





# Govt plans to include health, hygiene in curricula: Dr Nadeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Monday said that the government had planned to include health, hygiene, and nutrition in the curricula to create awareness among people from the childhood.

He was addressing a women convention on 'Family Planning and Population', which was organized by the Population Programme Wing (PPW) of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination.

The minister said that the main objective of the convention was to raise the awareness and knowledge of women, particularly the rural women on population issues and family planning.

He said that the population of Pakistan was growing at an alarmingly high growth rate, with addition of around 6.1 million new individuals every year. "This is more than the

size of the total population of countries like Singapore, Denmark and Norway," he added. "It means every year we are adding the population more than the Denmark's population in Pakistan."

He said, "When population is growing we need to increase the resources. If we cannot rapidly increase our resources, we should focus on stabilization and management of our population at the family, community and country level and it is a huge pressure on our resources and economy."

He suggested to integrate the health, population and nutrition at the federal and provincial levels which would synergize and complement each other. He quoted the example of Iran where family is taken as a unit.

He said that health as well as the family planning were the fundamental hu-

man rights. "There is a direct link between female status and development. Women can contribute in the development through literate, educated, well aware and empowered females."

He said that at the policy level, the number of lady health workers would be increased to 150,000. "We will integrate polio workers and volunteers, which are our asset into LHWs (lady health workers) to address the uncovered areas."

He said that the government would ensure due respect and dignity for the hospital staff, nurses, midwives, doctors and community workers.

He suggested that there should be a dashboard at the district, provincial and federal levels showing real time information on health, population and family planning to indicate as to where we are going.



ISLAMABAD: Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and Director China Cultural Center in Pakistan Zhang Heqing wrote Long Live Pak-china Friendship on charts during the celebrations of 74th anniversary of Founding of the People's Republic of China - Celebrating a Decade of CPEC and BRI at local hotel in Federal Capital.

# Italian Embassy hosts immersive digital art exhibition

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Italian Embassy in Pakistan on Monday organized an immersive digital art exhibition, bringing an innovative art form to the Pakistani audience. Speaking on the occasion, Italian Ambassador Andrea Ferrarese expressed his pride in presenting the unique showcase of digital art to the public, highlighting its versatility and wide range of possibilities.

The ambassador acknowledged the artwork of Stefano Fake, one of Italy's celebrated digital artists. He praised Italy's capacity to blend historical heritage with new and creative arts, dispelling the notion that the country was solely associated with its past. Stefano Fake, in his address, delved into the journey of digital art, which he began nearly 30 years ago.

He described his transition from traditional art to digital tools in 1997, culminating in the establishment of his studio in 2001, dedicated to creating immersive

art experiences. Fake underlined that every era had its unique artistic tools, and digital art represented the current period's creative expression. He said, "The purpose of art is, after all, to create original and imaginative forms of aesthetic expression shared with a community through experiences and events."

Stefano Fake's early work in this field was initially met with skepticism, often being associated with music or youth-centric events. However, over time, digital art gained recognition and acceptance. His exhibitions now span the globe, from Germany to Colombia, and even recent showcases in Berlin and Shanghai. This transformation reflects the growing appreciation for new media art worldwide.

One of Fake's groundbreaking approaches was to immerse audiences in a digital environment, using video projection to transform spaces and even people.

# Umrah draw held at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Employees Welfare Association (EWA) of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) organised an Umrah draw in the university's auditorium the other day.

Six members from grade 2 to 16 including Irfan Ahmed, Farman Ali, Iram Nazli, Mumtaz Alam, Riasat Hussain and Muhammad Ansar, while 5 members from grade 17 to 21 including Shah Farrukh, Zahida Parveen, Shafique Ahmed, Aftab Ahmed and Naveed Sultana were among the lucky members whose name was balloted and they will perform umrah this year.

The ceremony was presided over by Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, while Registrar, Raja Umar Younis, Chairman, Umrah Committee, Syed Zia Hussain Naqvi, President EWA Yasir Mehmood and other representatives participated in the event. The VC and the Registrar congratulated all the lucky winners.

Dr. Nasir Mahmood advised them to go to Madinah and offer special prayers for the development and prosperity of the country and the university in particular.



ISLAMABAD: Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Andrea Ferrarese and his spouse Albana Ferrarese posing for group photo along with participants after an event by "fake Factory" at local hotel in Federal Capital.

# Four high-profile absconders apprehended for serious crimes

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police successfully detained four high-profile absconders involved in serious criminal activities, police said on Monday.

As per the directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, senior police officials were assigned specific tasks to ensure the apprehension of proclaimed offenders and absconders engaged in severe criminal activities.

In adherence to these orders, the police teams

from Karachi Company, Golra, Noon, and Lohi Bher police stations collaborated to apprehend the four high-profile absconders associated with serious crimes.

The ICCPO, emphasized that the police were committed to eliminating crimes from the city, with strict actions planned for those involved in heinous crimes and illegal activities.

Ensuring the safety of citizens and their property remained the topmost priority for the Islamabad Capital Police, he emphasized.

# IESCO recovers over Rs 401 mln from 26,399 defaulters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has so far recovered over Rs 401 million from 26,399 defaulters during the ongoing drive against power theft and recovery across all the circles of the company.

According to an IESCO official, the Company teams on Monday recovered over Rs 1.4 million from 130 running defaulters and Rs 1.9 million from dead defaulters, besides removing meters and transformers of defaulters.

The official said the drive would continue vigorously till complete elimination of power theft and recovery from the defaulters.

He urged the consumers to pay their bills timely.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan presenting a shield to UNFPA Country Director Dr. Luay Shabaneh at All Pakistan Women Convention on Family Planning and Population Management.

# HEC explores opportunities for students, faculty in WBAF Financial Inclusion Programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan held here Monday a meeting with Executive Chairman World Business Angel Forum (WBAF), Mr. Babarys Altuntas to explore opportunities for students and faculty under the WBAF Financial Inclusion Programme.

Chaired by Chairman HEC Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, the meeting was attended by Vice Chancellors/Pro-Vice Chancellors of leading public sector universities including MNS

University of Agriculture Multan, National Textile University Faisalabad, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Institute of Management Sciences Peshawar, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Dow University of Health Sciences Karachi, National University of Science & Technology Islamabad.

CEO IGNITE Mr. Asim Hussain, Director General R&I HEC Hazrat

Bilal, Director R&I HEC Ms. Noshaba Awaiz, and representatives of universities' Business Incubation Centres, also attended the meeting.

