



"When women are given equal opportunities, communities thrive, economies prosper, and nations progress"

US Ambassador to Pakistan  
**Donald Blome**

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Price Rs 8 | Pages 4

## FM Jilani lauds "bold decisions" of interim govt as term nears conclusion

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Monday lauding the "bold decisions" of the caretaker government on economic and foreign policy fronts thanked the colleagues and cabinet members for their tireless efforts to serve the national cause. The foreign minister, in a series of posts on his X timeline, called it a "great honour" to serve Pakistan and its people. He said that despite confronting various challenges, on the economic and foreign policy front, the caretaker government under the leadership of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar took bold decisions, to stabilize the economy, avert a major crisis in the country's neighbourhood and demand global action against climate change. The interim government also called for an end to the unimaginable violence orchestrated by Israel in Gaza and send relief goods to our Palestinian brothers and sisters, he added.

"As we complete our constitutional mandate and hand over to a new government, I would like to appreciate the hard work, dedication, and commitment of all my cabinet colleagues who worked tirelessly for the national cause," the foreign minister remarked. He expressed gratitude to the officers of the Foreign Office who supported him and continued to lead by example both at home and abroad, showcasing the very best that Pakistan has to offer. The outgoing interim foreign minister also wished the incoming government the very best as "it sets out to serve the people of Pakistan who long for political and economic stability, good governance, peace, and harmony." APP

## Pakistan, UAE sign MoU for promotion of date palm cultivation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding here aimed at boosting agricultural innovation and research related to the development and promotion of various aspects of date palm cultivation and the allied industry.

Ambassador of Pakistan to UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi and General Secretary of Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation Dr. Abdelouahab Zaid Prof. signed the document.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence of the UAE Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, according to Pakistan's embassy in UAE. The MoU will help in promoting cooperation and sharing of expertise between the two sides. It will also provide an opportunity for Pakistani farmers to increase the cultivation of date palm including through innovative ideas. Being one of the pioneers, the UAE will provide technological support to Pakistan to increase date palm cultivation as Pakistan's rich topography presents immense potential in this sector. DNA

## Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf convenes NA meeting on Nov 29 after President objects to summary

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi has returned the summary of caretaker parliamentary affairs ministry, objecting to the proposed meeting of the National Assembly scheduled for 10 am on February 26. The president has raised concerns, insisting that the process of allocating reserved seats for women and minorities must be completed before calling the National Assembly into session.

The move has set off a constitutional debate, with Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf ultimately deciding to call the meeting on Thursday, February 29, citing Clause 2 of Article 91 of the Constitution.

This decision follows consultations with senior officers and constitutional experts of the National Assembly Secretariat, who reviewed the situation arising from the president's refusal to sign the summary.

According to constitutional provisions, the meeting of the National Assembly must be convened within 21 days of the elections, and February 29 is the mandated date under Article 91. If the National Assembly meeting proceeds as scheduled on February 29, the schedule for the new speaker will be released on the same day after the oath. Subsequently, on March 1, papers for the speaker's election will be submitted, and on March 2, the speaker will be elected, along with the deputy speaker.

The process for submitting nomination papers for the election of the prime minister is slated for March 3, followed by the prime minister's election in the National Assembly on March 4. The Election Commission of Pakistan will then conduct the election for the president on March 9. SABAH



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Baligh Ur Rehman administering the oath to the Newly-elected Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz at Governor House. APP

## President Alvi appreciates blind cricket team for bringing fame to Pakistan

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: The members of the Pakistan Blind Cricket team on Monday called on President Dr Arif Alvi here wherein he lauded them for bringing laurels to Pakistan besides highlighting globally the capabilities of differently-abled persons.

In the meeting held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said that through their participation in tournaments, the team also inspired other blind cricketers. He said that during the recent years, blind cricket got special attention and recognition in Pakistan. The active role of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Board in promoting and holding contests is welcoming, he added. Calling for the encouragement of the blind cricket team, the president also called for acknowledgement of the cricketers' impressive role to highlight the team's efforts and achievements.



The team management briefed the president about the team's performance. The team members thanked President Alvi and First Lady Samina Alvi for their encouragement.

## Women empowerment crucial for promoting peace and stability: US Envoy

ISLAMABAD: The US Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome, highlighted on Monday the crucial role women play in promoting peace and stability, said that their inclusion is vital not only for economic benefits but also for societal progress.

Speaking at the Breaking Barriers Through Diversity and Inclusivity Conference, Ambassador Blome said that empowering women is not just about gender but also a matter of human rights and economic necessity. He pointed out that societies investing in empowering women experience better education, health, and economic outcomes. "When women are given equal opportunities, communities thrive, economies prosper, and nations progress," he added.

