



"Efforts should be made to work in collaboration with universities to share practical knowledge with students of Statics and relevant Field"

Federal, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives  
Prof. Ahsan Iqbal

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## PM, US ambassador discuss bilateral ties

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan Donald Blome paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The prime minister expressed satisfaction on the present state of bilateral relations. He emphasized the need to maintain the positive momentum by regular convening of existing dialogue mechanisms, focused on trade, investment, energy, health, defence, education, agriculture and climate change.

The prime minister said that his government would focus on macro-economic reforms to stabilize the economy and attract foreign investment. In this regard, he also highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) that has been established to fast-track foreign investments in priority sectors in Pakistan.

A number of issues of bilateral and regional significance were also discussed during the meeting, including the situation in Gaza and the Red Sea, developments in Afghanistan, as well as the case of Dr Aafia Siddiqui, which was raised forcefully by the prime minister.

While congratulating the prime minister on his reelection, ambassador Blome said that the U.S. considered Pakistan an important partner and hoped to work with the government to build stronger ties between the two countries.

### Any stories regarding the visit of a high-level IAEA delegation to Pakistan are fake news: Mumtaz Zahra Baloch



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has said that any stories regarding the visit of a high-level IAEA delegation to Pakistan are fake news.

In response to media queries regarding visit of IAEA delegation to Pakistan, Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that no official from IAEA is currently visiting Pakistan, nor are any policy talks planned in the near future with IAEA.

She said that Director General IAEA visited Pakistan in February 2023. This Ministry had issued briefings to the media on the occasion, she said. APP

## Muhammad Aurangzeb appreciates the longstanding bilateral relations & development cooperation b/w EU & Pakistan

Ambassador of the EU to Pakistan Dr. Riina Kionka calls on Finance Minister



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, at the Finance Division, on Friday.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb welcomed the Ambassador of the EU and appreciated the longstanding bilateral relations and

development cooperation between EU and Pakistan. He thanked the Ambassador for EU's ongoing support in flood-affected areas of Pakistan. Dr. Riina Kionka congratulated the Federal Minister of Finance and Revenue on his recent appointment to office and looked forward to collaborating with the new Government. The Finance Minister apprised the EU Ambassador about the important reform priorities of the Government. The Finance Minister also shared possible areas of mutual collaboration including digitization, export competitiveness, livestock and dairy production.

The Ambassador acknowledged the economic agenda of the Government and assured the Finance Minister of EU's continued support to Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Donald Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## PM Shahbaz Sharif, accompanied by key members of the Cabinet, visited the General Headquarters

The PM was received by Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, and was presented guard of honour

VOM Report

RAWALPINDI: The Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shahbaz Sharif, accompanied by key members of the Cabinet, visited the General Headquarters (GHQ) Rawalpindi today. The PM was received by Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, and was presented guard of honour. Floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada was laid by the Prime Minister, to pay tribute to the martyrs.

During the visit, Prime Minister and Cabinet members engaged in discussions with military leadership on matters of national security, regional stability and military preparedness. They were briefed on the current security environment, threat spectrum, response to the security threats and ongoing counter terrorism operations.

PM and Cabinet members appreciated the professionalism, operational readiness, and sacrifices of Pakistan Army in war against terrorism and commended the dedication of the Pakistan Army in safeguarding the nation's territorial integrity and ensuring



peace and stability.

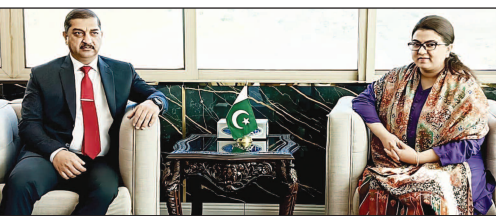
The PM assured that the Government shall provide all the resources required for ensuring operational readiness of the Armed Forces. He said that Pakistan is destined to rise and the role of the Armed Forces in ensuring peaceful rise of Pakistan cannot be over-emphasized.

COAS thanked the PM for the visit and reposing confidence in the Army. COAS

affirmed that Pakistan Army will continue to measure up to the nation's expectations and will resolutely support the Government in addressing the security challenges facing Pakistan.

The visit concluded with civilian and military leadership reiterating their commitment to upholding national interests and working together for a prosperous and secure Pakistan.

## CEO Telenor calls on Minister of State for IT



ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Telenor Khurram Ashfaq on Friday called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja and discussed issues regarding 5G rollout, innovation and youth development.

