruption measures. The government of Bangladesh can address the root causes of public agitation, such as economic inequality, political disenfranchisement, social grievances, and governance issues.



The PDWP approves seven development schemes worth than Rs 11 Billion.



Soon Times Correspondent Lahore. The PDWP approves seven development schemes worth than Rs 11 Billion. The 15th meeting of Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) FY 2024-25 was held under the Chairmanship of Chairman P&D Board Barrister Nabeel Ahmad Awan in which development schemes of Roads sector approved with an

estimated cost of Rs 11775.832 million. The approved schemes are as follows: Rehabilitation of PD Khan, Choa Saidan Shah from Chakwal to Choa Bypass Length 32.25 Km (31.70 Km), District Chakwal at the cost of Rs 2398.755 million. Rehabilitation of Jhang Gojra Road at the cost of Rs 1532.852 million. New Road from Dari Mero Ladan to Ghous Abad along Link No.1 Length=30.40 km at the

cost of Rs 633.986 million. Construction of New Roads & Repair of Roads in UCs 57 to 68 Tehsil Kamalla and UCs 69 to 85, Tehsil Pir Mahal, District T.T. Singh Length=26.00 Km at the cost of Rs 416.312 million. Rehabilitation of Samundhari Sahiwal Road length 50.90 km at the cost of Rs 2718.139 million. Dualization of Road from Chumian to Jambier More L-21 Km, District Kasur at the cost of Rs 2525.094 million. Rehabilitation of Road from Narowal to Zafarwal excluding City Rehabilitation of Road from Narowal to Zafarwal Portion Length=25 Km district Narowal at the cost of Rs 1550.694 million. Secretary P&D Board Dr Asif Tufail, Chief Economist Dr Nasir Iqbal Malik, Members P&D Board, Head of relevant depts and other senior representatives of the relevant provincial departments attended the meeting.

Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi receives warm welcome during NA visit

ISLAMABAD (Web Desk). The National Assembly on Friday resumed its session at the Parliament House with recitation of verses from Holy Quran by Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi Dr Salah bin Mohammad Al-Budair. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq chaired the session that was also witnessed by Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi Dr Salah bin Mohammad Al-Budair and Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, amid the thumping of desks by lawmakers, welcomed the visiting dignitary, saying that his presence is a matter of pride and spiritual guidance for us. He said Masjid Al-Nabawi holds a special place in the hearts of all the Muslims across the world. Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said that his presence is a matter of honour. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also welcomed the Imam of Masjid Al-Nabawi in parliament. Meanwhile, Leader of the opposition Omar Ayub said Imam of Masjid Al-Nabawi holds



the distinction of leading prayers attended by Muslims across the globe. He was appreciative of the excellent arrangements made by the Saudi government at the holiest sites. In his remarks, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the visit of Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi will give further impetus to Pakistan-Saudi relationship. He said Saudi Arabia is a friendly country of Pakistan and a leader of Islamic world. Mustafa Kamal of MQM said Saudi Arabia has always stood by Pakistan in difficult times. He highlighted the excellent arrangements made by Saudi Arabia for Hajj.

Punjab Cabinet approves the Purchase of 27 Modern Quadcopters for Surveillance and Counter-Terrorism Operations



Soon Times Correspondent Lahore. On the special instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab, the cabinet has approved the funds for the purchase of 27 modern Quadcopters for Surveillance and counter terrorism

operations in Punjab. The spokesman of Punjab Home Department said that the cabinet has approved the summary for the purchase of the latest Quadcopters. According to the details, an amount of Rs. 21 crore 40 lakh was approved for the purchase of these quadcopters. It is decided that 20 surveillance quadcopters will be handed over to the Police in Attock, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Layyah, DG Khan, Rajanpur and Rahim Yar Khan, while, 7 quadcopters capable of transferring and dropping payload will be purchased for Mianwali, DG Khan, Rajanpur and Rahim Yar Khan. These special Quadcopters can carry up to two mortar shells of 80mm and can hit the target at the same time. The home secretary Punjab Noor ul Amin Mengal has said that all the necessary resources are being provided to the law enforcement agencies for best possible results and these latest Quadcopters will help in operations in Kacha and border areas.