The meeting held in continuation of the recent collaboration established between HEC and WBAF, in March 2023 on the sidelines of the 5th Vice Chancellors Forum. WBAF, an international organization, aims to ease access to finance for start-ups for generating jobs in the world economy.

# AC conducts massive crackdown on encroachers, violators of polythene ban

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a massive crackdown on encroachers, beggars, and violators of the polythene ban, the Assistant Commissioner Secretariat Islamabad Aneel Saeed visited different areas of the Secretariat Sub-Division and conducted price checks, inspected the unauthorized use of polythene bags and overall cleanliness, and took action against violators in accordance with the law.

Four encroachers were arrested and transferred to the police station, and their goods were seized. Thirty-six professional beggars were also arrested from different areas of Islamabad, ICT spokesman said on Monday.

He also issued a warning on the unauthorized use of open spaces, instructions were issued for immediate registration with the (MCI / DMA) under the law.

# ITA announces 10% reduction in transport fares

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Transport Authority (ITA), in a bid to provide relief to commuters, on Monday announced 10% reduction in transport fares, both for inter-city and intra-city routes.

The decision was to the effect taken in a meeting held on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, following the reduction in the price of petroleum products by the government.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Waseem Ajmal announces bonus for teachers and head-teachers The Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training hosted head teachers and teachers from 7 FDE schools today.

# Virtual University organized All Pakistan Integration camp

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Virtual University of Pakistan commenced its highly anticipated Student Integration Camp 2023 in collaboration with the Pakistan Boys Scout Association.

This exciting event was organized at the Headquarters of Pakistan Boys Scouting Association Islamabad. More than 300 students gathered for the event from all provinces of Pakistan including GB and Azad Kashmir for a memorable 5-day experience.

The Student Integration Camp offered a wide array of activities, including camping, hiking, archery, first aid training, and captivating bonfire. This unique camp not only provided students with an opportunity to connect with peers from various backgrounds but also enables them to forge connections that can be invaluable for both professional networking and personal development. To promote healthy lifestyle hiking walk along with visit to Pakistan

Monument was organised by VU for their campers.

The closing ceremony of the Student Integration Camp took place at the National Headquarters of PBSA in Islamabad.

The ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Mr. Muhammad Junaid Jalil Khan Director General Pakistan Customs, Mr. Sohail Tajik, Deputy Director General Anti Narcotics Force Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem Bhatti, Rector of the Virtual University of Pakistan, and Mr. Sarfaraz Qamar Doha, the Chief Commissioner of PBSA. During the ceremony, Registrar VU Prof. Dr. Mohsin Javed shared his insights about the significance of the student integration camp for VU students.

Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem Bhatti emphasized the importance of Scouting and its profound impact on our student in recognition of his invaluable support in organizing this remarkable event for our student community, providing all the necessary assistance required for its success.

# IRSA releases 99,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 99,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 69,000 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1528.93 feet and was 130.93 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 39,300 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1212.90 feet, which was 162.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 8,100 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 60,400, 57,900, 50,900 and 20,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

# Prominent persons call on Jamal Shah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent arts and academia figures here on Monday met with Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah at the Culture Division to discuss cultural preservation and peace, exploring academic partnerships to empower youth creatively, concluding with a friendly gathering.

Conversations also revolved around plans to establish academic connections with periphery universities to empower youth creatively, said a press release issued here.

The meeting included attendees such as film director Sajjad Ahmed, Prof. Dr. Mansoor Ahmed Kundi, who previously served as the VC of both Gomal University and Bahauddin Zakariya University, Former ED HEC, Islamabad, and Sarfaraz Ali Korejo, who holds the position of Executive Director of Students Advancement Fund Endowment (SAFE) at Shah Abdul Latif

University, and is the Founder of the Pak-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN) Sukkur Chapter, among others who met with the minister.

In the meeting, they conveyed their best wishes to the minister.

During meeting, they talked about common areas of interest and matters concerning the promotion and preservation of the country's artistic and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, they had a detailed discussion about establishing academic and institutional connections with universities in Pakistan's periphery, including Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur. The aim is to empower and involve our dynamic youth in creative endeavors.

The minister emphasized that promoting the national heritage and culture among the people is key to preventing societal issues such as hatred and intolerance, leading to peace and stability.



ISLAMABAD: Workers of Jamat-e-Islami (Women wing) hold banners and placards during "Free Palestine Rally" in City.

# Competent officers should be transferred to Operations division; ICCPO

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: According to the details, the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan held an important meeting at Central Police Officer, a public relations officer said.

He said that, during the meeting, the ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan assessed the performance of all divisions and issued directives to improve their performance further. Senior police officers from all divisions of Islamabad Capital Police were present at the occasion.

The meeting emphasized the effective use of

the ICT-15 application by all officers and officials, effectively in fulfilling their official duties. Directives were given to strengthen the security of all important government offices and installations.

Special directions were issued to SSP Operations, to improve the standard and effectiveness of Operations division by appointing officers skilled in investigation matters.

Those police officers and officials who have been suspended should not be sent for training courses. Directions were also given to reduce delays in case processing due to SOPs.

# Experts call for joint efforts to make Pakistan a food secure country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Dr Abid Qaiyum Sulteri on Monday said that this year's World Food Day theme is "Safe Food Today for a Healthy Tomorrow", which meant that only the safe and nutritious food could guarantee a healthy future. In his message on the World Food Day 2023 here, Dr Sulteri called upon the

government, private sector, civil society and academia to work together to give top priority to make Pakistan a food secure country and bring an end to this crisis especially in vulnerable districts of the country.

He stressed the need to invest in long-term initiatives such as Benazir Income Support Programme that provide the poor, vulnerable and needy people with enough food to eat.



ISLAMABAD: Teachers are shouting slogans during protest outside National Press Club as More than 300 teachers working in Federal Capital's schools under wedlock have appealed to President Dr Arif Alvi to sign the much-awaited legislation entitled "Protection of Family Life and Wedlock Bill 2023" which was passed by both Houses of the Parliament, the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan.

# Secretary education announces bonus for teachers and head-teachers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training on Monday hosted head teachers and teachers from seven schools working under Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) here on Monday.

On the occasion, the Secretary also announced a one-month bonus salary for the teachers and head-teachers present, as well as a one-time grant of Rs 100,000 for each of the seven schools to be used at the discretion of the head-teacher.