The CEO congratulated the minister for assuming the charge, said a news release issued here. Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that youth were the asset of the country, adding it was vital to equip youth with digital skills. The government was committed for the development of youth, she added. Meanwhile, Director General Special Communication Organization (DCO) Major General Umar Ahmad Shah called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja. — DNA

## NA grants extension to seven Ordinances for further 120 days

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly, here on Friday, passed a resolution to grant an extension to seven Ordinances for a further period of one hundred and twenty days.

The resolution was moved by the Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar. The extension was granted under the proviso to sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of clause (2) of Article 89 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Ordinances included The Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 (No. II of 2023), The Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, The Pakistan Postal Services Management Board (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, The National Highway Authority (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 (No. V of 2023), The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 (No. VI of 2023), The Privatization Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 (No. VII of 2023), and the



Establishment of Telecommunication Appellate Tribunal Ordinance, 2023 (Ordinance No. VIII of 2023). APP

## Handful miscreants bent on sabotaging Pakistan-IMF deal: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar said on Friday said a handful of miscreants associated with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was bent upon sabotaging Pakistan's deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that was crucial for economic stability.

"In a bid to disrupt Pakistan's ongoing talks with IMF, some miscreants protested in front of IMF and World Bank offices in United States and indulged in sloganeering against Pakistan Army," he said while addressing a news conference here.

The protestors belonging to the PTI were urging the IMF to give funds to Pakistan only if their jailed leader was released, he said, regretting that "activists of an anti-national party" continued to hold sit-in and protest outside the IMF office.

"This is a fashionable crowd and these are the enemies of Pakistan who are left

with no love for the country," the minister said while paying tributes to the overseas Pakistanis who were sending their hard-earned money to the country by doing white and blue collar jobs abroad.

He said these people were protesting to stop funding to the people of Pakistan were wearing costly branded shoes and carrying branded bags.

They only wanted to sabotage the IMF deal because their dream was to make Pakistan default but Inshallah, Pakistan would make progress and the growth rate would increase soon.

The heinous conspiracies of anti-national elements would not have any effect on the IMF deal, the minister said emphatically, adding the imprisoned PTI founder chairman was involved in Toshka Khana fraud, 190 million pound scam and cypher case.

He advised the PTI to approach courts of Pakistan for release of Imran as IMF



and World Bank had nothing to do with his cases. Tarar said that country was stable today

with the sacrifices of martyrs, Ghazis and efforts patriotic political leaders. The Allah Almighty had always pro-

TECTED Pakistan from external and internal threats and the talks with the IMF were going on positively which was also reflected by the trends in stock exchange, he added.

"We have been voted by the people to solve the problems in the country, not to increase them", he maintained.

He said under the vision of the Prime Minister, efforts would be made for making the country prosperous through hard work.

The Prime Minister, he added, had given a comprehensive agenda on economic reforms including restructuring FBR, increasing tax network, reducing government expenditure.

He said since the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took over the power, the economic situation has started improving. The minister said that the Prime Minister wanted an early solution to the country's problems and he had been pursuing the vision to chart the country on path

of progress and prosperity.

He said that international organizations like Bloomberg were hailing the appointment of Muhammad Aurangzeb as the Finance Minister of the country as he had command over economic affairs.

The minister said that unfortunately an anti-national party involved in May 9 incidents was conspiring and working against the interests of Pakistan.

He said that the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz faced imprisonment due to fake cases but it never compromised on honour and dignity of the country.

Tarar urged the youth to side with Pakistan instead of any political party, adding "This is the mission of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and we will be moving forward with the same spirit."

To a query, he said the PTI would be requested in the dialogues to refrain from taking any such initiatives that undermined economy or country. APP

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## World must recommit to the fight against Islamophobia

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH

Amid the growing challenges of division and prejudice, International Day to Combat Islamophobia emerges as a vital catalyst for global unity and understanding. Designated by the UN in 2022, this day, observed worldwide annually on March 15, holds profound significance. It commemorates the anniversary of the Christchurch mosque shootings, a tragic event that claimed the lives of 51 innocent individuals during Friday prayers. As we mark this solemn occasion, it is important to reflect on the devastating consequences of hate and intolerance and recommit ourselves to combating Islamophobia in all its forms.

This important day compels us to confront the harsh reality that Islamophobia is not merely a distant concern but a stark and present threat to individuals and communities around the world. By honoring the victims and survivors of the Christchurch massacre, we ought to acknowledge their suffering and affirm our collective responsibility to stand against bigotry and prejudice. Islamophobia, like all forms of discrimination, is rooted in ignorance and fear. It thrives on stereotypes, misinformation and dehumanization. In addition, it manifests itself in overt acts of violence, such as the Christchurch shootings, as well as in subtler forms of prejudice and discrimination that permeate our societies. From discriminatory policies and practices to everyday acts of microaggression, Islamophobia perpetuates a climate of hostility and exclusion that undermines the fundamental principles of equality and justice.