PDMA warns of urban flooding as Punjab braces for more rain starting today

Soon Times Correspondent Lahore. The Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued an alert for monsoon rains expected across the province from today until 12 August. According to a PDMA spokesperson, thunderstorms accompanied by rain are likely in several southern Punjab districts including Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, and Gujrat Divisions. In response to the anticipated weather conditions, the PDMA has directed relevant provincial administrations to remain on high alert. PDMA Director General Irfan Khattia highlighted that all concerned departments, including commissioners, deputy commissioners, WASA, the irrigation department, Rescue 1122, and civil defence,



have been instructed to finalise precautionary measures, particularly in light of the risk of urban flooding. The PDMA control room is monitoring the situation around the clock, and citizens have been urged to follow government guidelines to ensure safety. The public is advised to stay in secure locations, particularly avoiding old buildings, electric poles, and areas prone to lightning during thunderstorms.

Provincial Minister For Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora Visits Pastor Shaukat Ashiq's Home

Soon Times Correspondent Lahore. Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs, Ramesh Singh Arora, visited Pastor Shaukat Ashiq's home in the Chuhung area of Lahore upon his special invitation. A large number of the Christian community warmly welcomed him during his visit. As part of the reception, flower petals were showered upon the minister from rooftops, and he was garlanded by members of the Christian community. On this occasion, the Christian community expressed their gratitude to the minister



for presenting a historic budget for religious minorities and expressed hope that during his tenure, the sense of deprivation among religious minorities would be effectively addressed.

Referring to the Chief Minister of Punjab, Ramesh Singh Arora said, "The Chief Minister of Punjab has referred to religious minorities as the crown on his head." He further added, "Historic work is being done for religious minorities in the history of Punjab." The provincial minister announced, "For the first time, we will celebrate Minorities Day at a high level," and on August 11, the Punjab government will celebrate Minorities Day with full grandeur. He also mentioned that the "Minorities Development Fund has been increased.

Director Regional Campus AIOU Releases Update About Admissions

Soon Times Correspondent Chakwal: Madam Syeda Bushra, Regional Director AIOU Chakwal campus released a press briefing regarding fresh and continues students of AIOU. According to her admissions for Matric and Inter classes are opened. The last date of admissions is 5th September, 2024. Moreover, the Face to

face PH.D, M.PHIL, MS, BS, BSC (HONR), MBA and certificate courses are also opened till 20th August, 2024. She also added that public awareness Open Days programmes are also scheduled all over in the District Chakwal. For more information students can contact 0543553566, 0543553577 or they can visit Regional Office AIOU Chakwal campus.

BISE Sargodha Announces Results of Class IX Annual Examination 2024

Soon Times Correspondent Sargodha: Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Sargodha has announced the results of Class IX Annual Examination 2024. Commissioner and Chairman Education Board Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti pressed the computer button and made the results online. A total of 1 lakh 7 thousand 523 candidates participated in the examination. Out of them 47,288 candidates have secured more than 33%

marks. Thus, the success rate was 43.98%. According to the results, 91,139 regular candidates participated in the annual examination and 41,176 were declared successful. Thus the success rate is 45.18%. While 16,348 private candidates participated in the exam, out of them 6,112 were declared successful and the success rate was 37.30%. 57,249 boys participated in the exam, out of them 20,024 passed and the success rate was 34.98%. 50,274 female students participated in the

examination, out of them 27,264 were declared successful and the success rate was 54.25%. Commissioner and Chairman Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti congratulated the successful candidates and advised them to continue their studies with the same hard work and dedication. Director Colleges Sarfaraz Gujjar, Secretary Board Abul Hasan Naqvi and Controller of Examinations Riaz Qadeer Bhatti and other board officers participated in the event.