As part of the Ministry's STEAM Pakistan program, the head teachers and the program's focal persons were invited to tea to celebrate these schools' commitment to improving the learning experience of their students.

"From the establishment of STEAM Clubs, organising Safer sessions, encouraging students to conduct STEAM demonstrations, these schools have shown how we can transform schools just through committed teachers and head teachers."



ISLAMABAD: Director General Pakistan Customs, Mr. Muhammad Junaid Jalil Khan and Deputy Director General Anti Narcotics Force Pakistan Mr. Sohail Tajik, honored with souvenirs by Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem Bhatti, Rector of Virtual University of Pakistan, at the closing ceremony of the VU's student integration camp.



## CM Punjab orders reduction in commodity prices and transport fare following petrol price cut

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Acting upon the special directives of Punjab's Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, a decision has been made to promptly pass on the benefits of significant reduction in petroleum prices directly to the people of Punjab.

In a pivotal meeting convened at the Chief Minister's Office and presided over by Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, a deadline of 48 hours was set for

implementing price reductions. Additionally, the task of reducing transport fares by 10% was assigned, aligning them proportionally with the lowered petroleum prices.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi instructed the Provincial Transport Minister and Transport Secretary to urgently engage with transporters. Similarly, the Provincial Ministers for Industry and Agriculture, SM Tanvir was entrusted with liaising with Ghee, flour and other

relevant associations. Furthermore, agriculture secretary, commissioners, and deputy commissioners were entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing reductions in the prices of essential commodities. Chief Secretary will conduct regular meetings with Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners to assess the progress of price reduction measures.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi issued directives to Price Control

Magistrates and Price Control Committees, urging them to actively contribute to providing relief to the public. He emphasized the necessity of a relentless crackdown on hoarders, ensuring that the benefits of the reduced petroleum prices are equitably distributed among the populace. It was underscored that the historic relief extended by the government through the reduction of petroleum prices must directly benefit the public.



PESHAWAR: A combine delegation of Academia and Business Community meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.



KARACHI: Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Mehmet Pacaci handing over a memento to Sindh Caretaker Minister for Health Dr. Saad Khalid Niaz during the inauguration ceremony of an Operation Theatre (Operating Room) renovated and equipped by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) at NICH.

## Turkish Ambassador, British HC call on Sindh Governor

KARACHI (APP): Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Mehmet Pacaci called on Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House on Monday.

They discussed Pakistan and Turkiye relations, the exchange of delegations in various fields, investment opportunities and other issues of mutual interests.

Governor Tessori said that Pakistan and Turkiye were two nations but one soul.

He said that Turkiye and Pakistan had brotherly relations, rooted in history.

The Turkish Ambassador visited the site of Bell of Hope and appreciated Governor's initiative.

He also witnessed articles, used by Father of the Nation Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Meanwhile British High Commissioner (HC) to Pakistan Jane Marriot called on Sindh Governor Moammed Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House on Monday.

They discussed economic relations between Pakistan and Britain, enhanced cooperation in the field of education, investment opportunities in the Sindh province and other issues of mutual interests.

Deputy High Commissioner of Britain Sara Mooney was also present on the occasion.

The Governor said the province offered good opportunities of investment and British investors could invest in the province. The High Commissioner visited the site of Bell of Hope and appreciated the Governor's initiative.

## Trying to change things in health sector: Health Minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Health Dr Saad Khalid Niaz has said that they were trying to change things in the health sector during a short period of time.

He said that they were working on 'Insurance' and he also discussed it when he visited Turkiye.

While addressing the inauguration ceremony of an Operation Theatre (Operating Room) renovated and equipped by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) at the National Institute of Child Health (NICH), also attended by

Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Caretaker Minister Dr. Saad Niaz said, 'Operation Theatre is a good addition to NICH.'

He thanked Turkiye and said that she was a real brother. Dr. Niaz said that Turkiye always stood shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan whenever she was in need of help or in trouble.

The minister said Pakistan and Turkiye had old and strong relations.

He said that NICH was providing health services to children and adolescents free of cost. He also highlighted that there was always room for

improvement. Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye Mehmet Pacaci addressing the ceremony said that Pakistan and Turkiye had a brotherhood more than a friendship.

He said that both the countries had people-to-people contacts. He said that Pakistan had a special place in the hearts of Turkiye people.

Pacaci said, 'Our relations are unparalleled.' He said that TIKa was performing well in Pakistan and its work was making our relations stronger. He also congratulated TIKa on its successful projects in Pakistan.

## Governor asks teachers to protest without skipping classes

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Governor Punjab Engineer Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman has said that all the right demands of teachers should be heard however, teachers must not skip classes for protests which will hurt students' future.

Talking to APP, he said that teachers are founder of our future and the government will solve their grievances.

He urged teachers to work on recruiting more students at school and help in improving Pakistan's literacy rate.

Responding to a question, he said that Pakistan was heading in the right direction and as a result, Pakistan's economy was improving.

He said that the recent decrease in petrol prices, dollar, and gold rates were indicators of better economic conditions.

Governor Punjab said that an international cricket stadium would be constructed in Bahawalpur.

He said that sports activities must be promoted among youth and more grounds must be made available for them.

Engr Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman said that youth must not indulge in negative ventures and refrain from following anti-state propaganda.

He said that political parties must teach their followers respect and acceptance of opposite ideologies.

## German Envoy calls on Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Consul General of Germany Dr. Rudiger Lotz called on the Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab in KMC head office on Monday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Earlier, the mayor welcomed the Consul General of Germany on his arrival.

Talking to Dr. Rudiger, the mayor said that there was a wide scope of cooperation between Pakistan and Germany in various fields. Germany achieved an important position in the provision of urban facilities and the development of science and technology. We had also improved the basic urban infrastructure in Karachi, he said.

Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, District Municipalities and other institutions were working together to provide quality facilities to the citizens, he said. The mayor said that there were attractive investments opportunities for German investment companies in Karachi and complete facilities would be provided to German.

## PFA celebrates World Food Day

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority has celebrated World Food Day 2023 by organizing a seminar titled "Food Adulteration Challenges & Way Forward" at Alhambra Art Centre on Monday.

On the occasion, PFA Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar, Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa, senior journalist Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Shami, Former Chairman PCSIR Dr Shahzad Alam, Chairman Department of Food Sciences Punjab University Lahore Dr Shinawar

Waseem Ali, nutrition expert Dr Ghazala Pervez, Vice Chairman Food Industry Dr Muhammad Nasir and people from different walks of life attended the event.

