

# Independent

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## Iranian President Raisi to reach Islamabad today with a focus on regional dev., connectivity, trade

This will be the first visit by any head of state to Pakistan after the February 8 general elections



ISLAMABAD (INP): Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will reach Pakistan on Monday for a three-day visit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Sunday, to become the first head of state to arrive in the country after the Feb 8 general elections.

During his stay, Raisi will meet President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the statement said,

adding that he was also scheduled to visit Lahore and Karachi, where he would hold talks with the provincial leadership.

The Iranian president would be accompanied by his spouse, the foreign minister and other cabinet members, senior officials as well as a large business delegation.

According to the Foreign Office, the two sides will have a wide-ranging agenda to further Pakistan-Iran ties and enhance cooperation in diverse fields in-

cluding trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture and people-to-people contacts. "They will also discuss regional and global developments and bilateral cooperation to combat the common threat of terrorism," the statement read.

It noted that the two countries "enjoy bilateral ties anchored by history, culture and religion" and "the visit provides an important opportunity to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran relations". The high-profile visit follows the recent trip by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud during which Islamabad invited Riyadh for joint business ventures like the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and airports as Pakistan aims at bolstering foreign investment to stabilise shaky economy.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori addressing a commemoration ceremony of Nishan-e-Imtiaz conferred on Olympian Islahuddin Siddiqui.

## Gohar calls by-elections a farce, slams ECP for failing to ensure transparency

GUJRAT (INP) - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan criticised the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday, accusing it of failing to conduct the by-elections on 21 national and provincial seats transparently.

Speaking to reporters outside the Khattala polling station in Gujrat's PP-32 constituency, Gohar called the by-elections a farce, arguing that parliament should consist of genuine public representatives with popular support, rather than those installed through electoral malpractice.

Gohar declared that the PTI would not recognise the results of the PP-32 constituency by-polls.

Asked about the death of a political worker from the PML-N in Narowal, Gohar expressed sadness and stressed the importance of respecting differing opinions among political workers from opposing parties.

Responding to a question about the PTI founder, Gohar stated that efforts to distance him from the public would not succeed. He expressed optimism about the founder's imminent release.



SHOUGUANG: Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Mr. Khalil Hashmi paid a one-day visit to Shouguang County, renowned for being China's "vegetable capital" at the invitation of the Shouguang government. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi also delivered remarks at the opening ceremony of the 25th China (Shouguang) International Vegetable Science and Technology Expo. He took a tour of the expo and visited the Pakistan pavilion.

## Pakistan Navy continues rescue, relief operation in flood hit areas of Gwadar

GWADAR (INP): Pakistan Navy in the aftermath of recent unprecedented rain spells in Gwadar, Ormara and adjoining villages of Balochistan, was actively undertaking rescue and relief operation named 'Operation Madad' from past three days.

Immediate relief was provided to affected families on Sunday upon receiving information through local sources that large number of people were stranded into houses due accumulated water in vicinity and were in immediate need of ration supplies.

Pakistan Navy Rescue teams immediately coordinated the efforts and air dropped ration bags to af-

affected people of Muradi, Dando, Kulanch and adjoining isolated areas of Gwadar District. Pakistan Navy Sea King helicopters undertook multiple sorties to ensure ration supply to hundreds of stranded families.

Pakistan Navy has always assisted Coastal communities in every crisis situation and was committed to continue rescue operation until normalization of on-going situation. Prompt relief operation on the call of locals was practical manifestation of Pakistan Navy's strong ties with Coastal communities and demonstrates PN's resolve to assist fellow countrymen in every hour of need.

## CM grieves over death of two Rangers jawan

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah expressed grief over two Rangers jawans' death in Nangarparkar accident on Sunday.

According to the Spokesman, CM Murad said, "I am very saddened by the death of two jawans". He directed to provide the best medical treatment to the injured jawans.

The accident occurred due to tyre bust in the Nangarparkar, the Spokesman added.

## Two Rangers personnel martyred after their truck tipped over in Tharparkar

THARPARKAR (INP): Two Rangers jawans were martyred and 18 others injured when their truck overturned near village Ade Jotar, a suburb of Islamkot Tharparkar on Sunday. According to MS Islamkot Hospital, two officers Qasim and Ibrahim were martyred in the accident. MS Islamkot Hospital said that the injured youths underwent treatment at Islamkot Hospital.