In order to combat Islamophobia effectively, we must first recognize it for what it is: a violation of human rights and a threat to social cohesion and peace. It is not only an attack on individuals and communities, it is also an assault on the values of pluralism, diversity and tolerance that lie at the heart of our shared humanity. As such, addressing Islamophobia requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that encompasses legal, social and educational measures aimed at challenging stereotypes, promoting understanding and fostering dialogue. To begin with, education plays a crucial role in combating Islamophobia by dispelling myths and fostering empathy and respect for cultural and religious diversity. By integrating comprehensive education about Islam and Muslim communities into school curricula, we can equip future generations with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate an increasingly diverse world with openness and acceptance.

In addition, initiatives that actively foster interfaith dialogue and cooperation play a pivotal role in fostering more inclusive and harmonious societies. By providing platforms for individuals of diverse faiths and beliefs to come together, engage in meaningful conversations and collaborate on shared goals, these initiatives not only bridge divides but also cultivate empathy, mutual understanding and respect.

Through facilitated discussions, joint projects and cultural exchanges, participants have the opportunity to challenge stereotypes, dispel misconceptions and build genuine connections based on shared values and aspirations. Moreover, interfaith initiatives often serve as catalysts for broader social change, inspiring communities to work together toward common objectives such as social justice, environmental sustainability and peace-building. By embracing the rich diversity of religious traditions and perspectives, these initiatives contribute to the creation of more cohesive and resilient societies, in which all individuals are valued and respected regardless of their faith or background.

Legislation and policy measures are also essential tools in the fight against Islamophobia. Governments must enact and enforce laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all individuals. Authorities must also take swift and decisive action to investigate and prosecute hate crimes and acts of violence motivated by Islamophobia, sending a clear message that such behavior will not be tolerated in any civilized society.

At the same time, combating Islamophobia requires collective action at the grassroots level. Communities must come together to challenge stereotypes, confront prejudice and promote inclusivity and solidarity. Through local initiatives such as community outreach programs, cultural exchanges and interfaith dialogue, individuals can build bridges across divides and foster a sense of belonging and mutual respect among people of diverse backgrounds.

More fundamentally, combating Islamophobia also necessitates addressing the structural inequalities and systemic injustices that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization. Economic disparities, social exclusion and political marginalization exacerbate the vulnerability of Muslim communities to discrimination and violence. Therefore, efforts to combat Islamophobia must be accompanied by broader efforts to address the root causes of inequality and injustice and to create inclusive societies where all individuals can thrive.

Finally, on this International Day to Combat Islamophobia, let us honor the memory of the victims of the Christchurch mosque shootings by renewing our commitment to combat hate and intolerance in all its forms. Also, let us stand in solidarity with Muslim communities around the world and reaffirm our shared humanity and commitment to justice and equality. Together, we can build a world where diversity is celebrated, differences are respected and all individuals can live free from fear and discrimination.

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh is a Harvard-educated Iranian American political scientist. X: @Dr\_Rafizadeh



Kamila Hyat

## The meaning of democracy

Democracy is the system of government that most analysts in the country and beyond it believe may be the best for our future. The question however is how it is put in place. There are many perceived problems with the most recent exercise in polling carried out in Pakistan which have left many disillusioned with the system and unwilling to accept its outcome. This is hardly surprising given the reports we are seeing of valid return forms which seem to have been quite clumsily tampered with and results would seem on the surface at least extremely strange given that initial readings from various polling stations within a constituency did not match the outcome. The same errors made in previous polls when the number of ballots cast for national and provincial assembly elections carried out on the same day did not match are also beginning to emerge. We do not know what will happen as election tribunals consider the various pleas placed before them but we do know that this would be a long process that may not yield results for many weeks, many months, or even longer.

fairness of the 2024 elections. Like others before him, he has reneged on these pledges.

The result is that there is now little faith left in the Election Commission of Pakistan as a body, and people are even less willing than before to trust the voting process and the question of what happens to the votes they cast. If these have no meaning, then our democracy itself has very little value in the eyes of people. It can in other words be said to have left behind a nation whose distrust in democracy grows by the day. In time, this will mean even lower turnouts and even less interest in polls since people know how they can be managed.

