

## CHURCH BURNING Troops guard Pakistani Christians

REUTERS, Lahore

Paramilitary troops have cordoned off a Christian settlement in eastern Pakistan where a Muslim mob vandalised and torched several churches and scores of houses after two men living there were accused of desecrating the holy Quran, police and witnesses said yesterday.

The attack took place in Jaranwala in the industrial district of Faisalabad on Wednesday, and continued for more than 10 hours without any intervention by police who were at the scene, residents and community leaders said. Police denied the accusation, saying security forces had prevented an even worse situation.

Police had arrested over 100 suspected rioters, the government statement said, adding that an inquiry has been ordered into the incident.



A firefighter plane discharges water over a forest fire in La Esperanza on the island of Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain yesterday. The blaze has destroyed more than 2,600 hectares, affecting some 7,600 people, many of whom were evacuated. PHOTO: REUTERS

## AFGHANISTAN Taliban 'ban' political parties

DAWN ONLINE

The Afghan Taliban on Wednesday said there was a complete ban on activities of political parties in Afghanistan.

"Political parties' activities have been completely stopped in the country because neither do these parties have any standing in Sharia, any place in Sharia nor are any national interests attached to these parties or the nation liked them," Interim Minister for Justice, Shaikh Maulavi Abdul Hakeem Sharaf said while presenting annual report of his ministry in Kabul, according to a statement issued by the Afghan Taliban's media outlet.

The statement demonstrates that Afghan Taliban may continue to monopolise power as a movement.

It wasn't clear when the ban was imposed, but the Afghan Taliban have been resisting international pressure to form a more inclusive government, saying their "interim government" had representatives from all ethnicities and tribes.

The Afghan Taliban have been opposed to including what they call "discredited and puppet politicians" from the previous dispensation.

## Ukraine claims gains on southeastern front

Fighting rages in east; Kyiv says it has no hope of using F-16 fighter jets this year

REUTERS, Kyiv

The Ukrainian military yesterday claimed more success in its counter-offensive against Russian forces on the southeastern front, a day after announcing the liberation of a village that had served as a Russian stronghold.

The military said Ukraine had made progress to the south of Urozhaine, a village in Donetsk region that Kyiv said on yesterday it had retaken as it tries to build momentum for a southward push into occupied areas towards the Sea of Azov.

"In the direction south of Urozhaine they (Ukrainian troops) had success," military spokesman Andriy Kovaliov said on national television. He gave no more details.

Urozhaine was the first village Kyiv said it had retaken since July 27, a stretch of time that signalled the challenge Kyiv faces in advancing through heavily mined Russian defensive lines without powerful air support. It lies about 100 km (60 miles) west of the Russian-held city of Donetsk.

Vladimir Rogov, a Russian-installed official in parts of Zaporizhzhia controlled by Moscow, said Urozhaine and the neighbouring village of Staromaiorske were not under Ukrainian control.

Rogov, writing on Telegram, said Russian forces had halted a Ukrainian offensive towards the village of Robotyne in Zaporizhzhia region, to the west of Urozhaine, yesterday morning.

Ukraine's Kovaliov also reported fierce fighting in the northeastern Kharkiv region, and around an eastern village not far from Bakhmut, the city occupied by Russian forces in May after a bloody months-long struggle.

"The enemy conducted unsuccessful offensive actions in the area of Senkivka in Kharkiv region and

Bohdanivka in Donetsk. There are serious battles here," he said.

"In the Bakhmut direction, defensive forces (Ukraine) continue to conduct offensive actions to the south of Bakhmut."

A Ukrainian general said on Wednesday that Russia was attacking towards Kupiansk, a town in Kharkiv region, but Kovaliov said Ukraine was holding them back, as well as Russian assaults to Bakhmut's north and near the town of Lyman.

Russia controls nearly a fifth of Ukraine, including the peninsula of Crimea, most of Luhansk region and large tracts of the regions of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.



Meanwhile, air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat told Ukrainian television late on Wednesday that Ukraine will not be able to operate US-built F-16 fighter jets this coming autumn and winter.

"It's already obvious we won't be able to defend Ukraine with F-16 fighter jets during this autumn and winter," Ihnat told a joint

teletalk broadcast by Ukrainian channels. Ukraine has repeatedly called its Western allies to supply the country with F-16s, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said would be a signal that Russia's invasion would end in defeat.

US President Joe Biden endorsed training programmes for Ukrainian pilots on F-16s in May but no timing for the supply of war planes has been given so far.

In a separate development, the US yesterday imposed sanctions on four Russian individuals it accused of being involved in the 2020 poisoning of now jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The US Treasury Department in a statement said the four hit with sanctions are linked to Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB).

## Violence against aid workers shows no respite

Says UN as 62 died  
this year

AFP, United Nations

A total of 62 humanitarian aid workers have died this year around the world, the United Nations said Thursday as it prepared to mark 20 years since a devastating attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

The UN observes World Humanitarian Day on August 19 each year as it remembers the suicide bombing, which claimed 22 lives, including that of Sergio Vieira de Mello, then the UN high commissioner for human rights and the head of the UN mission in that country.