## Saudi citizen abducted in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): A Saudi national was reportedly abducted from F-8 area, Margalla police station jurisdiction in Islamabad on Sunday.

The Margalla police station at the request of the foreign embassy has registered an FIR into abduction of Hanan Abdullah Al-Bashar.

The foreign missing approached the law enforcement seeking recovery of the abducted citizen and also named an accused.

As per FIR, accused Abdul Wahid Shahid Khan kidnapped the foreign citizen from the F-8 area.



WASHINGTON DC: Finance Minister Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb's interaction with Pakistani media at Pakistan Embassy.

## Provisional results of by-elections trickle in

Parvez Elahi loses PP-32 seat to Musa Elahi in Gujrat

LAHORE (INP): Provisional results of the by-elections in five national and 16 provincial constituencies have begun trickling in as the vote count commenced following the conclusion of polling on Sunday.

Polling continued from 8 am until 5 pm without any break - across five National Assembly seats, 12 Punjab Assembly seats, two Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly seats and two Balochistan Assembly seats - amid stringent security measures.

In a major upset, former Punjab chief minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed (PTI) Sunni Ittehad Council candidate Parvez Elahi, contesting from PP-32, faced defeat from Gujrat as Musa Elahi from the Pakistan Muslim

League (PML) secured victory.

Musa Elahi emerged victorious with an impressive count of 63,536 votes, as per unofficial results.

In contrast, Chaudhry Parvez Elahi could only manage to secure 18,237 votes, according to the unofficial tally.

This outcome marks a significant shift in the political landscape of Gujrat, signaling a change in representation for the constituency.

The results of the 21 by-elections started pouring in as per the unofficial and unverified after polling concluded amid violent incidents reported in Narowal.

Elections were originally scheduled for 23 constituencies. However, the results of two seats, one

national [NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad] and one provincial [PS-80 Dadu], had already been announced.

PPP's Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was elected unopposed on the NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad seat, while the PS-80 Dadu seat was secured by Zubair Ahmad Jenejo.

During the polling today, cellular and internet services remained suspended in 13 cities of Punjab and are likely to remain off till late night.

As per unverified and unconfirmed reports coming in shortly after by-polls closed, the PML-N is riding the tide in Punjab, with its election candidates attaining lead over competitors in several constituencies. The PML-N is backed by the PTI.

## Finance Minister declares negotiations with Int'l financial institutions as positive

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb has declared negotiations with international financial institutions as positive.

Addressing a news conference in Washington along with Pakistan Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan, he said that Pakistan Stock Market witnessed a historical bullish trend in recent days due to positive indicators of economy.

The Minister said that the mechanism regarding tax collection was also being improved through reforms.

He said that Pakistan was heading towards financial stability as government's vision regarding revival of economy is quite clear.

M u h a m m a d Aurangzeb also stressed the need for concrete measures to reduce government expenditures.

INP adds: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb has expressed the expectation of larger bailout programme from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and considered improving the revenue distribution between the provinces and the Centre.

The minister said, if the loan is approved, Islamabad would revisit its NFC award that allocates revenues between the federation and the provinces. He said that some of the sectors which need to be brought in a much bigger way into the tax net were provincial markets.

Pakistan is requesting a "larger and longer" multi-billion-dollar loan programme from the IMF and discussions are underway with the Fund's officials, the finance minister said, without specifying how much the nation was trying to secure.



LAHORE: Eminent religious scholar Dr. Raghیب Hussain Naemی calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## PML-N worker killed, three injured in violence at polling stations in Punjab

ECP takes notice of PML-N activist killing, 'abduction' of polling staff

ZAFARWAL (INP): At least one dead in clashes between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) workers in PP-54 Zafarwal during by-elections.

As per details, the police officials said that the deceased was identified as 60-year-old Muhammad Yousuf, a PML-N worker.

Following the tragic incident, the police took the dead body into custody for further investigation.

Reacting to the incident, the Punjab Election Commissioner's spokesperson said that the polling continued uninterrupted despite the incident as it occurred 200 meters away from the polling station.

Election Commissioner Punjab, Ejaz Anwar Chohan, urged political parties to remain tolerant and appealed to workers to refrain from violence.

It is worth mentioning that voting for the by-elections on twenty-one vacant seats of National and Provincial Assemblies is underway in Pakistan on Sunday under strict security.