The new leaders who have come to power, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, need to be questioned about why he suggested unelected institutions be granted a supervisory role in the polling process rather than leaving the conduct and counting of ballots up to the government officials appointed for this purpose. In India, the democratic process itself has only rarely come under any kind of question or any shadow. We need to try and understand why this is the case. Of course, the fact that the Indian armed forces have never taken hold of the country or attempted to do so by force is one reason for this. There are also other reasons entrenched in a more stable and more practiced process of democracy.

If doubts continue to pour in, as is happening in the present time, questions will arise over whether these elections can stand and hold their rest of time. If they cannot, we have to ask what happens next and what this would mean for the country

already badly injured by a history of unfair play and problems at polling stations during past elections. We have to find a way to end this lack of transparency and the many doubts that seem to come with each election, as has been the case since the initial exercise of democracy carried out in 1970. The lack of fair play can only injure all the political parties and, unfortunately, they lack the ability to step forward, talk and sort things out amongst themselves.

The issue is not only to amend the system but also to build people's faith in democracy. This cannot happen if there is so much doubt about how the outcome was reached and by whom. The polling process itself needs to be far more open to scrutiny and far more transparent in the manner in which it is conducted. This is being said not only of the 2024 results but also of that in 2018 and the balloting for nationwide elections carried out in the years before this.

In 2018 we are told that from the room where the final result was compiled, the agents of political parties were not allowed entry as should be the case under the law and instead locked out by giant doors on which bolts and locks had been placed. This is extremely unfortunate and the manner of tampering has become more and more evident to people over the past few years as they have become better educated in the methods and nuances of democracy.

We need to iron out the sheet and make sure a clean one is laid out. It is probably not possible to do this immediately. But the question raised at the 2024 poll and the debate in which the media was allowed to look

and question many aspects of it holds out some hope for the future. Of course, not all was as transparent and as visible as it should be. But we can only hope that by moving forward, people will become better versed in what to look for and how to judge if a fair verdict has been reached. If the outcome of the election is not fair, a question arises on why this expensive exercise should be conducted at all and what purpose it then serves.

These are key questions in any system where polling by the people stands as a key part of bringing a new government to power. The questions being raised over the allocation of reserved seats add to the whole equation. We need to put in place a body that can correctly oversee elections and their outcome as is the case for the most part in neighbouring countries. We also need to understand why some countries succeed in holding polls that are perceived as fair and others do not. Very grave questions over the polling process have been raised even in the US. We need to move beyond these issues and tell people quite what happened and why.

The reports now coming forward from organizations such as Pildat, Fafen and HRCP, raise some of the blinds. But still more transparency is needed if we need people to have faith in the process itself and if they are to be expected to cast their votes for candidates who they believe can lead the country out of its current crisis.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

## Today in History

### History of Pakistan



It also produced a class of Muslim leaders experienced in organizing and mobilizing the public. This experience was of immense value to the Muslims later during the Pakistan Movement. The collapse of the Khilafat Movement was followed by a period of bitter Hindu-Muslim antagonism. The Hindus organized two highly anti-Muslim movements, the Shudhi and the Sangathan. The former movement was designed to convert Muslims to Hinduism and the latter was meant to create solidarity among the Hindus in the event of communal conflict. In retaliation, the Muslims sponsored the Tabligh and Tazim organizations to counter the impact of the Shudhi and the Sangathan. In the 1920s, the frequency of communal riots was unprecedented. Several Hindu-Muslim unity conferences were held to remove the causes of conflict, but, it seemed nothing could mitigate the intensity of communalism.

#### MUSLIM DEMAND SAFEGUARDS

In the light of this situation, the Muslims revised their constitutional demands. They now wanted preservation of their numerical majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, separation of Sindh from Bombay, constitution of Balochistan as a separate province and introduction of constitutional reforms in the North-West Frontier Province. It was partly to press these demands that one section of the All-India Muslim League cooperated with the statutory commission sent by the British Government under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon in 1927.

#### SIMON COMMISSION

The other section of the League, which boycotted the Simon Commission for its all-White character, cooperated with the Nehru Committee, appointed by the All-Parties Conference, to draft a constitution for India. The Nehru Report had an extremely anti-Muslim bias and the Congress

leadership's refusal to amend it disillusioned even the moderate Muslims.