Studies have shown that when women are involved in peace processes, resulting agreements are more durable and sustainable. Their unique perspectives and experiences bring a different dimension to conflict resolution, fostering inclusivity and long-lasting solutions, he added.

Continued on Page 4

## Gohar Ejaz discusses issues of bilateral interests with his foreign counterparts



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Commerce, Industry and Investment Gohar Ejaz discussed issues of bilateral interests with his foreign counterparts on sidelines of the 13th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial

Conference being held in Dubai.

Gohar Ejaz called on Commerce Minister of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Turkiye and China on the occasion.

Talking to his counterparts, the minister said the caretaker government has taken concrete steps to increase Pakistan's share in world trade. He said Pakistan's export of goods and services to China has witnessed an increase of 46 percent. Dr Gohar Ejaz said that increase in international trade will bring prosperity to the people of Pakistan. INP

## Chevening scholars had opportunity to re-connect and foster relationships



By Sohail Majeed Butt

ISLAMABAD: From London to Islamabad: Chevening and Commonwealth

Scholars welcomed home by British High Commissioner.

British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, has welcomed returning Chevening and Commonwealth scholars. After completing postgraduate studies in the UK, the 2022-2023 cohort consisting of 47 Chevening and 46 Commonwealth scholars had the opportunity to re-connect and foster relationships which will stay with them for life.

The 2022-23 cohorts came from across Pakistan, with all provinces represented. The scholars all benefited from fully-funded scholarships to study a range of subjects, including development, public health, climate change and business, at leading Universities like the University of

Oxford and the London School of Economics.

They will now join a cohort of high-profile alumni from diverse fields. This includes the first female judge of the Gilgit-Baltistan High Court, Amna Zamir Shah, prominent disability activist Abia Akram, and the first woman lawyer from the Hazara minority, Jalila Haider.

British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said: "Our Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships are up there at the top of the UK's education offer to Pakistani. These returning scholars have not only received an education at some of the world's best universities, that have also expanded their professional networks

and experienced life in the UK. They take this with them as return to their respective careers and fields."

Aurangzeb Kasi, a scholar from Baluchistan, said: "Chevening was a transformative experience, enriching me both academically and culturally. I can't wait to use the global perspective I've gained to pioneer positive change in my community."

Applications for Commonwealth Scholarships will next open in September 2024. To find out more information, visit the CSC website. Applications for Chevening scholarships will open in August 2024. Interested candidates can register for alerts by visiting [www.chevening.org](#)

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## When disaster strikes

ALI REHMAT SHIMSHALI AND RAMSHA MEHBOOB KHAN

Climate-induced disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, tend to have a more severe impact on vulnerable populations, especially those living in poverty. Pakistan, according to the INFORM Climate Change Risk Index 2024, is categorized as a high-risk country for such disasters. This classification underscores the heightened susceptibility of Pakistan to the adverse effects of climate change.

The country has already experienced a series of significant natural disasters, including the devastating earthquake in 2005, as well as the floods of 2010 and 2022. These events have resulted in extensive socio-economic and infrastructural losses, exacerbating the challenges faced by already marginalized communities. The aftermath of these disasters has further entrenched poverty and compounded existing vulnerabilities among affected populations. Disaster is the disruption to the functioning of a community that exceeds its resilience. Yes, natural disasters immensely impact people, but disruptions are further aggravated by unsustainable developmental approaches and practices. These practices involve the ongoing over-exploitation of mountain ecosystems, illegal encroachments in riverbeds, artificial alterations to natural river flows, and haphazard infrastructural development in both the main Indus River and its tributaries. In 2022, the capacity of the Indus River System (IRS) to manage and absorb flood peaks was significantly reduced due to a range of unsustainable land use and water management practices. The 2022 floods impacted over 33 million people and caused more than \$40 billion in economic damages. The floods submerged one-third of the country and displaced around eight million people. The flooding left 1,700 people dead, 2 million homes destroyed, and killed over 900,000 livestock.

Sindh was the worst affected province with close to 70 per cent of total damages and losses, followed by Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab. The major issues that emerged due to floods include mass displacement, food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and an increased risk of waterborne diseases, drowning, and malnutrition.

The Post Disaster Need Assessment Report 2022 preliminary estimates suggest that as a direct consequence of the 2022 floods, the national poverty rate will increase by 3.7 to 4.0 percent points, pushing between 8.4 and 9.1 million people into poverty.