According to Election Commission of Pakistan, the polling is being held on five National Assembly seats, twelve Punjab Assembly seats, two seats of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and two seats of Balochistan Assembly.

The polling will continue till five in the evening without any break.



KARACHI: Supporters of PTI take part in a rally at Shahrāh-e-Faisal.

## Complaints of clashes in Gujrat, Rahim Yar Khan addressed promptly: ECP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The by-election for 21 seats of National and provincial assemblies is underway across Pakistan, with reports of clashes from some areas of Punjab in which one person has been killed.

The ECP says that there were some complaints of clashes among workers from Gujrat and Rahim Yar Khan reported in the media, adding that the polling process was stopped for some time, but resumed after taking immediate action.

The ECP spokesperson said their control room had not yet received any written or telephonic complaints, and the polling process was underway in all 21 constituencies.

The director general of the control room said the polling process remains uninterrupted and peaceful across all constituencies. He emphasized that they are fully prepared to address any issues that may arise.

The spokesperson said control rooms at provincial, divisional, and district levels are operational, with staff available to assist individuals in registering complaints. Citizens are encouraged to contact the control room directly at 05111327000 or send complaints via email or fax to 0519204404. The control room will work 24 hours on the day of polling until the results are received, the spokesperson said.



RIYADH: Senator Prof. Sajid Mir representing Pakistan in International Conference of Muslim World League.

## Pakistan sends humanitarian assistance tranche for Gaza: FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar on Sunday said that Pakistan dispatched 8th tranche of humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza.

The 400 tons assistance consisted of winterized tents, tarpaulins, blankets, medicines and food supplies through sea, the foreign minister posted on

his X account.

"The shipment will be received by the Pakistani Ambassador at Port Said, Egypt and handed over to the Egyptian Red Crescent for onward delivery to the people of Gaza. Pakistan remains committed to addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of our brothers and sisters in Gaza," he further posted.

## Ahsan alleges PTI activists of killing innocent PML-N worker

NAROWAL (INP): Federal Minister for Planning, Ahsan Iqbal has alleged that activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have killed innocent PML-N worker and I will call him a political martyr.

Talking to media persons in Narowal on Sunday, he pledged to root out all kinds of oppression and hooliganism from Zafarwal.

Ahsan Iqbal said that he strongly condemns the hooliganism that PTI has done against the PML-N workers in the country.

He alleged that PTI people have resorted to

high tactics after seeing the defeat of their thuggish domain.

The federal minister said that PML-N workers are our soldiers who started movement for development of peace.

Ahsan Iqbal said, "I will call them political martyrs. They stood for a good cause and were punished for it. Murderers of the party workers can't escape the grip of law."

He said that those who were supervising all what was happening would be brought to book and all kinds of oppression and hooliganism will be eradicated from Zafarwal.

## Lanjar grieves over killing of Rangers jawans in road accident

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of two Rangers jawans in a road accident in the Nangarparkar area of Umerkot.

He prayed for granting courage to the bereaved family members of jawans.

## Former bureaucrat Roedad Khan passes away at 101

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former bureaucrat Roedad Khan passed away at the age of 101 here on Sunday.

Since his entry into the Pakistani Civil Services in 1949, he has held a number of positions, including those of chief secretary of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, managing director of PTV, information secretary during Yahya Khan's regime, secretary ministry of labour and tourism, interior secretary of Pakistan, secretary general ministry of interior, federal minister of accountability, and adviser to the prime minister and president.



Pakistan Navy rescue teams air dropping ration bags to trapped people of Muradi, Dando and Kulanch near Gwadar.



## Punjab Governor says: Supremacy of constitution and law is vital for the development of country

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedal Khan Nasir met Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. Matters of mutual interest and other important issues were discussed in the meeting. During the meeting, Governor Punjab congratulated Syedal Khan Nasir on assuming the

office of Deputy Chairman Senate. Speaking on the occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the constitution and law is vital for the development of country. He said that uniform development of all units is very important for the strength of the federation. Governor Punjab said that we have

to strengthen our democratic institutions for sustainable development of country. He said that the current leadership is taking concrete steps to address the challenges facing the country. Governor Punjab said that an economically self-sufficient, energetic Pakistan and a socially empowered society with high morals and mutual respect is our destination.



