

# Independent

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QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti presiding over meeting of Provincial Cabinet

## Seeds of hatred sowed in minds of youth to keep them away from state through social media under pre-planned conspiracy: CM

CM and Balochistan cabinet honour Israrullah Khan Kakar on his election as President of Oxford University Students Union; says hard working and talented youngsters like Israrullah are asset of country

**Independent Report** would remove their sense of deprivations by embracing them. He stressed that there is need to implement the Balochistan Youth Policy 2024 in real terms so as to guide the youngsters in right direction and they get opportunities of progress and move ahead. The Chief Minister stated so was while chairing the 5th meeting of Balochistan cabinet held here on Friday. During the course of meeting, certain important decisions were made on the agenda points of different departments. While addressing the meeting, Chief Minister issued orders for return of the loans of the private banks payable against the food department at the earliest. He said that we can't pay the exchequer of poor public on account of the interest. He regretfully pointed out that Rs. 2 million are being paid as interest daily while Rs. 60 million are paid monthly on this account. This is sheer cruelty and as such this practice must be stopped, he added.

## Pak-China relations transforming into enhanced investment, economic ties: PM Shehbaz

KARACHI (APP): The Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, emphasizing the transformation of friendly relations between China and Pakistan into enhanced investment, economic and trade ties, said that the next phase of CPEC will mainly involve business to business arrangements particularly in industrial sector. He expressed the views while addressing the representatives of international companies doing business in Pakistan including China here on Friday. Governor and Chief Minister of Sindh, Federal Ministers, prominent businessmen and senior officers were also present on this occasion. The PM said "Pakistan and China are two iron brothers and now we have to convert these relations of brotherhood and friendship into enhanced investment, economic and trade relations particularly in the fields of agriculture, information technology, mines, minerals and infrastructure." Being an agrarian economy with over 60% population Pakistan need to further strengthen and augment its agricultural produce, he said and informed that Pakistani agricultural exports increased by \$ 3 billion in the last financial year while we have fixed a target of additional 7 billion for the current fiscal year. Referring to his recent visit of China the PM said that fascinated by wonderful technology and educational culture in Chinese educational institutions he decided to send 1000 Pakistani boys and girls for advance training in China in Agriculture. That program was almost finalized and now these students would go to China for refresher courses, he added. Encouraging the Chinese businessmen to enter into business cooperation agreement with Pakistani counterparts the PM said that next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will mainly consist of business-to-business arrangements and joint ventures in industry particularly in textile, agriculture production and then export of these products to different countries.

## Meets COAS Pakistan holds significant place in Muslim world: Imam Masjid-i-Nabawi

COAS welcomed the dignitary and highlighted that visit by Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi to Pakistan is a matter of honour for the people of Pakistan.

RAWALPINDI (Online): Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi, Dr. Salah bin Mohammad Al-Budair called on Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir in Rawalpindi Friday. According to ISPR, during the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed. The COAS welcomed the dignitary and highlighted that visit by Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi to Pakistan is a matter of honour for the people of Pakistan. Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi said Pakistan has a significant place in the Muslim world and it is playing its vital role for peace and stability in the region. Both sides expressed satisfaction over Pak-Saudi relations. At the end Imam Masjid Al-Nabawi prayed for the peace, stability and unity of Muslim Ummah.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir exchanging views with Dr. Salah bin Mohammad Al-Budair, Imam Masjid-i-Nabawi (PBUH) during meeting held at General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi.

## Governor directs NADRA to improve present methodology by benefitting from modern scientific inventions & new IT

**Independent Report** QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has directed to the high ups of NADRA to create easiness and improve the present methodology by benefitting from the modern scientific inventions and new information technology. He also directed to start double shifts in the NADRA offices in big cities and run mobile vans for the remote areas of the province. Our actual objective is to serve the people better at their doorstep for we are making efforts and formulating public friendly policies. The Governor was speaking during the briefing on performance and future plan of the NADRA in Governor's House on Friday. Also present in the briefing were Director General NADRA, Kashif Iqbal and Principal Secretary to the Governor, Hashim Khan Ghilzai.