#### ALLAMA MUHAMMAD IQBAL

Several leaders and thinkers, having insight into the Hindu-Muslim question proposed separation of Muslim India. However, the most lucid exposition of the inner feeling of the Muslim community was given by Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) in his Presidential Address at the All-India Muslim League Session at Allahabad in 1930. He suggested that for the healthy development of Islam in South-Asia, it was essential to have a separate Muslim state at least in the Muslim majority regions of the north-west. Later on, in his correspondence with Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he included the Muslim majority areas in the north-east also in his proposed Muslim state. Three years after his Allahabad Address, a group of Muslim students at Cambridge, headed by

Chaudhry Rehmat Ali, issued a pamphlet, Now or Never, in which drawing letters from the names of the Muslim majority regions, they gave the nomenclature of "Pakistan" to the proposed State. Very few even among the Muslims welcomed the idea at the time. It was to take a decade for the Muslims to embrace the demand for a separate Muslim state.

#### QUAID-I-AZAM MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

Meanwhile, three Round Table Conferences were convened in London during 1930-32, to resolve the Indian constitutional problem. The Hindu and Muslim leaders, who were invited to these conferences, could not draw up an agreed formula and the British Government had to announce a 'Communal Award' which was incorporated in the Government of India Act of 1935.

To be continued....

## Showbiz

### Ariana Grande beats Taylor Swift, Beyonce with 'Eternal Sunshine'

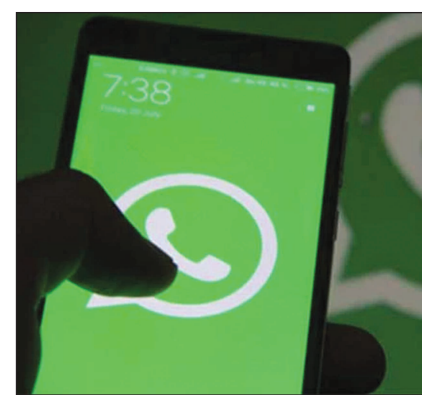
Ariana Grande secured the top spot in Australia for her new album, 'Eternal Sunshine'



Ariana is shining in Australia with her new album Eternal Sunshine. The 30-year-old pop star secured the number one spot on the Australian Recording Industry Association's (ARIA) Top 10 list for the coming week of Monday, 18 March, 2024. The position was previously held by Taylor Swift's Midnights. Grande also landed the number two spot on the ARIA Top 50 Singles of the Week with the album's track, We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love). The spot was previously held by Beyoncé's Texas Hold 'Em. This isn't the first time that the Yes, And? songstress was featured on the ARIA Top 10, nor the first she landed on the number one spot. In fact, all of Grande's seven albums have made it to the ARIA Top 10. Moreover, she has previously enjoyed the top spot for My Everything (2014), Dangerous Woman (2016), Sweetener (2018) and Thank U, next (2019). Grande recently released the enigmatic music video for We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love), starring Evan Peters, with a sci-fi concept inspired by Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet's 2004 movie Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind – the namesake of Grande's new album.

## Tech

### WhatsApp rolls out ability to 'silence unknown callers'



Meta-owned messaging app, WhatsApp is one of the most used platforms for social interaction and has become a kind of personal space for many users due to its instant communication and security features. Widely used all over the world, WhatsApp also offers a very convenient form of commu-

nication as its developers take care of the users' preferences and ease with new improvements and innovations that come as new features.

One of the best thing about WhatsApp is its up to the minute and most relevant security features.

There may be countless things users would want for their convenience and staying unbothered by the unknown calls on WhatsApp, which for many is a personal space, is one of them.

As per a latest update, the WhatsApp users now have ability to "silence" unknown callers.

WhatsApp's official account on X, formerly Twitter, in its latest post on the microblogging site has revealed the option to the netizens.

By taking steps as simple as "inhale, go to settings on the app > privacy > calls > silence unknown callers and exhale", users can shush those who are not in their contacts.

## What are best daily walking distance, steps to lose weight and stay fit?

### Few steps are not enough to stay fit but ideal daily walking distance is required for optimum physical health

Most adults should strive for 10,000 steps of daily walking distance for overall health as less than 5,000 steps is indicative of a sedentary lifestyle; however, a person's age, present level of fitness, and health objectives affect how many steps they are required take on average, as per Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A good low-impact exercise that can help people maintain or increase their physical fitness is walking. The majority of Americans only walk 3,000-4,000 steps a day (about 1.5-2 miles), according to Medical News Today.

As a result, many Americans are not taking as many steps as they should to improve their health, as doctors typically classify persons who walk less than 5,000 steps a day as inactive.

Walking can help a number of body functions, according to the Arthritis Foundation. Here is a list:

- Muscle strength**
- Range of motion**
- Blood flow**
- Flexibility**
- Balance, which can help prevent falls**

#### Joint stiffness Mood and sleep Breathing

Additionally, walking can help prevent or treat illnesses including osteoporosis, obesity, and age-related memory decline.