LAHORE: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedal Khan Nasir in a meeting with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

## Advisor urges Expedited projects, 100% goal achievement for tourism development

**Independent Report**  
ABBOTTABAD: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture, and Archaeology Zahid Chanzab on Sunday emphasized the urgent completion of tourism projects and activities, as well as achieving 100% of the set goals for tourism development in the province. He conveyed this message during a meeting and briefing held at Pakhtunkhwa House Islamabad, attended by the Khyber Development Authority (KDA) and delegations from Manshra's elite. The advisor made it clear to the authorities that the current PTI-led KP Government will evaluate departmental performance based on target achievement rather than mere claims.

Chanzab stated that funds and staff of underperforming departments or institutions will be reduced, while those demonstrating excellence will receive strong encouragement and funding. During the KDA meeting, Director General Muhammad Shabbir updated the Tourism Advisor on progress regarding the management of hotels from Manshra to Lake Saif Al-Muluk, tourist facilities along highways, and other tourism-related schemes. Presentations were made on ongoing and new projects for tourism development, with managers of various KDA sections highlighting their contributions to promoting the tourism sector in the region.

## Two Dacoits Killed - One injured in Police Encounter

**Independent Report**  
SHIKARPUR: Shikarpur police claims for killing of two Dacoits and one injured in two separate police encounters on Sunday in early hours. According to Press Release issued from SSP office Shikarpur that some group of armed men trying to looting the passengers on Dakhan link road in the jurisdiction of Madeji police station on last late night, while receiving the information, area police rushed to the spot and the criminals opened fires upon police mobile while seeing coming to them. Police also fired in return. As an exchange of firing from both sides, police succeeded in killing two Dacoits on the spot. Two Dacoits were killed in an police encounter, SSP Shikarpur Irfan Samo added. The dead bodies of deceased Dacoits sent to Government Hospital for Medico Legal formalities. The killed Dacoits were identified as Rafique Jeffery of Sukkur District and Ali Jan Sabzoi of Garhi Tegho. Further police is collecting their criminal records from various police stations. Similarly an other police encounter took place between three criminals and police at Madd Khosa road in the limit of Jahan Khan Police Picket.



LAHORE: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Mr. Nasir Bosal calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Iqbal gave spiritual energy to Muslims of Subcontinent: Qureshi

**SARGODHA (APP):** Senior Vice President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Tehsil Sillanwali Makhdoom Shah Kameer Qureshi said on Sunday that Allama Muhammad Iqbal dreamt of a separate country for the Muslims of Subcontinent and gave them spiritual energy and guideline to wage a movement for creation of Pakistan. He said it was Allama Iqbal's dream that the Muslims of Subcontinent should have a country which would be a cradle of peace, political forbearance and brotherhood. Kameer Qureshi, stressing renewal of a pledge to achieve Iqbal's vision, said the Poet of the East wanted the youth to take the country to acme of progress and development with their constructive approach. On the 86th death anniversary of Dr Muhammad Iqbal, the PML-N leader said the entire nation had been praying for high ranks of the departed soul in Heaven. "Dr Muhammad Iqbal, through his thoughts and teachings, stressed the unity of Muslim Ummah," Qureshi recalled.

## Food Minister visits Sahadi Yateem Khana in Mardan

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Provincial Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru along with Member Provincial Assembly Abdul Salam Afridi and Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayaz Sherpao visited Sahadi Yateem Khana located on Shamsi Road Mardan. The minister distributed prizes and gifts among the children who achieved prominent positions in the annual examinations. On this occasion, Zahir Shah Toru was informed about serious issues and problems of the institution.

## Two killed, three injured as roof caves in SARGODHA (APP):

A roof collapse incident in a nearby village, left two dead on the spot and injuries to two others, in the jurisdiction of Cantonment police station here on Sunday. Rescue-1122 district emergency officer Mazhar Shah said the incident took place in Chak No 78/N-B where the roof of a dilapidated house caved in, as a result of which five members of a family buried under the rubble.