The 2010 monsoon flood disaster in Pakistan was both massive and unprecedented, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake. The Federal Flood Commission Report 2010 shows that the floods of 2010 caused a cumulative financial loss of \$10 billion, about 2000 deaths, destroyed 17,553 villages, and impacted 160,000 sq km area of the country.

The floods damaged 392,786 and destroyed 728,192 houses; around 436 health facilities were damaged. The overall production loss of key crops such as sugar cane, paddy, and cotton was estimated at a staggering 13.3 million metric tons. Particularly in Punjab and Sindh, between 60 and 88 per cent of farming households reported losses exceeding 50 per cent for major crops like rice, vegetables, cotton, sugar, and fodder.

The devastating floods in 2022 and 2010 exposed critical deficiencies in disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. Weak coordination among various agencies and duplicated roles further hampered response efforts. Emergency response gaps, such as inadequate supplies, lack of communication, and infrastructure damage, compounded the challenges. These issues highlight the urgent need for improved coordination and preparedness measures.

Coordination issues persist at various levels, including inter-agency and international collaboration. The 2022 flood response shows that the global community's response has fallen well, and the consequences of a debt-reliant recovery and rehabilitation plan pose severe challenges to the country. The convergence of climate-related disasters and broader economic issues has created a vulnerable environment for Pakistan, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive and equitable financial support to break free from this detrimental debt cycle. There is a need to learn from past disaster events, anticipate the gaps in response mechanisms, map the challenges, and devise practical coping strategies. Centralized coordination mechanisms at the national level serve as linchpins for effective planning and execution of developmental and relief activities. Pakistan needs to transition towards a technologically driven, forward-thinking, and adaptable disaster risk reduction (DRR) framework and approaches. The revised emergency management paradigm can effectively mitigate the evolving nature of disasters and safeguard vulnerable communities. Given Pakistan's diverse topography covering from north to south, a one-size-fits-all approach to crisis response is unsustainable. Therefore, an indigenous, need-based, and geographical-specific disaster risk reduction and response mechanism is necessary. Communities are the first responders to disasters; therefore, communities need to be taken on board while devising any policy or disaster response mechanism to ensure a more agile and responsive framework.

Various tools, apps, and weather forecasting systems in Pakistan are appreciable however there is a need to move towards more authentic and reliable sources of information.

The SMS alert and weather forecasting systems do not provide details of the impacts and duration of the disasters. Therefore, the integration of impact-based weather forecasting systems and the consolidation of reliable, up-to-date data sources need to be incorporated into the overall disaster management mechanisms.

By embedding disaster risk reduction principles into public-sector initiatives and harnessing community perspectives through inclusive engagement, Pakistan can strengthen its defences against the ravages of natural and human-induced disasters.

The writers are research assistants at the Research Assistant Sustainability and Resilience Development Programme, SDPI. The views expressed are their own.



By Khalid Bhatti

# Politics at stake

The PML-N and PPP have formally announced a coalition government in Islamabad. Both parties have the numbers to form a stable coalition government. The MQM-P, IPP, PML-Q and BAP are likely to join the coalition. The PML-N-led coalition government will have more than 200 members in the National Assembly. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif has been nominated as prime minister. It is not clear at the moment whether the PPP will join the federal cabinet or not.

The decision to lead a coalition government at the federal level by the PML-N has put its politics at stake. The previous experience of the 16-month-long coalition government resulted in the PML-N losing support in its stronghold of Punjab. It burnt a lot of political capital during the last government. Its support base eroded due to the tough economic decisions it made to stabilize the economy. Rising inflation, high unemployment and increased poverty made many people unhappy.

The PML-N tried to sell the narrative that the PTI government was responsible for the economic crisis and runaway inflation but failed to convince many voters. Many people refused to buy this narrative and abstained from voting. Inde-

pendent voters punished the PML-N heavily in its strongholds. The PML-N's vote bank is on the decline in many central Punjab constituencies. The same is true in Hazara, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which used to be the party's stronghold.

PTI-backed independents posed a serious challenge to the PML-N in Punjab. The gap between the PML-N and the PTI narrowed down, and the PTI made big inroads in central Punjab. The PML-N's poor performance in many central Punjab districts is a matter of concern. The revival of the PML-N in Punjab largely depends on the performance of the Shehbaz Sharif-led government. Its unsatisfactory performance will further erode the party's support base and credibility. The PML-N has played a big gamble here. If its government fails to complete its five-year tenure after making all the tough decisions under an IMF programme, it will face serious political consequences. It seems that the first two years are going to be tough for the new government.

