

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## UAE, China to hold first joint air drill



AA – China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will conduct their first joint military drill next month in China's northwestern Xinjiang province, the Chinese Defense Ministry said on Monday.

"This is the first joint training between both air forces, aiming to deepen pragmatic exchanges and cooperation between the two militaries and enhance mutual understanding and trust," it added.

## Death toll from Pakistan's suicide bombing rises



AL JAZEERA – The death toll from a massive suicide bombing that targeted an election rally for a pro-Taliban Muslim leader has risen to 54, as Pakistan held funerals and the government promised to hunt down those behind the attack. While no one immediately claimed responsibility for Sunday's bombing, which also wounded nearly 200 people, police said their initial investigation suggested that the ISIL (ISIS) regional affiliate could be responsible.

## China curbs exports of drone equipment



REUTERS – China on Monday announced export controls on some drones and drone-related equipment, saying it wanted to safeguard "national security and interests" amid escalating tension with the United States over access to technology.

The restrictions on equipment including some drone engines, lasers, communication equipment, and anti-drone systems would take effect on September 1, the commerce ministry said. The controls would also affect some consumer drones.

## Kremlin asks for aims of Ukraine talks in Saudi Arabia



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (front-L) shakes hand with Crown Prince of Kuwait Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during a meeting of the Arab League in Jeddah on May 19, 2023.  
● AMERICAN PHOTO ARCHIVE

The Kremlin said on Monday it needed to find out the purpose of upcoming talks reportedly planned in Saudi Arabia about the war in Ukraine.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported on Saturday

that Saudi Arabia would invite Western states, Ukraine, and major developing countries to the talks. The paper said Kyiv and Western countries hoped that the talks, which would exclude Russia, can lead

to international backing for peace terms favoring Ukraine, Reuters wrote. Asked about the WSJ report, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "Of course, Russia will follow this meeting. We need to understand

what goals are set and what will be discussed. Any attempt to promote a peaceful settlement deserves a positive evaluation." However, Peskov also restated Moscow's position that it currently saw no grounds

for peace talks with Kyiv. "The Kyiv regime does not want and cannot want peace, as long as it is used exclusively as a tool in the war of the collective West with Russia," he said on a call with reporters.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has previously expressed a readiness to mediate in the conflict.

President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that an African initiative — which envisages confidence-building measures followed by a cessation of hostilities — could be a basis for peace in Ukraine but that Ukrainian attacks on Russia made this very hard to realize.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has rejected the idea of a ceasefire now that would leave Russia in control of nearly a fifth of his country and give its forces time to regroup after 17 grinding months of war.

## Denmark, Sweden seek to de-escalate as more Qur'ans are burned

More Qur'an burnings took place in Sweden and Denmark on Monday as the governments of the two Nordic countries said they were examining ways to legally limit such acts in a bid to de-escalate growing tensions with several Muslim countries. Denmark and Sweden have seen several protests in recent weeks where copies of the Qur'an have been burned, or otherwise damaged, prompting outrage in Muslim countries, which have demanded the Nordic governments put a stop to the desecrations, according to Reuters.

The Danish government said on Sunday it would seek to find a "legal tool" that could enable authorities to intervene in such protests, if deemed to entail "significant

negative consequences for Denmark, not least with regard to security". "The fact that we are signalling both in Denmark and abroad that we are working on it will hopefully help de-escalate the problems we are facing," Rasmussen told journalists following a meeting with foreign policy speakers of parliament on Monday. "It is not because we feel pressured to do so, but it is our political analysis that it is in the best interest of all of us," Rasmussen said, adding: "We shouldn't just sit and wait for this to explode."

Meanwhile, desecration continues. Even so, Qur'an burnings took place in both countries on Monday. In Stockholm, an Iraqi

refugee behind several protests in recent weeks appeared to burn a copy of the Qur'an outside the Swedish parliament. In Denmark, anti-Muslim protesters burned the Qur'an outside the Saudi Arabian embassy in Copenhagen, with several more planned for later in the day. The Nordic countries have deplored the burnings of the Qur'an but claim that they cannot prevent it under constitutional laws protecting freedom of speech. However, both governments have now said they are considering legal changes that would allow authorities to prevent further desecrations in special situations. The Swedish government said this month it is examining a similar

solution but right-wing parties in both countries have denounced the initiatives, with some saying freedom of speech cannot be compromised. Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said on Monday that he had sent letters to all 57 countries in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to explain Sweden's right to assembly and

condemned Islamophobic acts. OIC foreign ministers will convene in an extraordinary session on Monday to discuss the recent developments.

Furious protesters burn the Danish and Swedish flags outside the Swedish Embassy in London.  
● SHUTTERSTOCK

Karbala's message resonates with Hindus too: *Indian scholar*

Karbala's enduring message of resisting tyranny strikes a chord not only with Indian Muslims but also with Hindus and followers of other faiths, says an Indian professor. Professor Balram Shukla, the director of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Tehran, made the remarks in an interview on Press TV's weekly show "The Subcontinent", which

aired on Friday. Shukla called Imam Hussein (PBUH) "the epitome of the struggle against tyranny and untruthfulness," saying he is revered by people of different religious denominations including Hindus. "India is a syncretism of all cultures that you can find on the surface of Earth. A variety of cultures live together in peace. And in

this colorful India, one of the brightest colors, I think, is that of Muharram and that of Imam Hussein (PBUH)," Shukla said. "In all parts of India, we find that Muharram is observed, mourning is observed, and people find themselves close to the imam and there're many localized traditions that are not visible even in Iran or other parts of the world."

Shukla, a Hindu, also spoke about his personal experience of observing Muharram commemorations, which are part of the rich cultural heritage of India and an example of interfaith harmony. "I'm from the city of Gorakhpur in the (northern Indian) state of Uttar Pradesh, and there is an Imambara (Hosseinayah). Imambara is a specific place for mourn-

ing Imam Hussein's (PBUH) martyrdom," he stated, adding that people of all religions go there and "mourn for the imam, observe the mourning, and watch ta'zieh (a recreation of the scenes of Karbala)." He said Indian people from various religious backgrounds understand the message of Karbala, which is about fighting injustice and standing on the right side of history. The Indian cultural house director said that at various places in mainland India, Hindu families have been holding ta'zieh processions for hundreds of years, believing that Imam Hussein (PBUH) is an embodiment of piety, courage, and sacrifice, and someone who belongs to the whole of mankind. "Karbala was an event that could transcend localities,

geographies, ethnicities, and even religions including Islam. This is not something exclusive to Muslims. All human beings of each and every ethnicity find themselves close to the imam because of the special message that Karbala conveys," he said. "Karbala sends the message that even if you seem to be small, even if you seem to be weak, you should not quit being on the side of truth and ultimately, you will triumph." On why Imam Hussein (PBUH) is so popular in the Hindu-majority South Asian country, he said the Indian people's love for Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) grandson has its roots in India's history and its eastern culture that has been intertwined with the Islamic culture for centuries.



A clan of Hindus known as "Hussaini Brahmins" mourn the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Shia Imam, in India during the Ashura.  
● ALAMY