Addressing the participants during a panel discussion, PFA DG Raja Jahangir said that food safety is as important as food security. He said that reforms are being made in the food industry to provide nutritious food to the people at their doorstep. Along with the provision of nutritious items for children, it is very important to reduce the consumption of junk food.

## PPP getting stronger in South Punjab

DG Khan (APP): Former Punjab Chief Minister and leader of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Dost Muhammad Khosa said his party was getting stronger in South Punjab day by day.

Addressing a ceremony at Khosa House, he called it 'unfortunate' that implementation of the law remained a phenomenon for

the poor only. The powerful class considers itself as superior, he said.

He said they welcomed Akram Khan Mulghani, the political figure of Taunsa for joining the party.

He said that every section of society is affected by the current situation in the country. Inflation has broken back of the poor, he remarked.

## ANF seizes 108 kg drugs; arrests three

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 108 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 24.8 kg hashish was recovered from an accused, resident of Kohat arrested on Super Highway Karachi. On the pointation of the accused, a co-accused, resident of Karachi was also arrested. In another operation at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi Courier Office, ANF recovered 180 grams Ice drug from a parcel booked for Dubai. 30 kg hashish concealed in doors of a vehicle was recovered on Sibi Road Quetta. During the operation, an accused, resident of Naseerabad was arrested.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi issuing directives regarding construction works during his visit to under construction controlled access corridor project.

## Amir Mir holds Press conference Positive shift in smog conditions, Lahore's improved ranking, govt actions highlighted

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The current smog situation presents a notable improvement compared to January 2023. Previously topping the smog index, Lahore has now descended to the 54<sup>th</sup> position. This shift can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the influence of rainfall and government initiatives. Among the most effective governmental measures has been the enforcement of Section 144 in the city, alongside restrictions on smog-emitting vehicles and crop residue burning, practices that continue to be upheld. Further steps in this direction will be considered with an eye on future smog scenarios.

These views were shared by Punjab's Information and Culture Minister, Amir Mir, during a press conference at the Directorate General Public Relations Department following today's Punjab Cabinet meeting.

Minister Mir informed the media representatives that, in accordance with the directives of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi, district administration and price control teams have been mobilized to transfer the benefits of the Rs 40 per liter reduction in petrol prices to the public. It is anticipated that, in the coming days, prices of essential commodities such as flour, milk, and rice will

see significant reductions. Responding to questions from journalists, the provincial minister affirmed that the Punjab government will pursue legal avenues to reinstate the commissioner's authority to impose fines on wholesalers, a measure aimed at curbing inflation.

When queried about the implementation of long-term smog control strategies, Amir Mir stated that the caretaker government is deploying every available resource within its limited timeframe to ensure compliance. He further emphasized that decisions regarding permissions for specific political gatherings are influenced by the events of May 9.



HYDERABAD: Members and supporters of Jamat-e-Islami (JI Women Wing) are holding protest demonstration against Israeli cruel and inhumane acts and express unity with the innocent people of Palestine, held at Hyderabad press club.

## COMSATS Uni Abbottabad awards degrees to 1357 students at Convocation 2023

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Pakistan's development Comsats University Abbottabad Monday awarded MS/BS degrees to the 1,357 students, both at the undergraduate and graduate level while 27 students received PhD degrees, and 47 students were honored for their exceptional performance with gold, bronze, and silver medals.

The ceremony marked the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> convocation at the university, held on the campus grounds. The special guest for the event was Professor Dr. Sajid Qamar, the Vice-Chancellor of the Islamia University of Islamabad.

While addressing the convocation, Professor Dr. Sajid Qamar commended the university's management and faculty members for their dedication in raising Pakistan's educational standards on a global scale.

He emphasized the pivotal role that graduates play in the progress of the country and encouraged them to contribute to

Pakistan's development with their skills and dedication. The VC underscored the significance of scientific research in achieving economic growth and addressing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The special guest also stressed the importance of acquiring strong academic skills in relevant fields for a successful professional life.

He praised the efforts of Professor Dr. Muhammad Ma'roof Shah, the Director of the Abbottabad campus, in imparting excellent academic skills to the students. Dr. Sajid Qamar encouraged the graduates to be appreciative of the opportunities they've been given and the knowledge acquired from a prestigious institution like COMSATS University. He urged them to maintain a strong work ethic and express gratitude to their parents and teachers, emphasizing that consistent hard work and mutual respect would lead to continuous self-improvement.



LAHORE: Sikh Yatrees are being welcomed on their arrival at JCP Wagah Border.

## People welcome relief in POL prices; ask for inflation-ease

ISLAMABAD (APP): People from different walks of life on Monday welcomed the government's decision to substantially reduce petroleum prices, viewing it as a much-needed relief to counter the adverse effects of high inflation on their daily routines.

In the past, they said whenever petroleum prices increased it resulted in a surge in the prices of essential commodities, public transportation fares, and shipping costs, negatively impacting the common man.

Now, with the government's ample reduction of Rs40 per liter in petrol prices and Rs15 in high-speed diesel, people expect this to have a trickle-down effect on the prices of everyday items, goods transport, and public transportation fares. Khurram Shahzad, a government employee who

commutes daily from Qasim Market Rawalpindi to Islamabad, expressed his concern that public transporters had not lowered their fares despite a significant reduction in petroleum prices.

They had increased fares by almost 300 percent over the past six months, which he said should be revised and brought down.

He urged the Regional Transport Authority to revise and regulate the public transport fares to align them with the reduced petroleum prices.

He also called for the display of revised fare charts in public transport vehicles to provide maximum relief to the common commuters between the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The business community also commended the government's decision to



HYDERABAD: A large number of motorcyclists at petrol pump after the government reduce the petrol prices.

## Investment in digital banking, FinTech, AgriTech beneficial for global investors: Dr. Umar

DUBAI (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif said on Monday that international investors could greatly benefit from investing in Pakistan's digital banking, FinTech, AgriTech, and telecom infrastructure sectors.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Global Information Technology Exhibition in Dubai, he said international investors can

take advantage of various incentives in Pakistan, including tax concessions and a 100% ownership rights regime.

Running from October 16 to 20, the Dubai Global Exhibition features delegates from 170 countries, representing over 6,000 IT companies.