Depending on a person's target weight, food intake, and present weight, there are several actions that need to be taken to lose weight. But for most people, 10,000 steps is a good target.

More strenuous walking may also be beneficial for someone who wants to use it to increase their strength, flexibility, or stamina.

Walking uphill, for instance, uses three times as many muscle fibres than walking on a level surface. Therefore, those who walk up hills to get many of their 10,000 steps will get a more comprehensive workout.



## Health



## Dar, UAE FM discuss sustained momentum of multi-tiered cooperation: PM

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar on Friday received a congratulatory telephone call from Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. During the conversation, the two foreign ministers discussed the sustained momentum of multi-tiered cooperation between the two countries, Foreign Minister Dar wrote on his X timeline. "I look forward to working closely with His Highness in transforming the bilateral relations with the UAE into a mutually beneficial economic partnership," the foreign minister added.

## CEC dismisses speculation of foreign ambassador appointment

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on Thursday rejected the unfounded rumors of being appointed as an ambassador for a foreign country, clarifying that neither has the government made any offer nor does he have any intention of accepting such a position.

A spokesperson of the ECP stated in a press release that the CEC will remain in the country after completing his current tenure and has no interest in seeking any assignments abroad.

The ECP issued a warning to those spreading and inciting rumors, urging them to act responsibly to avoid legal consequences. The CEC is adept at dealing with such individuals and anti-state elements.

## Five more MNAs take oath



ISLAMABAD: Five more Members of the National Assembly elected on reserved seats took the oath on Friday. Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, administered the oath to the women elected on reserved seats.

MNAs who took the oath included Naima Kanwal, Asma Arbab Alamgir, Shaheen Shah, Ghazala Anjum and Naeema Kishwer Khan APP

## President visits mausoleum of Bhutto family in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh

LARKANA: President, Asif Ali Zardari arrived Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on Friday and visited the mausoleum of the martyrs of Bhutto's family. He visited the grave of former prime minister and chairperson of PPP Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, laid a floral wreath at the grave and offered "Fateha".

The president also visited the graves of founder-chairman of PPP Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Madar-e-Jamhooriat late Begum Nusrat Bhutto, late Shireen Amir Begum, late Mir Murtaza Bhutto and late Mir Shahnawaz Bhutto and

laid floral wreaths and offered fateha. He also prayed for the development and prosperity of the country.

On the occasion Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah was accompanied with the president. Earlier, on his arrival at Sukkur Begum Nusrat Bhutto Airport, the president was received by Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, Mayor Sukkur Barrister Arslan Sheikh, DIG Sukkur range, Commissioner Sukkur and other top officers of the Sukkur and Larkana divisions.



NAWABSHAH: President Asif Ali Zardari meets with elected representative at Zardari House. APP

## Despite 76 years of independence, the country still grapples with a colonial system: Sirajul Haq

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Sirajul Haq has said that despite 76 years of independence, the country still grapples with a colonial system.

Speaking to reporters at Mansoorah on Friday, Sirajul Haq attributed this persistent state of affairs to dynastic politics and the influence of international powers. He emphasized that meaningful change hinges on the electorate's choice of honest and dedicated leadership. He criticized government formed through manipulated elections, stating that such administrations cannot effectively address the nation's challenges. He highlighted the deepening polarization following rigged polls and underscored the government's responsibility to tackle this issue by ensuring the rights of all citizens are safeguarded.

"Contentious and tainted elections have only

exacerbated polarization; resolution lies in guaranteeing people's rights," he stressed. He lamented the theft of JJ's mandate in the election and pledged to pursue legal avenues, including approaching the Supreme Court, to reclaim their rights.

Sirajul Haq urged ruling parties to fulfill their manifesto promises, particularly advocating for the provision of free electricity for consumers using up to 300 units. He cautioned against imposing further burdens on the populace, anticipating harsher conditions from international financial bodies like the IMF, which could worsen inflation and taxation woes. He proposed combating corruption and curtailing non-development expenditures to strengthen the economy, while urging an end to the culture of excessive protocol. SABAH



ISLAMABAD: People offering first Friday prayers during the holy fasting month of Ramadan at Faisal Mosque in the Federal Capital. ONLINE

## Women financial independence key to unlock nation true potential: Mushaal Mullick

Urges world to take notice of Kashmiri, Palestinian women's abuses by Indian, Israeli forces

### VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick stressed the need for the increased women engagement in social and digital arenas because their financial independence was a pivotal pillar to unlock the true potential of the nation.