BYC sit-in ends after reaching agreement with govt

QUETTA: The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) and the government reached an agreement on Friday, bringing an end to the 11-day sit-ins across various parts of Balochistan. Following the negotiations, a committee has been established to oversee the implementation of all agreed-upon points. Once their demands are met, participants of the Gwadar sit-in are expected to proceed to Turbat in a rally today. Negotiations were led by Provincial Minister Zahoor Buledi, along with the Commissioner of Makran Division, the Deputy Commissioner of Gwadar, and the SSP. The BYC presented their demands, including the release of detained activists, the withdrawal of cases, and compensation for public losses. It was agreed that no force would be used against peaceful gatherings, and the Balochistan Home Department would issue a notification. Additionally, all roads in Gwadar and Makran will be reopened, and communication networks restored.



The Baloch Yakjehti Committee has announced plans to march from Gwadar to Turbat, where they will outline their future course of action. The protests began when convoys of demonstrators, demanding the recovery of missing persons, were prevented from attending the BYC meeting in Gwadar. Previous reports indicated that the protests had escalated into violence, resulting in clashes with security forces that left three protesters dead and at least 24 injured. Dr. Mahrang Baloch, a BYC leader, claimed that a large number of supporters were detained.

Provincial Local Govt Minister Inaugurates the Digital Payment System of MC

Soon Times Correspondent Sargodha: Provincial Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafique has inaugurated the Digital Payment System of Municipal Corporation MC Sargodha is the first local government of Punjab to achieve this milestone. In this regard, a function was organized in which Municipal Secretary Shakeel Ahmed Mian, members of Provincial Assembly Saifur

Sahi, Mian Ikramullah and others participated. In his address, Zeeshan Rafique said that the digitalization of MC's bills, taxes and fees collection will increase the revenue significantly. This will improve financial management and customers will not have to go round the office. Moreover, the digitalization of local bodies will eliminate corruption. Provincial Local Government Minister said that according to the vision

of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, steps are being taken to provide clean drinking water to the citizens and solve the sewage problems. Sargodha is included in the Dream 2 project of the Asian Development Bank, 27 billion rupees will be spent on the project, which will permanently solve the problems of water supply, sewage and waste management across the city. Efforts are being made to

complete all the paperwork within eight months and start the work. Commissioner and Administrator Municipal Corporation Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti said that unless the local government system is strengthened, the municipal problems of the people will not be solved. He said that now the customer will receive the bill on the mobile phone and the payment can also be made through-payment.



'No one deserves this': UK Muslims reel after far-right violence

LONDON
Noor Miah was a student when riots broke out in northern England in the summer of 2001, with angry young British South Asians clashing with police after a series of racist attacks and incidents. The northern town of Burnley was engulfed in the riots which began an hour away in Oldham, as the far-right stoked racial tensions and minority communities accused the police of failing to protect them. More than two decades later, Miah recalled that dark period as he tried to calm Muslim youths in Burnley after several Muslim gravestones in the local cemetery were defaced and far-right riots targeted mosques in nearby cities.



US, Qatar and Egypt push urgent talks with Israel and Hamas on Aug 15

CAIRO/WASHINGTON
Leaders of the United States, Egypt and Qatar on Thursday called on Israel and Hamas to meet for negotiations on Aug. 15 in order to finalise a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal. The three countries, which have been trying to mediate a deal, said in a joint statement the talks could take place in either Doha or Cairo. "A framework agreement is now on the table with only the details of implementation left to conclude," they said. "There is no further time to waste nor excuses from any party for further delay. It is time to release the hostages, begin the ceasefire, and implement this agreement." The leaders also offered to present "a final binding proposal" resolving the remaining issues. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli negotiators would be there. The aim, he said, was "to finalize the details and implement the framework