## NA unanimously adopts resolution to pay tribute to Olympic gold medalist Arshad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Friday unanimously adopted the resolution to pay tribute to world record holder javelin throw athlete Arshad Nadeem for winning a gold medal at the Paris Olympics 2024 with highest ever 92.97 meters long throw. Minister for Law and Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar tabled the resolution with his welcoming remarks for Imam Masjid e Nabawi (PBUH), Sheikh Dr. Salah Bin Muhammad Al-Budair and said that it was a blessed day for the nation with the eminent presence of the Imam. Tarar while paying tribute to the gold medalist Athlete said that Arshad Nadeem had set an Olympic world record by throwing the highest ever javelin throw. "All parliamentary leaders have demanded that the House should pass a resolution to pay tribute to Arshad Nadeem," he added.



QUETTA: DG NADRA Muhammad Kashif Iqbal briefed Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail about NADRA



KARACHI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses business delegates from the People's Republic of China.

## Govt accepts JI demands to give relief in electricity prices. Attaullah Tarar

Ji's sit-in achieved its targets, claims Hafiz Naeem

QUETTA: The Governor, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has congratulated the Pakistani athlete Arshad Nadeem on winning gold medal in the Paris Olympics. In their separate felicitation messages issued here on late Thursday night, the Governor and Chief Minister said that the courageous and talented youngster Arshad Nadeem is pride of Pakistani nation. Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti said that the longest Javelin throw in the Olympics final is a commendable honour. With this, he set an excellent Olympics record, the Chief Minister added. He said that there's no dearth of talented youth in the country. The Chief Minister also expressed best wishes for more successes in future.

## Govt accepts JI demands to give relief in electricity prices. Attaullah Tarar

Ji's sit-in achieved its targets, claims Hafiz Naeem

RAWALPINDI (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday night reiterated the government's firm resolve to provide relief to people by reducing electricity prices. He said that the final round of talks with the Jamat-e-Islami remained fruitful with the government accepting certain demands of JI. He said that the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had already directed the government's negotiating team to accede to the JI's demands which were aimed at providing relief to the people. Addressing the protesters at the conclusion of the 5th and final round of bilateral negotiations with the JI, the minister endorsed the agreement announced by the JI leadership. He highlighted that government was giving the subsidy of Rs 50 billion in electricity prices, and the three months relief to the consumers using up to 200 units. He said the government would fully act upon the agreements and the commitments formed in that regard would regularly meet to monitor its implementation. The minister also condemned in the strongest terms the brutalities being committed by the Israeli forces in Gaza. "The UN must bring Israel to justice for war crimes in Gaza," he added.



RAWALPINDI: Chief (emir) of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JI) Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, and Liaqat Baloch exchanging view on stage in sit-protest, after final round of negotiations between the government and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) concluded successfully.

## Gwadar & Balochistan are inseparable part of Pakistan, no one can separate them from us, asserts Zia Langove

Provincial Minister Home says developed Gwadar can put Balochistan and Pakistan on track of development and prosperity; hate & disturbance would push province in more darknesses

**Independent Report** QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Ziaullah Langove has categorically stated that Gwadar and Balochistan are inseparable part of Pakistan which can't be separated from us. He said that the developed Gwadar can put Balochistan and Pakistan on track of development and prosperity. While hate and disturbances would push province in more darknesses. In an official statement issued here on Friday, the Provincial Minister for Home urged the people of Balochistan to reject terrorism by making education their mission as it (education) is the ornament through which the darknesses of ignorance can be evaded. He stressed that people of Balochistan should play their role for serving the province and country utilizing their capabilities. He also stressed that every segment of the society including doctors, lawyers, teachers and others have to contribute in development of the province while presenting best services. He urged the parents to play their wholehearted role for decorating their children with ornament of education.

## CM calls on Governor; agree to stay in constant contact for interest of province

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti met with Governor Balochistan Jaffer Khan Mandokhail at the Governor House here on Friday. During the course of meeting, issues of mutual interest including ongoing development projects in the province, important political and administrative issues were discussed. The changes taking place in the region, ensuring good governance in the province and benefiting the people from development projects were also discussed. Both leaders were agreed to consult each other and stay in constant contact for the best interest of the province.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti meeting with Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail

## Pak Armed Forces, CJCSC felicitate Arshad Nadeem

RAWALPINDI (INP): Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) Department of Pakistan Army congratulated the nation including Arshad Nadeem for winning the first gold medal for Pakistan after 40 years in the Paris Olympics. According to ISPR, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) and Chiefs of Pakistan Army including Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Sidhu, and Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf congratulated the



nation on the victory of Arshad Nadeem for winning the first gold medal for Pakistan in Olympics after 40 years. The ISPR stated that Arshad Nadeem made history by becoming the first Pakistani athlete to win an individual gold medal. Pakistan's spectacular success in the Olympics is the result of Arshad's unwavering dedication. In its statement, the ISPR added that the success in the Olympics is proof of Arshad Nadeem's tireless work, perseverance, and exemplary work. In the men's javelin throw event final at the Paris Olympics, the eyes of the whole nation were on Arshad Nadeem, who was Pakistan's only hope of getting a medal in the Olympics after 32 years.