Speaking at a seminar held in connection with International Women Day titled "Breaking Barriers: Roles, Challenges, and Opportunities for Women Empowerment in the Digital Age" as a chief guest, Mushaal Mullick said that women's empowerment and human rights encompassed a wide range of interconnected areas, each contributing to the overall goal of achieving gender equality and ensuring the rights and dignity of all individuals.

"On this International Women's Day, let us vow to support and empower women in all areas of life. Together, we can build a world where gender equality is not just a goal, but a reality. Let us seize this opportunity to create a better, more inclusive world for future generations," she added.

She made it clear that no nation in the world

could make progress without empowering their women and they needed to admit the bitter reality and worked tirelessly for realizing the dream to give due constitutional, legal and Islamic rights to them.

Mushaal Mullick, who is a wife of senior incarcerated Hurriyat Leader Muhammad Yasin Malik, revealed that despite a limited timeframe and mandate of the caretaker government, she as SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment had given a robust "100-day Plan" aimed at enhancing the overall human rights landscape and promoting women's empowerment in Pakistan. She further elaborated that the plan encompassed a wide array of initiatives spanning critical areas such as Gender Equality, Education, Economic Empowerment, Healthcare, Violence against Women, Political Participation, Legal Rights, Reproductive Rights, Freedom from Discrimination, Child Marriage, Access to Justice, Media Representation, Access to Technology and Social and Economic Safety Nets.

Moreover, Mushaal stated that her ministry undertook a number of other initiatives such as establishing four Truly Representative Consultative Committees on rights of Transgender, Minorities, Kashmir struggle

and Palestine Issue, besides launching a Pakistan wide program of Converting Prisons into Correction Facilities Program and converting SAPM Office into Incubation and Nerve Centre for Accomplished Women as well as building a grass root irreversible structure of women mobilization through Bukhtar Program.

The Hurriyat leader stressed the need for providing girls and women with access to quality education societies to unlock their potential to become leaders, innovators, and agents of change. Speaking about hardship of Kashmiri women, she lamented that in conflict zones like Kashmir, sexual violence, including rape, had been used as a tool of psychological warfare to instill fear, humiliate communities, and exert control over the population.

"Rape not only harms individual victims but also has far-reaching consequences for families, communities, and the overall social fabric of Kashmiri society," Mushaal added.

Similarly, hurriyat leader highlighted unimaginable difficulties being faced by women of Palestine and urged the world to take notice of the barbarism and state terrorism unleashed by Indian and Israeli forces on Kashmiri and Palestinian women.

## AJK President calls EU to play role for solution of Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD: Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, President of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) has called upon the European Union's role to help resolve the longstanding Kashmir issue.

"European Union can play an important role as a mediator between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue for the sake of peace and security in the South Asian region", AJK President said while talking to the European Union Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka and Political Consul Rukiye Komurcu, who called on him at Jammu Kashmir House here, said a press release. He said that the long-standing dispute posed a serious threat to peace and security in South Asia. Stressing the need for early settlement of the dispute, Barrister Sultan said that the Kashmir conflict could lead to a nuclear war between the two nuclear powers, Pakistan and India. "Any mishap, no matter how small or big, can be a precursor to a nuclear war between the two nuclear neighbors," the president said. Talking on volatile situation prevailing in the region, the AJK President said that the European Union should appoint its special representative on Kashmir to help resolve the Kashmir issue amicably. Meanwhile, AJK President Barrister Sultan Mahmood will begin state-wide mass public-liaison drive from Mirpur tomorrow (March 16).

A statement issued here revealed that AJK President, as part of the drive, is scheduled to attend and address an Iftar dinner to be hosted by civil society in his honor at the Quaid-e-Azam International Sports Stadium in his native Mirpur city on Saturday. PR

## Alizey Khan is the first Pakistani woman to have been awarded the Diana Legacy Award by Prince William

LONDON: Alizey Khan, founder Ruhil Foundation is the first Pakistani woman to have been awarded the Diana Legacy Award. She received the award from Prince William at a ceremony held in London.

Alizey Khan, 26 has been recognised with the highest accolade a young person can achieve for social action or humanitarian efforts. The legacy awards take place every two years and celebrates the achievements of 20 young leaders from across the world The Legacy Award marks The Diana Award's 25th Anniversary - a charity set up in memory of Diana, the late Princess of Wales and her belief in the power of young people to change the world. The Award has the support of both her sons, HRH The Prince of Wales and Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex. The 20 Legacy Award recipients have been chosen by a prestigious independent judging panel, chaired by Baroness Doreen Lawrence, who had the difficult task of selecting just 20 from a pool of exceptional individuals, already recognised for their impact on society with The Diana Award in 2022 or 2023. SABAH

## IHC appoints two amici curiae in Dr Aafia Siddiqui case

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) has appointed two amici curiae in the case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui to assist the court besides coordinating with the ministry of foreign affairs.