Besides the 62 deaths this year in the world's conflict zones, another 84 aid workers were wounded and 34 were kidnapped, according to the Aid Worker Security Database, compiled by the consulting firm Humanitarian Outcomes. The fatality figure for all of 2022 was 116.

For several years running South Sudan has been the world's most dangerous place for aid workers. As of August 10, there had been 40 attacks on humanitarian staffers there with 22 lives lost, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

## Pakistan appoints new caretaker cabinet

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan swore in a caretaker cabinet under interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in Islamabad yesterday, with fresh elections due to be held in November or later.

The government's top priority is economic stabilisation, with the \$350 billion economy on a narrow recovery path after getting a last minute \$3 billion bailout deal with the IMF, averting a sovereign debt default.

Kakar himself was sworn in on Monday after President Arif Alvi dissolved parliament last week on the advice of outgoing prime minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Kakar yesterday appointed the new cabinet, which was later sworn in by Alvi.

In the interim cabinet, former central bank chief Shamsad Akhtar was appointed finance minister, and Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, Jalil Abbas Jilani, was named foreign minister, the new information minister Murtaza Solangi said.

Other names in the cabinet include former provincial minister Sarfaraz Bugti as interior minister and Mishaal Malik, the wife of jailed Kashmiri Leader Yaseen Malik, as Minister for Human Rights.

Under Pakistan's constitution, a neutral caretaker government will oversee elections that must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of parliament's lower house, which in this case means early November.

However, the ballot may be delayed as the Election Commission has to draw new boundaries for hundreds of federal and provincial constituencies. Later yesterday, the election commission said new constituencies would be finalised by December 14, state television reported.

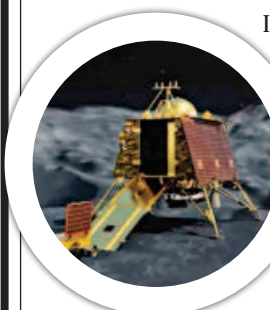
## Man arrested after Eiffel Tower jump

AFP, Paris

A man was arrested in Paris yesterday after jumping off the Eiffel Tower with a parachute, police and the monument's operator said. The man, an experienced climber, entered the tower's perimeter shortly after 5.00 am, well before its official opening. He was quickly detected by guards, according to the site's operator Sete, but still managed to get to the top before anybody could stop him, carrying the parachute in a backpack. Once he got near the top of the 330-metre-high structure, he jumped. The man landed in a nearby stadium where he was arrested for endangering the lives of others. "This kind of irresponsible action puts people working at or below the tower in danger," Sete said in a statement.

## Indian lunar lander splits from propulsion module

AFP, New Delhi



India's latest space mission completed a key step in the country's second attempt at a lunar landing, with its Moon module separating from its propulsion section yesterday. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) confirmed that the lander module of the Chandrayaan-3, which means "Mooncraft" in Sanskrit, had "successfully separated" from the propulsion module six days ahead of a planned landing slated for August 23. "Thanks for the ride, mate!" ISRO said. It also said the propulsion module now "continues its journey in the current orbit for months/years" as part of efforts to study exoplanets.

## THAI POST-POLLS DEADLOCK

## Army-linked party of outgoing PM joins new coalition

AFP, Bangkok

The military-backed party of Thailand's outgoing prime minister and former coup leader said yesterday it will join an opposition-led coalition, as the kingdom's post-election deadlock appears to be nearing an end.

The United Thai Nation (UTN) party said it would add its 36 seats to the multi-party partnership formed by Pheu Thai, with a vote to choose a new premier expected on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Charan as UTN's lead candidate in the May election, less than a decade after he seized power in a coup that ousted a democratically elected Pheu Thai government.

"We want the country to move forward so UTN will join the Pheu Thai government," party spokesman Akaradej Wongpitakroj told reporters after talks.

"UTN is ready to support a candidate from PT by voting for the candidate on August 22."

Voters roundly rejected army-linked parties at the ballot box, with the reformist Move Forward Party riding support from young and urban Thais yearning for change to win most seats.

But MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat's bid to become prime minister was thwarted by conservative senators opposed to his determination to reform royal insult laws and tackle big business monopolies. Pheu Thai, the party associated with exiled former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, finished second in the polls and has taken the lead in coalition efforts since MFP dropped out.



Manipur Police and Gurkha Regiment personnel patrol in the periphery of Imphal East area in India's north-eastern Manipur state yesterday, during ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur. In a major mobilisation, the CBI on Wednesday deputed 53 officers, including 29 women, drawn from its units across the country to probe Manipur violence cases, officials said. PHOTO: AFP

## WEST BANK RAID

## Palestinian man shot dead by Israeli army

REUTERS, Jenin

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian gunman during a raid that set off clashes in the flashpoint town of Jenin in the occupied West Bank, medical officials and militant groups said.

The Palestinian health ministry said one of its staff, a woman, was also seriously injured.

The dead 32-year-old was a senior operative with Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed wing of President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement, according to relatives.

Israel's military said soldiers came under fire, and shot back, during a mission to arrest suspected members of the Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad faction. A gun and a dozen bombs were also captured in the operation, during which a soldier was lightly wounded, the military statement said.