Dr. Saif said that 85% of Pakistan's population does not have bank accounts and prefers to use cash or alternative means

for transactions. This presents an excellent opportunity for offering suitable digital payment solutions.

The minister said Pakistan is an attractive market for payment companies like PayPal due to its potential for generating billions in revenue.

He also pointed out that Pakistan's strength lies in its youthful population, with 65% of its people under the age of 30.



QUETTA: Central Anjuman Tajran Balochistan President Abdul Rahim Kakar along with All Balochistan Sugars Association President Syed Abdul Rehman Shah and others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Quetta press club.

## Irfan Iqbal Sheikh says Business community lauds Army Chief's role in economic stabilization

**Independent Report**  
KARACHI: Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPCCI, said that the business community of Pakistan appreciates the effective, timely and crucial role played by the Army Chief in swiftly reducing economic uncertainty, bringing back stability and fostering positive sentiment in the country. Controlling speculative trading of dollar and putting a stop on its smuggling are the most effective and meaningful steps in the right direction by COAS, he added.

Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh recalled that dollar was trading at 336 on 4<sup>th</sup> September in the open market and today it has come down to 276. In an export-dependent economy like Pakistan, currency depreciation is the mother of all evils as it

fuels inflation, increases cost of production, escalates debt repayments and eliminates fiscal space for developmental expenditures.

FPCCI Chief added that, coupled with a decline in international crude prices, these steps have enabled the government to slash the prices of petroleum products by a historic PKR. 40 per litre for petrol and PKR. 15 per litre for high speed diesel.

Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh maintained that crackdown on smuggling is another praiseworthy step taken by the Army Chief, which has resulted in improved supplies of the essential commodities & agricultural inputs in the country and their prices are experiencing significant decline in the domestic market.

## Gold rates decrease by Rs.1,900 to Rs.200,100 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,900 and was sold at Rs. 200,100 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs. 202,000 the previous day of trading.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,629 to Rs.171,553 from Rs.173,182 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.157,257 from Rs.158,750, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.2,500 and Rs.2,143.34 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$15 to \$1,923 from \$1,938, the Association reported.

## Rupee gains 79 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Monday witnessed the 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive recovery session as it gained 79 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 276.83 against the previous day's closing of Rs 277.62.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 276 and Rs 278 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.47 to close at Rs 291.61 against the last day's closing of Rs 293.08, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.85, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.16 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound.

## IIUI, I Bank Al-Falah ink MoU

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) and Bank Alfalah Limited Monday joined hands by signing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for free of cost digital banking.

The MoU is part of the efforts of IIUI President's vision of Students' facilitation, said a press release here.

As per MoU, the Bank Alfalah will provide facility of mobile banking through its app for deposit of dues at IIUI.

The students will also be given a facility of Afalah wallet that is an E wallet service to make banking and transactions more easy.

The bank will also install special cash deposit

machines to facilitate the IIUI community for payment of dues.

Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi, President IIUI and Adnan Nasir, Head Digital Payments Bank Alfalah signed MoU on behalf of their respective institutions.

Dr. Hathal said that IIUI was committed to promote education and adopt the latest techniques.

He opined that the student's centric approach was cornerstone of the university's leadership's vision.

The president IIUI further added that the university provided a sound intellectual and scholastic foundation for the ideological, moral, intellectual, social,

## Facilities at rural revenue centres reviewed

LAHORE (APP): Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) Nabil Javed here Monday chaired a meeting about the provision of facilities at rural centres.

Punjab Land Revenue Authority (PLRA) Director General Saira Umar apprised the meeting about facilities in rural centres such as e-registration, inheritance and online registration of property for foreign nationals. The SMBR congratulated Saira Umar for her excellent performance. Briefing the meeting, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director Nazia Jabeen said that the authority had distributed furniture among all districts as per demands.

## PSX holds Gong ceremony to announce building of In-House manufacturing facility

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) held a gong ceremony to announce the building of an in-house manufacturing facility for the Panadol portfolio by Haleon Pakistan Limited, a world-leading Consumer Healthcare Company and a listed company on the Pakistan Stock Exchange.

The gong ceremony was attended by British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, as the Chief Guest, said a press release on Monday.

The team from the British High Commission and Haleon Pakistan Limited were received at the Stock Exchange by the MD & CEO PSX, Farrukh H. Khan and Board member(s) PSX along with the Exchange's senior management. The gong was struck by the Chief Guest, Jane Marriott, and the CEO of Haleon Pakistan Limited, Farhan M. Haroon, in the presence of MD and CEO PSX, Farrukh Khan, Board member(s) PSX, the team from the British High Commission and senior management of both Haleon Pakistan and PSX.

Speaking on the occasion, the MD & CEO PSX, Farrukh Khan stated, "I warmly welcome the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, her team, the CEO of

Haleon Pakistan, Farhan Haroon, and the Haleon Pakistan management team, to PSX. Your visit to PSX will serve as a confidence-building measure for the UK-based companies in Pakistan and will send a positive message to the PSX-listed companies to enhance business and trade with companies in the UK."

"I would also like to congratulate Haleon Pakistan on the launch of their Panadol Expansion project. Multinationals operating in Pakistan have historically enjoyed excellent profitability. Haleon's further investment reinforces their commitment to Pakistan and highlights the opportunities presented by Pakistan's economy".

The CEO & General Manager of Haleon Pakistan Limited, Farhan Muhammad Haroon, added, "Under the project, Haleon Pakistan Limited will be investing ~USD 10 million in its manufacturing facility at Jamshoro to bring the latest technology to Pakistan and enhance the production of Panadol to 8 billion tablets.

This will help ensure smooth supplies of Pakistan's largest pharmaceutical/ Over-the-Counter medicine to needy patients.



MULTAN: A labourer busy in spreading rice for drying purpose in the field.

## PCJCCI keen to merge urban, rural development for common prosperity

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki Monday emphasized upon equitable development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in rural areas of the country in conjunction with the urban business hubs at the pattern of Chinese model of Urban-Rural Coordinated Development.

Addressing a think-tank session here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that China had enhanced the prosperity level of her villages by making coordinated urban and rural development.