## PM felicitates Prof Yunus on swearing in as Bangladesh's interim gov't head

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday felicitated Professor Muhammad Yunus as he took the oath of office of Chief Advisor of Bangladesh's interim government. Heartiest felicitations to Professor Muhammad Yunus on his swearing-in as Chief Advisor of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. He wished Professor Yunus great success in guiding Bangladesh towards a harmonious and prosperous future. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that he looked forward to working with him to deepen cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh in the days ahead.

## FO spokesperson rubbishes Israeli media's baseless reports targeting Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Office spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch on Friday rubbished as "baseless" the reports published in the Israeli media, alleging any commitment by Pakistan to send nukes to support Iran. At her weekly press briefing, the spokesperson responding to a query, rejected a Jerusalem Post's report of August 6 which alleged that "if the conflict between Iran and Israel escalates, Pakistan plans to supply Iran with Shaheen-III medium-range ballistic missiles." "Such reports are patently false. Before paying any attention to such reports, it is important to reflect on the source behind such baseless reports and the malicious agenda behind them," the spokesperson remarked. She said, "This is a critical time in the Middle East. We, therefore, urge all parties, including the media, not to indulge in peddling of fake news."



## Kundi terms justice crucial for development of society

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Kundi, on Friday emphasized that social justice was crucial for the development of any society. He said that if justice was not delivered promptly, public trust in the justice system erodes. He urged the lawyers to play a significant role in ensuring swift and affordable justice. The Governor also highlighted his party's consistent support for lawyers and noted that many prominent positions in the country had been filled by lawyers. The Governor said these remarks during a meeting with a delegation from the Association of International Lawyers, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter at the Governor House Peshawar. The delegation, led by Association President Waqar Khan Advocate, included Vice President Fiza Nizami, General Secretary Shahid Aziz, Advocate Hashmat Sadozai, Advocate Javed Iqbal Marwat and other officials and cabinet members from various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The delegation congratulated the Governor on assuming his office and presented him a bouquet. They informed the Governor about their organization's mission to uphold judicial independence, rule of law, and human rights. The Association of International Lawyers is also working globally for the welfare of lawyers and resolving their issues. The delegation shared that the Association had established Human Rights Committees in various districts, leading to legal assistance for families and the resolution of several cases. They are also working on child protection and other human rights issues, they told. The female lawyers in the delegation suggested to the Governor that there should be government-sponsored scholarships and professional development training programs for female lawyers both domestically and internationally.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Kundi is called on by International Lawyers KP Chapter delegation at Governor House.

## AJK Govt unveils ambitious socio-economic, Tourism plan

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Friday formulated an integrated plan aimed at the holistic development of the socio-economic and tourism sectors in the region. According to official sources, the primary focus of the plan is to promote adventure tourism in AJK, with the aim of transforming the region into a major tourism hub in South Asia. To this end, the government plans to organize a nationwide tourism conference in Mirpur in the near future, inviting renowned global tourism organizations. The sources further revealed that the government is determined to improve the living standards of the common people and accelerate the pace of ongoing development projects in the liberated area. Towards this end, the government has directed the relevant authorities to identify the problems faced by the common people and devise prompt solutions. To boost technical education in AJK, the government has also decided to establish a Higher Technical Education Board in the near future. Additionally, the plan includes setting up Artisan Schools in Mirpur and Muzaffarabad to produce skilled manpower for the cottage industry. The government is also taking steps to establish district-level Chambers of Commerce and Industry across AJK to promote trade and commerce activities. Moreover, the plan involves expediting the development of projects such as the Export Processing Zone and Industrial Estates in Mirpur, the region's major industrial and business hub. Recognizing the importance of engaging the overseas Kashmiri community, the AJK government has decided to invite them to participate in various developmental and educational activities as well as the business and industrial sectors.