## Minister Zeeshan says: Modern system of waste management to be introduced in Punjab

**SIALKOT (APP):** Provincial Minister for Government Zeeshan Rafique has said that a comprehensive and modern system of solid waste management will be introduced on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and a uniform sanitation system will be implemented in the entire province. In this regard, orders were issued to the Chief Officers (Cos) of all waste management companies to report on the operational model by working jointly. While introducing a uniform

and modern sanitation system, planning should be done for the quality and sustainability of local government system and municipal services. He stated this while addressing participants in an "Open Kutcheri" at Camp Office Daska. Assistant Commissioner (AC) Daska Anwar Ali Kanjo, Chief Officer (CO) District Council Ulfat Shehzad, SDO Municipal Committee Daska Uzair, officers of relevant departments, political and social leaders of constituency PP-51 were also present.



LAHORE: Police officials stand alert outside the polling station during the election 2024 at Barf Khana Chowk Railway Road.

## BISP registration process continues in Sargodha

**SARGODHA (APP):** The registration process for the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is currently underway in Sargodha, as well as other parts of the country. The tehsil offices of the programme have established registration centres to facilitate the process. Deputy Director BISP Sargodha Malik Mazhar Awan while talking to APP here on Sunday, said that low-income groups could register themselves with the BISP by visiting the registration centres, opened from Monday to Saturday. People have been asked to bring their Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) and B forms of their children for registration purposes. Individuals are required to provide their electricity or gas bills to update a database for future government subsidies, he added. The official urged people to provide their accurate data at the time of registration, while those who would provide false information would not be allowed to become part of the programme.

# International News

## US House okays aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives with broad bipartisan support passed a \$95 billion legislative package providing security assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, over bitter objections from Republican hardliners. The legislation now proceeds to the Democratic-majority Senate, which passed a similar measure more than two months ago. US leaders from Democratic President Joe Biden to top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell have been urging embattled Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson to bring it up for a vote. The Senate is expected to pass the measure next week, sending it to Biden to sign into law. The measure includes some \$60.84bn for Ukraine as it struggles to fight off

Russian invasion. The unusual four-bill package also includes funds for Israel, security assistance for Taiwan. "The world is watching what the Congress does," the White House said in a statement on Friday.

## Zelenskiy says he is grateful for US House approval of Ukraine aid

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy expressed gratitude for the passage by the U.S. House of Representatives of a military aid bill for his country and said the assistance would save lives and "bring a just end" to the war with Russia. "I am grateful to the United States House of Representatives, both parties, and personally Speaker Mike Johnson for the decision that keeps history on the right track," Zelenskiy wrote on X. The president said the bill "will keep the war from expanding, save thousands and thousands of lives, and help both of our nations to become stronger." Minutes later, in his nightly video address, the president said the assistance "will be felt by our soldiers on the front lines" and praised the role of "American leadership" in preserving a rules-based international order.



Lawmakers walk past pro-Palestinian protesters prior to a US House of Representatives vote on legislation providing \$95 billion in security assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, at Capitol Hill in Washington, US.

## Edmundo Gonzalez, Venezuela's low-profile and last-minute opposition candidate

**Monitoring Desk**  
CARACAS: As time was running out, Venezuela's opposition chose low-profile former diplomat Edmundo Gonzalez to run against President Nicolas Maduro in a July election that political analysts said will require Gonzalez to build name recognition among voters. The stakes are high for

the July 28 vote as the US has made holding fair elections a condition of lifting sanctions on the South American nation. Initially named as a placeholder while the opposition struggled to confirm candidates, Gonzalez' candidacy was finalized a day before a Saturday deadline to replace him with someone else.

## Palestinians to reconsider US ties after membership veto

**Monitoring Desk**  
RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority will "reconsider" its relationship with the United States after Washington vetoed a Palestinian bid for full UN membership earlier this week, president Mahmud Abbas said on Saturday. "The Palestinian leadership will reconsider bilateral relations with the United States to ensure the protection of our people's interests, our cause, and our rights," Abbas told the official Palestinian news agency Wafa. Wafa said his remarks came "on the heels of the United States' use of veto power" at the UN Security Council. Thursday's vote saw 12 countries on the Council back a resolution recommending full Palestinian membership and two — Britain and Switzerland — abstain. Only the United States, Israel's staunch ally, voted against, using its veto to block the resolution.



Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan meets with Ismail Haniyeh, leader of the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Istanbul, Turkey.