The meeting was also attended by PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong, Vice President Hamza Khalid and Secretary General Salahuddin Hanif. Ghurki said that

SMEDA (Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority) had focused in the past on equitable development of SMEs in the country and the best project in this regard was launched as "Aik Hunar, Aik Nagar" (AHAN) project that connected the rural handicrafts with the fashion designers to add value in the rural handmade products. The intervention proved to be so successful that a number of our rural handicrafts won the space in export market besides gaining business in the national markets. He stressed the need that present government should also focus on this important project. Fang Yulong said that common prosperity is an essential requirement of socialism and a key feature of Chinese-style modernization.



LAHORE: Director General PSQCA Dr. IU Khan in a group photo with participants participating in the awareness walk on World Standards Day.

## PSQCA arranges awareness walk

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) on Monday arranged an awareness walk with a theme "Shared Vision for a Better World" in connection with World Standards Day - 2023.

This day serves as a tribute to the collaborative efforts of experts worldwide who contribute to the creation of International Standards and to raise awareness about the significance of fostering a quality culture through adherence to the standards and regulations.

The walk was led by Director General PSQCA, Dr.H.U. Khan, commencing from 'Hamdard Chowk, Madar-e-Millat Road' and ended at Regional Office of PSQCA '125-A Quaid e Azam Industrial Estate, Kot

Lakhpat. The event saw the participation of Directors Dr. Shahzad Afzal, Mr. Muhammad Yasin Akhtar, Dr. Muhammad Rizwan, Ms. Anna Qasim, and Engr. Khurram Mateen along with officers, staff members, and representatives from the industry, academia, NGOs, and civil society. Addressing the participants, Dr. H.U. Khan highlighted the organization's achievements, stating that PSQCA has developed more than 22,000 national standards and adopted a number of ISO and IEC standards. He underscored the pivotal role of standardization and regulations, emphasizing that PSQCA plays a crucial part in Pakistan's economic development by providing technical guidance to the industry.



QUETTA: Demand of second hand jackets increased as start of winter season.

## PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 237 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with a bullish trend on Monday and gained 237.88 points, a positive change of 0.48 per cent, closing at 49,731.35 points against 49,493.47 points the previous day.

A total of 467,383,787 shares valuing Rs 14,119 billion were traded during the day as compared to 556,389,862 shares valuing Rs 15,450 billion the previous day.

As many as 359 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 218 of them recorded gains

and 129 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 12 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 98,168,338 shares at Rs 3.15 per share, PTCL with 22,603,000 shares at Rs 6.95 per share and Pak Int. Bulk with 22,073,500 shares at Rs 4.59 per share. Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 102.00 per share price, closing at Rs 7,300.00, whereas the runner-up was Philip Morris Pak with a Rs 40.50 rise in its per share price to Rs 580.50.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): The movements of ships was reported at the port where five ships namely, MSC Gina, Maersk Chesapeake, Hafnia Prestige, Jal Kalpavriksh and Horin Trader carrying Containers, Gas oil, Coal and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Oil Terminal, Bulk Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Onyx-1, Gambella, Xin An Ping and Al-Zubarah scheduled to load/offload Cement, Containers, LNG and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during last 24 hours.

A total of eight ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship, Maersk Chesapeake left the port on today morning, while two more ships, MSC Gina and Livarden are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 116,892 tonnes, comprising 79,628 tonnes imports cargo and 37,264 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,324 Containers (134 TEUs Imports and 2,192 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are six ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Gambella, Chem Harvest, Xin An Ping,



PESHAWAR: Members of Car Showrooms Association Ring Road are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of influential police officials, held at Peshawar press club.

## Motorbikes, three-wheelers sale drops 9% during July-September

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country witnessed a decrease of 9.85 per cent during the first three months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year.

During the months under review, as many as 268,990 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 298,405 units in July-September (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). The sale of Honda motorcycles dipped by 7.19 per cent from 250,132 units to 232,139 units whereas the sale of

Suzuki motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 62.27 per cent from 10,007 units to 3,775 units during the months under review.

Similarly, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes also went down from 3,726 units to 2,555 units witnessing a decline of 31.42 per cent while the sale of Road Prince motorbikes witnessed a sharp decline of 55.59 per cent from 9,273 units to 4,118 units. However, the sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed an increase of 7.04 per cent from 20,369 units to 21,803 units. Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers dipped from 412 units to 218 units while the sale of Sazgar.

Gaza aid stuck as Egypt says Israel not cooperating

Monitoring Desk ISMAILIA: Egypt said on Monday that Israel was not cooperating with the delivery of aid into Gaza and evacuations of foreign passport holders via the only entry it does not wholly control, leaving hundreds of tonnes of supplies stuck. Cairo says the Rafah crossing, a potentially vital opening for desperately needed supplies into the besieged Palestinian enclave, is not officially closed but is inoperable due to Israeli air strikes on the Gaza side. "There is an urgent need to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza," Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry

told reporters, adding that talks with Israel had not been fruitful. "Until now the Israeli government has not taken a position on opening the Rafah crossing from the Gaza side to allow the entrance of assistance and exit of citizens of third countries." More than 2 million Gazans have been under siege since Israel launched an intense bombardment and blockade in retaliation for an assault by the Hamas Islamist militants. Two Egyptian security sources had told Reuters a ceasefire in southern Gaza to last several hours had been agreed for Monday morning to facilitate aid and evacuations

at Rafah. However, Israel denied that. "There is currently no truce and humanitarian aid in Gaza in exchange for getting foreigners out," a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said. Hamas official Izzat El-Reshiq told Reuters the same. On the ground at Rafah, one source said that there had been no bombardments on Monday and that the Egyptian side of the crossing was ready. Shoukry said Egypt aimed to allow normal flow through the crossing, including for Palestinians seeking medical treatment or normal travel.



Palestinians recover a body from under the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in Khan Yunis in the southern of Gaza Strip.

Russia's Putin speaks to Iran, Israel, Palestinians, Syria and Egypt

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin entered the fevered diplomatic fray of the Middle East on Monday, speaking to five of the major players including Iran and leading Arab powers in an attempt to secure a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas. Russia, which has relationships with Iran, Hamas, major Arab powers as well as with the Palestinians and with Israel, has repeatedly said the United States and the West have ignored the need for an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders. Putin spoke to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi

and to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad by telephone, the Kremlin said. He also plans to speak to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, it said. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Putin that the situation was escalating, that Israeli army actions were "indiscriminate" and that the risk was that Israel would begin a ground operation against Gaza. "The threat is high that this whole conflict gets out of control," Ryabkov told Putin at a meeting also attended by Russia's spy

chiefs and military leaders. He said that the United States was ultimately responsible for the crisis due to its failed policy in the Middle East and that Washington was blocking a Russian resolution in the UN Security Council. Putin, who says the West is seeking to cleave Russia apart by supporting Ukraine, says the current violence in the Middle East shows just how far U.S. policy in the region has failed. Putin will meet Xi Jinping in China this week in a bid to deepen a partnership forged between the United States' two biggest strategic competitors.