## Climate change cell to be established in health department

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Minister of Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah had announced the establishment of a Climate Change Cell in the Health Department to address health-related issues in the context of climate change. Climate change has severe impacts on health, with natural disasters like floods affecting health first, said Syed Qasim Ali Shah in a statement. Diseases like malaria, dengue, and leishmaniasis have emerged in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to climate change. He said that recent monsoon floods have led to a significant increase in malaria cases in southern districts. Floods contaminate drinking water sources, leading to waterborne diseases. Skin diseases, waterborne diseases, and vector-borne diseases are all consequences of climate change. The minister said that extreme heat and cold waves are affecting children, the elderly, and women. Climate change is affecting healthcare centers, staff, and the public, making it the biggest challenge to public health.



KARACHI: Relatives of Atif Khan are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of police and demanding justice for him, at Karachi press club.

## Pervaiz Ashraf greets Arshad Nadeem on historic Olympic gold medal win

LAHORE (APP): Former Speaker of the National Assembly and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Punjab President Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has extended his heartfelt congratulations to national hero Arshad Nadeem for securing the gold medal in the javelin throw at the Olympics. In a statement issued on Friday, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf lauded Arshad Nadeem's historic achievement, noting that this victory marks the first individual Olympic gold medal for Pakistan. He emphasized that Nadeem's triumph has not only made history but has also brought immense pride to the entire nation on the global stage. Highlighting the significance of the accomplishment, Ashraf mentioned that Arshad Nadeem shattered a 114-year-old record in the Olympic javelin throw event. He remarked that Nadeem's name will be forever etched in golden letters in the annals of both Olympic and Pakistani sports history.

## 7 die, 1344 injured in 1234 road accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least seven persons were killed and 1344 injured in 1234 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 582 people with serious injuries were shifted to hospitals, while 762 victims with minor injuries were treated at the site by rescue medical teams, thus reducing the burden on hospitals. Furthermore, the analysis showed that 700 drivers, 63 underage drivers, 161 pedestrians, and 490 passengers were among the victims.

## ANF seizes 81 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations managed to recover 81 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He said, 12 kg opium and 21.6 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza Sheikhupura and an accused was arrested.

## Ramesh Arora says: Minorities Day to be observed with grandeur

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora has said that for the first time, the Punjab government will celebrate Minorities Day with full grandeur on August 11 (Sunday) to acknowledge their contribution towards the development of the country. He was addressing a gathering of Christian community during his visit to the residence of Pastor Shaikat Ashiq in the Chuhang area of Lahore. A large number of people from Christian community warmly welcomed him upon arrival and flower petals were showered from rooftops. On this occasion, the representatives of Christian community expressed their gratitude to the minister for presenting a historic budget for minorities and expressed hope that during his tenure, the sense of deprivation among minorities would be effectively addressed.

## Pregnant woman strangulated to death in Shikarpur

**Independent Report**  
SHIKARPUR: Tragedy struck in Shikarpur city when a pregnant woman was reportedly killed by strangulation over a minor dispute. The incident occurred on Friday in the jurisdiction of Lakh-Gate police station. According to initial reports, Surahiya Abro, wife of Kashif Abro, was found dead in her house located in the Plaza Cinema area.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Khan talking to media persons on the eve of inaugural ceremony of 100th Pakistan Lifestyle Furniture Expo.

## Minister says: Punjab to purchase 3,000 new buses in transport overhaul

ATTOCK (APP): Punjab Transport Minister, Bilal Akbar Khan on Friday announced a major upgrade to the province's transport system, vowing the purchase of 3,000 new buses to improve public transportation. During a visit to the Attock General Bus Stand, Minister Bilal Khan emphasized the government's commitment to providing quality travel experiences for passengers. He directed officials to enforce axle-load regulations, prohibit LPG cylinders in public transport and implement measures to reduce road accidents. Highlighting the government's broader efforts to improve public services, Minister Khan mentioned initiatives like providing free solar systems to households with electricity consumption below 200 units and offering subsidized tractors to farmers.