A single bench of Islamabad High Court IHC comprising Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaque Khan on Friday heard the constitutional petition of Dr. Fowzia Siddiqui. The court had asked the MoFA to provide the list of leading Pakistani lawyers living in the USA so as to seek help from them in this case. However, Additional Secretary (America) MoFA told the court that they have no such credible record about the leading Pakistani lawyers living in the USA. He said some people after getting the US nationality renounce the Pakistani nationality and hence they don't have a credible record about the Pakistani living in the USA. However, the court appointed two amici curiae, Ms. Zainab Janjua & Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, to assist the ministry of foreign affairs in legal communicating about this case with the US administration and the American lawyer of Aafia Siddiqui Clive Stafford Smith. SABAH

## Pak Army organizes cultural symposium in Bajaur

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan

Army on Friday organ-

ized a cultural sym-

posium for the protection

of regional language,

traditions and culture

in Bajaur district.

Renowned poets from

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

participated in the

symposium, according

to state run news chan-

nel. The local singers

presented Pashto lan-

guage and its histor-

ical significance in

their own style through

folk music.

More than 75 paintings

by various artists were

also exhibited in the

symposium, while stalls

of books, handicrafts

and local products were



also set up. The symposium was aimed at creating awareness amongst the local youth about the significance of Pashto culture and its history. APP

## Pak-Iran FTA will be finalised soon: Ambassador Moghaddam

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam on Thursday said that there is a strong possibility that the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will be finalized in the upcoming visit of the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan, which is likely to increase the mutual trade between the two countries.

From the upcoming visit of the Iranian president to Pakistan, there will be several bilateral economic and trade agreements between the two countries, which will further strengthen the mutual economic and trade relations and promote the bilateral business between the two countries, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam said this in visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the invitation of President ICCI, Mr Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri here in Chamber house.

The Iranian ambassador said that the current bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Iran is \$2.5 billion, which has increased by 11 percent in the last 11 months. The Ambassador said that after the FTA and bilateral agreements

between the two governments for the promotion of mutual trade, there is a strong possibility of doubling the mutual trade between Pakistan and Iran to reach \$5 billion in the next few years. He said that the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline is a huge facility for the people of Pakistan on behalf of the government of Iran, which will benefit both the domestic and industrial sectors of Pakistan.

He said that Iran is serious about resolving Pakistan's energy problems and that is why Iran completed the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project in 2009 to the border of Pakistan, which cost Iran \$1 billion, so that Pakistan could meet its energy needs. It could be done, but it is still waiting for its completion from the Pakistan side.

Iranian Envoy said that Iran is already trading with Turkey, Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan in the sector of energy and gas and Pakistan can also adopt the procedure adopted with these countries. Dr. Reza Amiri said that the banking channel in Pakistan and Iran is a big issue, but Iran has a banking channel with Turkey, Bahrain and Iraq, Pakistan can follow this procedure.

He said that Pakistan and Iran need to have strong air, maritime and sea links, which will strengthen the economic relations between the two countries and Pakistan will also be connected to regional and global trade. The Ambassador emphasized on the closeness of maritime links between the two countries, especially Karachi and Gwadar and Chabahar and Bandar Abbas ports and said that Gwadar and Chabahar should be declared as sister ports.

He said that this era is the era of economic and trade links and it will take time for Pakistan and Iran to connect with regional and global trade through these ports.

He said that Pakistan-China Trade Corridor and BRI projects also have strong prospects for economic and trade integration between Pakistan and Iran, which both countries need to work on. He said that the world is currently being connected to each other through various economic and trade corridors and Pakistan and Iran can make their place in the global trade market by connecting to the North-South and East-West trade corridors.

He said that with this both countries can be connected not only to regional trade, especially Central Asia, but also connect to European markets. He said that Pakistan and Iran can fulfill 70 percent of each other's needs by engaging in mutual trade, just as Iran imports halal meat, Pakistan can do a lot of work in Iran in this sector.

The Iranian ambassador said that Iran is issuing electronic visas to Pakistan businessmen while making visas easier. He said that the relations between the business community of Pakistan and Iran, especially Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Tehran Chamber of Commerce and Industry, should be further improved.

Meanwhile addressing to the forum, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri said that Pakistan and Iran's trade volume exceeds \$2.5 billion annually, with Pakistan selling rice and other products to its neighbor, while people living in the border area of Balochistan save money by buying Iranian food and goods from traders across the border. DNA