France's Macron holds security meeting amid heightened alert after deadly school stabbing

Monitoring Desk ARRAS: French President Emmanuel Macron held a special security meeting on Monday amid heightened alert against feared terror threats, as a high school where a teacher was fatally stabbed in an attack last week has been evacuated over a bomb threat. Several hundreds of students and teachers went back into the high school in the northern town of Arras after what appeared to be a false alert. All French schools held a moment of silence on Monday afternoon in homage to the teacher who was killed in Friday's attack by a former student suspected of Islamic radicalization. The homage also paid

tribute to another teacher, Samuel Paty, killed exactly three years ago near his Paris area school. He was beheaded by a radicalized Chechen later killed by police. Macron cut short travel plans abroad to hold a security meeting at midday with the prime minister and other key government members as well as top military and counterterrorism officials. He initially planned to attend a summit on the Western Balkans in Tirana, Albania. Speaking at the end of the meeting, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said that 102 people have been arrested in relation with antisemitic acts.



Hlas-Social Democracy party chairman Peter Pellegrini, Smer-Social Democracy party chairman Robert Fico and Slovak National Party chairman Andrej Danko sign a coalition agreement to form a new government in Bratislava, Slovakia.

No, Rafael's 'Iron Beam' laser didn't blow up missiles over Israel

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: Videos circulating on social media purporting to show a high-energy laser weapon destroying missiles during the Israel-Hamas war are actually altered clips derived from a military simulation video game. Cropped, low-resolution footage depicting swarms of overhead projectiles being intercepted in front of a tower are sourced from Arma 3, a photorealistic game billed as a "massive military sandbox" by its publisher, Bohemia Interactive. Multiple prominent accounts on X, formerly Twitter, shared videos over the weekend incorrectly claiming they showed the real-world application of Iron Beam, developed by Israeli company Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. Czech Republic-based Bohemia Interactive on

Oct. 10 warned that its game — set in a futuristic, fictional conflict, and easily modified and recorded by players — was being used to peddle misinformation. Staff at the BBC, the Warzone and the Times of Israel later reported the videos and accompanying descriptions were misleading. "While it's flattering that Arma 3 simulates modern war conflicts in such a realistic way, we are certainly not pleased that it can be mistaken for real-life combat footage and used as war propaganda," Pavel Koižka, a Bohemia Interactive public relations manager, said in a statement. "With every video taken down, ten more are uploaded each day," Koižka added. "We found the best way to tackle this is to actively cooperate with leading media outlets and fact-checkers (such as AFP, Reuters, and others).

Iran says Hamas is ready to release hostages if airstrikes stop

Monitoring Desk TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Ministry said Monday that Hamas potentially was ready to release the nearly 200 hostages it is holding if Israel stops its campaign of airstrikes on the Gaza Strip. The militant group hasn't acknowledged making such an offer. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani spoke at a news conference in Tehran. Iran's theocracy is a main sponsor of Hamas in its fight against Israel, Tehran's regional arch-enemy. Hamas officials "stated that they are ready to take necessary measures to release the citizens and civilians held by resistant groups, but their point was that such measures require preparations that are impossible under daily bombardment by the Zionists against various parts of Gaza," Kanaani said. Hamas has said it will trade the captives for thousands of Palestinians held by Israel in the kind of lopsided exchange deals that have been reached in the past.

Moscow does not violate UN sanctions against North Korea - Russian diplomat

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: Moscow does not violate United Nations sanctions against North Korea, but is categorically against new restrictive measures on Pyongyang, a high-ranking Russian diplomat told the RIA state news agency in remarks published on Sunday. "Russia, as a responsible member of the world community, strictly adheres to its international obligations towards Pyongyang through the UN Security

Council," Russian Ambassador at Large Oleg Burmistrov told RIA in an interview. "At the same time, we are categorically against the introduction of new restrictive measures." The White House on Friday said North Korea recently provided Russia with a shipment of weapons, calling it a troubling development and raising concerns about the expanded military relationship between the two countries.

Raisi says Iran backs Palestinians but 'resistance' groups decide independently

Monitoring Desk DUBAI: Supporting the Palestinians is Iran's foreign policy priority but the "resistance" groups make their own independent decisions, President Ebrahim Raisi told his Russian counterpart in a phone call on Monday, Iranian state media reported. They quoted Raisi as also telling Russia's Vladimir Putin. "There is a possibility of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians expanding to other fronts."



A view of trucks carrying humanitarian aid for Palestinians, as they wait for the re-opening of the Rafah border crossing to enter Gaza, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in the city of Al-Arish, Sinai peninsula, Egypt.

UN aid chief says six months of war in Sudan has killed 9,000 people

Monitoring Desk CAIRO: Six months of war between Sudan's military and a powerful paramilitary group has killed up to 9,000 people and created "one of the worst humanitarian nightmares in recent history," the United Nations humanitarian chief said Sunday. Sudan has been engulfed in chaos since mid-April, when simmering tensions between military chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan and the commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, exploded into open warfare. "For six months, civilians ... have known no respite from bloodshed and terror," UN Undersecretary-General Martin Griffiths said in a statement marking the six-month anniversary of the war. "Horrific reports of rape and sexual violence continue to emerge." The fighting initially

centered in Khartoum, but quickly spread to other areas across the east African nation, including the already conflict-wrecked western Darfur region. Griffiths said the fighting reportedly killed up to 9,000 and forced millions of people out of their homes, either to safer areas inside Sudan or in neighboring countries. He said the conflict led to "communities torn apart. Vulnerable people with no access to life-saving aid. Mounting humanitarian needs in the neighboring countries where millions have fled." According to the UN migration agency, more than 4.5 million people were displaced inside Sudan, while over 1.2 million others sought refuge in neighboring countries. The fighting also left 25 million people — more than half of the country's population — in need of humanitarian aid, Griffiths said.