# International News

## Russia declares an emergency in Kursk, under attack by Ukraine. 12 killed in Russian strike on mall

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russia declared a "federal-level" emergency in the Kursk region following a large-scale incursion from Ukraine and sent reinforcements there on Friday, four days after hundreds of Ukrainian troops poured across the border in what appeared to be Kyiv's biggest attack on Russian soil since the war began. Meanwhile, a Russian plane-launched missile slammed into a Ukrainian shopping mall in the middle of the day, killing at least 12 people and wounding 44 others, authorities said. The mall in Kostiantynivka, in the eastern Donetsk region, is located in the town's residential area. Thick black smoke rose above it after the strike. "This is another targeted attack on a crowded place, another act of terror by the Russians," Donetsk regional head Vadym Filashkin said in a Telegram post. It was the second major strike on the town in almost a year. Last September, a Russian missile hit an outdoor market there, killing 17. Russia's Defense Ministry said that reinforcements were on their way to the Kursk region to counter Ukraine's daring raid. Russia is deploying multiple rocket launchers, towed artillery guns, tanks transported on trailers and heavy tracked vehicles, the RIA-Novosti news agency said, citing the Defense Ministry. Little reliable information about the surprise Ukrainian operation has emerged, and its strategic aims are unclear. Ukrainian officials have refused to comment specifically about the incursion, which is taking place about 500 kilometers (320 miles) southwest of Moscow. But a top adviser to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday that border region attacks will cause Russia to "start to realize that the war is slowly creeping inside of Russian territory." Mykhailo Podolyak also suggested that the operation would improve Kyiv's hand in the event of negotiations with Moscow. Mathieu Boulegue, a defense analyst at the Chatham House think tank in London, said the Ukrainians appear to have a clear goal in mind, even if they're not saying what it is. "Such a coordinated ground force movement responds to a clear military objective, yet unknown, that requires extreme operational security," Boulegue told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. At the same time, the raid spooks the Russian public and delivers a slap in the face to Russian President Vladimir Putin, offering Ukraine "a great PR coup," he said.



A view shows a supermarket heavily damaged in a Russian military strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kostiantynivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine.

## ABC News says Harris, Trump have agreed to presidential debate on Sept 10

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: ABC News says that both Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and his Democratic counterpart, Kamala Harris, have agreed to meet in a debate on Sept. 10. The network's announcement on Thursday came shortly after Trump told a news conference that he had agreed to three debates with Harris in September on separate networks. Trump is rejoining the ABC debate days after posting on his social media network that he would not appear on the network, citing a lawsuit he has filed. His decision sets up a highly anticipated moment in an election where the first debate led to a massive change in the race — with Democratic President Joe Biden ending his reelection bid and endorsing Harris. "I think it's very important to have debates," Trump said Thursday. "I look forward to the debates because I think we have to set the record straight." On the social media site X later on Thursday, Harris wrote that "I hear that Donald Trump has fully committed to debating me on September 10. I look forward to it."

## UN warns IS Afghanistan branch growing in strength

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: A UN counter-terrorism official warned on Thursday that the Afghanistan branch of the militant Islamic State group (IS) poses the greatest external terrorist threat to Europe as it boosts its organisational strength. "ISIL-K has improved its financial and logistical capabilities in the past six months, including by tapping into Afghan and Central Asian diasporas for support," Vladimir Voronkov, undersecretary-general for counter-terrorism, said.

## Bodies of 34 Rohingya refugees found after boat sinking off Bangladesh

**Monitoring Desk**  
COX'S BAZAR: The bodies of 34 Rohingya refugees, who fled Myanmar only to drown when their overcrowded boat sank while crossing a river to Bangladesh, have been recovered, a top local government official said on Thursday. Other refugees fleeing the bitter conflict described grim scenes of "bloodshed" as thousands tried to escape. The boat sank on Tuesday, when the bodies of 10 people — including young children — were initially recovered. But more have since washed ashore, taking the total killed to 34. Police said the group had fled their villages in Myanmar's Rakhine state and their small craft sank in the Naf River, near Bangladesh's Shahpari Island. Adnan Chowdhury, the government administrator of Bangladesh's Teknaf border town, said the boat was carrying Rohingya people from Myanmar. Local councillor Abdus Salam said the bodies were buried. "The Rohingya people were fleeing with their lives from Myanmar," he said. At least 1,000 Rohingya have fled the war in Myanmar's Rakhine state to Bangladesh in the past few weeks, Chowdhury said. Clashes have rocked Rakhine since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked junta forces in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021. Abdul Kalam, 35, a Rohingya refugee, arrived on a different boat on Wednesday after fleeing the Rakhine town of Maungdaw and said thousands were trying to escape. "Arakan Army were killing us... they want to kick us out of Rakhine," he said.