## Israeli strikes on southern Gaza city of Rafah kill 18, mostly children, as US advances aid package

**Monitoring Desk**  
RAFAH: Israeli strikes on the southern Gaza city of Rafah overnight killed 18 people, including 14 children, health officials said Sunday, as the United States was on track to approve billions of dollars of additional military aid to its close ally. Israel has carried out near-daily air raids on Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million has sought refuge from fighting elsewhere. It has also vowed to expand its ground offensive to the city on the border with Egypt despite international calls for restraint, including from the U.S. The House of Representatives approved a \$26 billion aid package on Saturday that includes around \$9 billion in humanitarian assistance for Gaza. The first strike killed a man, his wife and their 3-year-old child, according to the nearby Kuwaiti Hospital, which received the bodies.

## 1 dead, 7 missing after two Japanese military helicopters crash

**Monitoring Desk**  
TOKYO: One person was killed and seven people were missing on Sunday after two Japanese military helicopters collided before crashing into the sea, officials said. A spokesman for Japan's Self Defence Force (SDF) confirmed the incident to AFP, adding that one person was rescued but later confirmed dead. Defence Minister Minoru Kihara said rescuers "spotted what are believed to be part of the aircraft in the sea, and we believe that the two helicopters crashed." "At this point the cause is unknown, but firstly we do our best to save lives," Kihara told reporters. Hours later, Kihara told reporters that the crew member who was rescued "was confirmed dead". He also said the ministry "discovered the flight recorders in places close to each other," and so the "possibility is high that (the two helicopters) collided."

## North Korea tests 'super-large warhead'

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korea has tested a "super-large warhead" designed for a strategic cruise missile, state media said on Saturday, the most recent test since UN sanctions monitoring against the nuclear-armed nation was upended last month by Russia. The announcement comes after Russia in March used its United Nations Security Council veto to effectively end UN monitoring of violations of the raft of sanctions on Kim Jong Un's government for its nuclear and weapons programme.

## Iran's Khamenei thanks armed forces for attack on Israel

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei thanked the country's armed forces for their operation against Israel, and urged them to "ceaselessly pursue military innovation and learn the enemy's tactics," Iran's official news agency reported on Sunday. Tehran openly targeted Israel for the first time on April 13 with more than 300 missiles and drones in what it said was retaliation for Israel's suspected deadly bombing of its embassy compound in Damascus on April 1.

## Erdogan meets Hamas leader in Turkey, discusses efforts for regional peace

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISTANBUL: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan discussed efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza and reach a fair and lasting peace in the region during a meeting with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Istanbul on Saturday, his office said. It was the first meeting between Erdogan and a Hamas delegation headed by Haniyeh since Israel began its military offensive in the Gaza Strip. Haniyeh's visit to Turkey took place three days after he met Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Doha. "Issues related to Israel's attacks on lands of Palestine, particularly Gaza, efforts for adequate and uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and a fair and lasting peace process in the region were discussed," the Turkish presidency said in a statement. The visit took place amid escalating regional tensions following Israel's reported attack on Iran this week. "Erdogan stressed that Israel should not benefit from the developments (between Iran and Israel) and that it is important to make efforts that will draw attention to Gaza again," the statement added. NATO member Turkey has denounced Israel's offensive in Gaza following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and called for an immediate ceasefire. Erdogan has called Hamas a "liberation movement" while slamming the West for what he calls its unconditional support of Israel. Ankara has also imposed trade restrictions on Israel.

## Russia says US facing humiliation in Ukraine like in Vietnam

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russia said on Sunday U.S. lawmakers' support for \$60.84 billion more in aid for Ukraine showed that Washington was wading much deeper into a hybrid war against Moscow that would end in humiliation on a par with the Vietnam or Afghanistan conflicts. President Vladimir Putin's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has touched off the worst fallout in relations between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, according to Russian and U.S. diplomats. On Saturday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed with broad bipartisan support a \$95 billion legislative package providing security assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, over bitter objections from some far-right Republicans. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said it was clear that the United States wanted Ukraine "to fight to the last Ukrainian" including with attacks on Russian sovereign territory and civilians. "Washington's deeper and deeper immersion in the hybrid war against Russia will turn into a loud and humiliating fiasco for United States such as Vietnam and Afghanistan," Zakharova said. Russia, she said, will give "an unconditional and resolute response" to the U.S. move to get more involved in the Ukraine war. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns warned last week that without more U.S. military support Ukraine could lose on the battlefield, but that with support Kyiv's forces could hold their own this year.