Ten killed, 35 hurt in Russian strike on supermarket in Ukraine's east

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Web Desk
A Russian missile strike hit a supermarket in the Ukrainian town of Kostiantynivka in the front-line Donetsk region on Friday, killing at least ten people and injuring 35 others, Ukrainian officials said. The strike caused a fire that had been put out, the interior minister said. Heavy black smoke clouds rising from the destroyed building could be seen in the images and videos posted by officials. "Russian terrorists hit an ordinary supermarket and a post office. There are people under the rubble," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X. Emergency services continued working out the rubble looking for survivors, he added. Regional Governor Vadym Filashkin initially said Russia used artillery but later said the attack with from an X-38 air-to-surface missile. Nova Poshta, Ukraine's largest private postal company, said its cargo office in the supermarket was damaged in the strike. "All our employees are alive. One colleague received a concussion - he is getting all the necessary help," the company said on X. Residential houses, shops and more than dozen cars were also damaged in the attack, according to the interior minister's post on Telegram. Kostiantynivka lies just about 13 kilometers from the active combat line in Ukraine's east. Kyiv-held parts of the Donetsk region regularly come under Russian shelling and air strikes. The region is one of the hottest areas of fighting as Russia targets areas in the direction of the strategic eastern logistics hub of Pokrovsk.

Russia says troops are battling to push Ukrainian forces back after cross border incursion in Kursk

KYIV, Ukraine
Russian troops are battling to push back Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region on the third day of one of the largest cross-border incursions of the war, the Russian Defense Ministry said Thursday. A ministry statement said the Russian military and border guards have blocked Ukrainian forces from pushing deeper into the region in southwestern Russia. It added that the army is attacking Ukrainian fighters trying to advance into the area from Ukraine's Sumy region. "Attempts by individual units to break through deep into the territory in the Kursk direction are being suppressed," the ministry said. Ukrainian troops had advanced as much as 15 kilometers (9 miles) into Russian territory, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. The data that hasn't been officially confirmed. Kyiv has not commented on the incursion. In a video address to the nation late Thursday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy did not mention the fighting in the Kursk region but emphasized that "Russia brought the war to our land, and it should feel what it has done." "Ukrainians know how to achieve their goals," Zelenskyy said, adding that he received three "productive reports, exactly the kind our country needs now" on Thursday from the commander of Ukraine's armed forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi.



Philippines, Vietnam hold first-ever joint coast guard exercise



MANILA (Reuters) - Crew of Philippine and Vietnamese vessels blasted a boat with water cannon and simulated a search and rescue on Friday, in the first joint exercises between coast guards of two countries that have faced off with Beijing in the South China Sea. Vietnam's 90-metre-long ship CSB 8002, which arrived at the port of Manila on Monday, joined the Philippine offshore patrol vessel BRP Gabriela Silang for simulated drills in firefighting, rescue and medical response. The exercises are the latest collaboration between countries that are locked in long-running disputes with Beijing over territory in the South China Sea, or concerned about freedom of navigation and activities of Chinese vessels in the key trade route. "Our exercise is more on the humanitarian side," Lawrence Roque, commanding officer of BRP Gabriela Silang, told reporters onboard. "We hope for more of these activities because the sea is large and many will need assistance from the coast guard." The drills with Vietnam came as the Philippines on Thursday completed two days of maritime exercises with the militaries of Australia, Canada, and the United States, the first involving the four countries, which Manila said was to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, which it asserts through a large deployment of coast guard in areas that include the exclusive economic zones of its neighbours. The China coast guard has been accused of aggression and of disrupting fisheries and energy activities of countries like Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, testing relations and raising concerns about escalations. China typically says its coast guard is acting professionally and lawfully to protect its territory from trespassers.

Top-ranked Korda suffers quadruple-bogey nightmare at Olympics



PARIS
Nelly Korda's Olympic golf title defence suffered a giant setback when the US world number one made a quadruple bogey late in her second round as two-time medalist Lydia Ko charged into contention. Unheralded Swiss player Morgane Metreaux took the halfway lead at Le Golf National after a spectacular front-nine of 28 in a six-under-par 66, taking her to eight-under for the tournament. China's Yin Ruoning is just one stroke behind after a bogey-free 65, while overnight leader Celine Boutier fell back with a four-over 76. Korda is six shots adrift in a tie for 12th place

after falling apart on the par-three 16th hole, when she looked poised to challenge for the lead. The American hit her tee shot into the lake protecting the green before dumping her effort from the drop zone into a bunker. Her shot from the sand, where her ball had plugged, flew over the pin to the back of the green and she three-putted from there to card a ruinous seven. "Those bunkers are really firm and when I tried to be a little aggressive with it, my ball just shot to the back of the green," Korda said. "Just a series of unfortunate events happened in a row."