## Afghan Taliban chief asks public workers to attend mosque

**Monitoring Desk**  
KABUL: Afghan government employees must attend mosque five times a day or face punishment, Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada said on Thursday in his latest edict. "This is another targeted attack on a crowded place, another act of terror by the Russians," Donetsk regional head Vadym Filashkin said in a Telegram post. It was the second major strike on the town in almost a year. Last September, a Russian missile hit an outdoor market there, killing 17. Russia's Defense Ministry said that reinforcements were on their way to the Kursk region to counter Ukraine's daring raid. Russia is deploying multiple rocket launchers, towed artillery guns, tanks transported on trailers and heavy tracked vehicles, the RIA-Novosti news agency said, citing the Defense Ministry. Little reliable information about the surprise Ukrainian operation has emerged, and its strategic aims are unclear. Ukrainian officials have refused to comment specifically about the incursion, which is taking place about 500 kilometers (320 miles) southwest of Moscow. But a top adviser to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday that border region attacks will cause Russia to "start to realize that the war is slowly creeping inside of Russian territory." Mykhailo Podolyak also suggested that the operation would improve Kyiv's hand in the event of negotiations with Moscow. Mathieu Boulegue, a defense analyst at the Chatham House think tank in London, said the Ukrainians appear to have a clear goal in mind, even if they're not saying what it is. "Such a coordinated ground force movement responds to a clear military objective, yet unknown, that requires extreme operational security," Boulegue told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. At the same time, the raid spooks the Russian public and delivers a slap in the face to Russian President Vladimir Putin, offering Ukraine "a great PR coup," he said.

## Somalia's cabinet approves bill for universal suffrage

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOGADISHU: Somalia's cabinet approved a bill on Thursday that, if confirmed by parliament, will revert the country's election system to universal suffrage for the first time in decades, ending a process of indirect voting, the government's spokesperson said. Amid widespread insecurity caused by an Islamist insurgency and weak state structures, in recent years lawmakers voted for the president, while clan heads and elders elected lawmakers in both the federal government and regional states. The country had initially been scheduled to move to direct voting in 2020, but protracted squabbles among politicians and persisting insecurity across the country forced the government to retain the indirect ballot.

## Israel vows to eliminate new Hamas leader as war enters 11th month

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Israel vowed to eliminate new Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar, the alleged mastermind of the Oct 7 attack, whose appointment further inflamed regional tensions as the Gaza war entered its 11th month on Wednesday. The naming of Sinwar to lead the Palestinian group came as Israel braced for potential Iranian retaliation over the killing of his predecessor Ismail Haniyeh last week in Tehran. Speaking at a military base on Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was "determined" to defend itself. "We are prepared both defensively and offensively," he told new recruits. Army chief Lieutenant General Herzl Halevi vowed to "find him (Sinwar), attack him" and force Hamas to find another leader.

## Israel revokes diplomatic status of Norway's envoys to Palestinian Authority

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM/WASHINGTON: Israel said on Thursday it was revoking the diplomatic status of Norway's envoys to the Palestinian Authority accusing Oslo of "anti-Israel behaviour" during the Gaza crisis and drawing a formal protest. Norway — a key facilitator in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, particularly in the secret negotiations that led to the Oslo Accords of the 1990s — swiftly summoned the Israeli ambassador to lodge a formal protest.

## UK, Egypt issue alerts for Iran, Lebanon airspace as risks of military conflict rise

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: Britain and Egypt asked their airlines on Wednesday to avoid Iranian and Lebanese airspace amid growing fears of a possible broader conflict in the region after the killing of senior members of militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Britain's advisory to its airlines to avoid Lebanon's airspace came hours after Egypt instructed all of its airlines to avoid Iran's airspace for three hours in the early morning on Thursday. Many airlines globally are revising their schedules to avoid Iranian and Lebanese airspace while also calling off flights to Israel and Lebanon. Flights through conflict zones became a prominent industry safety issue a decade ago after Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board. US-based United Airlines said on Wednesday its flights to Tel Aviv, which were paused on July 31 due to security concerns, remained suspended. "We continue to closely monitor the situation and will focus on the safety of our customers and crews as we decide when to resume service," the airline said. Its rival Delta Air Lines has raised its flights between New York and Tel Aviv through Aug. 31. British carriers are not flying to Lebanon currently, according to flight tracking website Flightradar24. Singapore Airlines stopped flying through Iranian airspace last Friday and is using alternative routes, saying safety is its top priority. Similarly, Egyptian airlines have already been avoiding Iran's airspace.