Hamas said it made the decision to attack Israel without direction from outside

Monitoring Desk NEW YORK: Ahmed Abdul-Hadi, the representative of Hamas in Lebanon, insisted Monday that the decision to launch the surprise Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel was made by Hamas leadership and not directed by Iran or any other outside party, but he said that in event of a ground invasion of Gaza, allied groups will intervene. The war in Gaza is "a Palestinian battle and the decision to enter it was a Palestinian decision" made by Hamas and its military wing, the Izz ad-Din al Qassam Brigades, "together with the Palestinian resistance factions," he said in an interview with The Associated Press ahead of a conference convened by the group in Beirut.

Poland votes in 'most important' election since communism

Monitoring Desk WARSAW: Poles voted on Sunday in parliamentary elections that will determine the country's future ties with the European Union and neighboring Ukraine, as the ruling populists bid for a third consecutive term in power. Opinion polls indicate the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party will get the most votes but may struggle to build a governing coalition, giving a chance to the opposition led by former EU chief Donald Tusk. A PiS victory could exacerbate tensions with the EU and Ukraine and will dismay campaign-

ers concerned about the future of media freedoms, women's and migrants' rights. "It's time for a change," said Ewa Bankowska, a 43-year-old working in finance, said as she voted in Halinow, a town just outside the capital Warsaw. "I'm concerned about the economy. I would like us to develop and for the government to stop spending money it does not have," she said. But Dorota Zbig, a 57-year-old nurse, said the last few years of PiS government "have been very good for me and my family and I hope everyone including young people votes reasonably."

Russia's assault on a key eastern Ukraine city reported to be weakening. The war marks 600 days

Monitoring Desk KYIV: A days-long attempt by Russian forces to storm a strategically important city in eastern Ukraine appears to be running out of steam, Kyiv officials said Monday, as the Kremlin's war entered its 600th day. Ukrainian forces repelled 15 Russian attacks from four directions on Avdiivka over the previous 24 hours, the Ukrainian General Staff said. That compared with up to 60 attacks a day in the middle of last week, according to Vitalii Barabash, head of the city administration. The slackening suggests the Russian effort to capture Avdiivka has "deflated," Barabash said. A Washington-based think tank broadly concurred with that assessment. "Russian forces continued offensive operations aimed at encircling Avdiivka ... but have yet to make further gains amid a likely decreasing tempo of Russian operations in the area," the Institute for the Study of War said in analysis published late Sunday. Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzya, told a U.N. Security Council meeting last Friday that the ramped-up attacks in the east amounted to a new stage in Moscow's campaign in Ukraine.

With eye on US, Turkiye in no rush to back Sweden's NATO bid

Monitoring Desk ANKARA: Turkiye is willing to hold off ratifying Sweden's bid to join NATO this month as it awaits signs of U.S. support for its own request to buy F-16 jets, sources said, potentially disappointing bloc allies hoping to end 17 months of delay. President Tayyip Erdogan elated a NATO summit in July by promising to send the bid to Turkiye's parliament for ratification when it re-opened in October, appearing after having raised objections over its alleged harbouring of terrorists. However since parliament opened on Oct. 1, its foreign affairs commission, which would debate the NATO bid, has received almost 60 international agreements to review - excluding Sweden's, official data shows. Two people familiar with the situation said Ankara wanted to move in tandem with Washington, where the State Department is expected at some time to seek congressional

approval for a \$20-billion sale of F-16 fighters to Turkiye and dozens of modernisation kits. "Given the lack of trust over the issue of F-16s and Sweden, Turkiye is not rushing to ratify the NATO bid and looking for a sign that the United States is taking steps at the same time," said an official from Erdogan's ruling AK Party. A second person familiar with U.S.-Turkish talks said a rough proposal - in which each side would take steps toward ratifying the NATO bid on the one side, and the F-16s purchase on the other - had been delayed. Erdogan's office did not immediately comment on a time frame for Sweden's ratification or on any U.S. talks. The U.S. State Department looked forward to Sweden joining NATO "in the near future", a spokesperson said, and that President Joe Biden backed the F-16s sale in the interest of the alliance, the United States and its relationship with Turkiye.

US Congress handcuffed by Republican feud amid international crises

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: As the flames of war burn in the Middle East and Ukraine, the US Congress is immobilised by a brawl among Republicans, a dysfunction that even some in Donald Trump's party worry is giving comfort to the nation's adversaries. The House of Representatives has drifted leaderless for 12 days since eight of its 221 Republicans ousted Speaker Kevin McCarthy. That has held up any legislative action, from debating further aid to Ukraine as it battles a Russian invasion to a statement of support for ally Israel. Republicans on Friday nominated hardliner Jim Jordan for speaker, but it was not clear if the long-time antagonist of party leadership would have the support needed to win a floor vote this week. McCarthy's removal was the latest in a series of self-created crises Congress has faced in a year that saw lawmakers bring the federal government to the brink of defaulting on its \$31.4 trillion in debt and just two weeks ago narrowly avert the fourth partial US gov-

ernment shutdown in a decade. That latter move led to McCarthy's ouster by colleagues angry that the spending bill passed with more Democratic than Republican votes, even though any measure passed by the House needs to clear the Democratic-controlled Senate and be signed by Democratic President Joe Biden to become law. Some House Republicans voiced frustration and anger that they have gone so long without being able to choose a leader. "The world is on fire. Our adversaries are watching what we do and ... quite frankly, they like it," said Republican House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul. Speaking to reporters as his colleagues huddled to discuss their next moves, McCaul added, "I see a lot of threats out there. One of the biggest threats I see is in that room because we can't unify as a conference." The dysfunction was undermining Americans' already weak confidence in Congress, with two-thirds of respondents to a Reuters/Ipsos survey this month saying they did not believe Washington.



Children sign documents as people place flowers at the Gambetta high school after a bomb alert in Arras, northern France.

Australia rejects more rights for Indigenous in historic referendum

Monitoring Desk SYDNEY: Australians have roundly rejected greater rights for Indigenous citizens, scuppering plans to amend the country's 122-year-old constitution after a divisive and racially tinged referendum campaign. With 88 per cent of polling places reporting, around 59pc of people had voted against a proposal to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the 1901 constitution for the first time. The reforms would

also have created a consultative body — a "Voice" to Parliament — to weigh in on laws that affect Indigenous communities and help address profound social and economic inequality. The often spiteful campaign exposed the deep racial fault lines still running through the so-called Lucky Country. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who campaigned for a "yes" vote, urged a divided nation to now come together in a 'spirit of unity and healing.'