USA escape Serbia, to face France for Olympic men's basketball gold

PARIS
The United States had to dig deep to erase a 17-point deficit to beat Nikola Jokic's Serbia 95-91 to keep their bid for a fifth straight Olympic men's basketball gold medal alive. Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry dazzled with 36 points and all-time NBA scoring leader LeBron James had a triple-double of 16 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for the Americans, who will meet hosts France in a repeat of the Tokyo Olympics final Saturday. France booked a return trip to the title game with a 73-69 victory over reigning World Cup champions Germany. The US team led by James is reckoned to be the most talented since the 1992 Dream Team led by Michael Jordan. But it took a massive fourth-quarter effort to finally subdue the Serbians, who led most of the night and took a 76-63 advantage into the final period. "Big-time win for us," James said. "We knew we were going to be challenged, we knew it was going to be the toughest game up to date, but it was a true total effort." Curry rattled in a three-pointer with 2:24 remaining to give the United States their first lead since the first quarter at 87-86. "Knocking down a big shot like that, you live for those moments," said Curry, who had struggled to find his shooting touch in his first Olympics. "(I) haven't shot the ball well the whole tournament," he said. "But it doesn't waiver your confidence to meet the moment." James followed with a driving layup. Curry grabbed a steal and drove for a basket that pushed the US lead to five and the Americans held on. Three-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic finished with 17 points and 11 assists for Serbia, who had 20 points from a brilliant Bogdan Bogdanovic. Curry drilled five three-pointers on the way to 17 first-quarter points. But Serbia combined for five three-pointers themselves and led 31-23 after the first and continued to pour it on.

Showbiz stars heap praise on Arshad Nadeem for winning gold in Paris Olympics



LAHORE
Pakistani showbiz stars have also expressed jubilation over the success of Arshad Nadeem in the Paris Olympics. Arshad Nadeem won gold in the Javelin and ended his country long wait for the Olympic medal. He also broke the record for throwing the Javelin at the distance of 92.97 meters. Not only did his monstrous throw receive massive praise from across the world but he also rewrote the record in the 118 years of Olympics. Actors Ayeza Khan and Hania Amir extolled the Pakistani hero for his massive success while Fahd Mustafa and Sajal Ali also did the same.

'Our way of showing resistance': Olympians raise Palestinian flag at Paris Games

PARIS
Ten months into a brutal war that has killed tens of thousands of people in Gaza, Palestinian athletes are aiming for a lot more than medals at the Paris Olympics, hoping to shed light on the suffering of Gazans as they fly the colours of a stateless people scattered across the globe. Yazan al-Bawwab's first and only race of the Games lasted less than a minute - long enough to have the colours of the Palestinian Territories projected onto his lane at the Olympic pool near Paris. It was a fleeting appearance for both flag and athlete, but to the 24-year-old swimmer, it meant the world. "France, like many European countries, still doesn't see Palestine as a country," he told FRANCE 24. "But we have a lane here at the Paris Olympics." A two-time Olympian, al-Bawwab is one of eight athletes representing Palestine at the Games, competing in such diverse sports as boxing, judo, athletics and taekwondo. Most were born outside the



Palestinian Territories but remain deeply tied to their parents' and grandparents' homeland. "We're 15 million Palestinians scattered around the world. It's just one who's able to give a voice to a people who are not heard," said al-Bawwab, the son of a Palestinian refugee who was born in Saudi Arabia and raised in Dubai. "It's an honour to raise my flag in a country that does not recognise Palestine," added the Palestinian flagbearer, who swam with a Palestinian flag tattooed on his chest. "It's my way of showing resistance."