The first task for the new setup will be to negotiate a new IMF programme worth \$6 billion. The government will be forced to make tough economic decisions, and under the IMF programme, there will be little space for the government to provide much-needed relief to people. A further increase in inflation, poverty and unemployment is likely to make the government even more unpopular.

In the short term, the PTI might be able to gain more popularity. It will

protest against any increase in the prices of gas, electricity and petrol. The key for the Shehbaz Sharif-led government is to complete its five-year term. To provide meaningful relief to the working class and the poor, the government requires five years.

If the government fails to complete five years and is toppled in the first couple of years, the PML-N will be in big trouble. It seems that the federal government will not be in a position to drastically cut the prices of electricity, gas and petrol and to offer subsidies to the most vulnerable sections of the population. The country's economic situation is likely to start improving in the third year. The federal government will be in a position to provide some relief to people after successfully completing the IMF programme and stabilizing the economy.

GDP growth is likely to remain low in the first two years. It might pick up pace in the third year. Job creation is directly linked with economic growth. To increase employment opportunities in the country, the government will require a high growth rate.

The PML-N has formed the government in Punjab and is all set to have Maryam Nawaz as the CM of Punjab. She will be the first-ever woman chief minister of Punjab. The performance of the Maryam Nawaz-led Punjab government will also play an important role in reclaiming the lost ground in Punjab. Maryam has announced an ambitious agenda for her govern-

ment. If she succeeds in delivering even 50 per cent of her promises and pledges, it will be considered a big success. If the Punjab government succeeds in providing some relief to people and reforming the health and education sectors, the PML-N will become stronger again. So there is a lot at stake not only in Punjab but also at the centre.

Failure is not an option for both Shehbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz. Both have the task of outperforming their opponents and competitors with good governance, corruption-free administration and service delivery. The political future of the PML-N is now in the hands of Shehbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz.

If both fail to perform well, the PML-N will likely be wiped out in the next election. Both the federal and Punjab governments will need political stability in the country to concentrate on governance and solve the problems faced by people. Political instability and uncertainty will create further problems for both governments.

The PTI as an opposition party will use every opportunity offered to them by the federal or Punjab government to destabilize the government. It will go to any lengths to create problems and hurdles for both governments.

For political stability in the country, the PML-N will not only have to keep the allies and coalition partners happy but also constructively engage with opposition parties.

The writer is a freelance journalist.

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



#### PRE-HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

When the primitive village communities in the Balochistan area were still struggling against a difficult highland environment, a highly cultured people was trying to assert themselves at Kot Diji, one of the most developed urban civilizations of the ancient world which flourished between the years 2500 and 1500 B.C. in the Indus Valley sites of Moenjodaro and Harappa. These Indus Valley people possessed a high standard of art and craftsmanship and a well developed system of quasi pictographic writing, which despite continuing efforts still remains undeciphered. The imposing ruins of the beautifully planned Moenjodaro and Harappa towns present clear evidence of the unity of a people having the same mode of life and using the same kind of tools. Indeed, the brick buildings of the common people, the public baths, the roads and covered drainage system suggest the picture of a happy and

#### contented people. ARYAN CIVILIZATION

In or about 1500 B.C., the Aryans descended upon the Punjab and settled in the Sapta Sindhu, which signifies the Indus plain. They developed a pastoral society that grew into the Rigvedic Civilization. The Rigveda is replete with hymns of praise for this region, which they describe as "God fashioned". It is also clear that so long as the Sapta Sindhu remained the core of the Aryan Civilization, it remained free from the caste system. The caste institution and the ritual of complex sacrifices took shape in the Gangetic Valley. There can be no doubt that the Indus Civilization contributed much to the development of the Aryan civilization.

#### GANDHARA CULTURE

The discovery of the Gandhara grave culture in Dir and Swat will go a long way in throwing light on the period of

Pakistan's cultural history between the end of the Indus Culture in 1500 B.C. and the beginning of the historic period under the Achaemenians in the sixth century B.C. Hindu mythology and Sanskrit literary traditions seem to attribute the destruction of the Indus civilization to the Aryans, but what really happened, remains a mystery.

The Gandhara grave culture has opened up two periods in the cultural heritage of Pakistan: one of the Bronze Age and the other of the Iron Age. It is so named because it presents a peculiar pattern of living in hilly zones of the Gandhara region as evidenced in the graves. This culture is different from the Indus Culture and has little relations with the village culture of Balochistan. Stratigraphy as well as the artifacts discovered from this area suggests that the Aryans moved into this part of the world between 1,500 and 600 B.C. In the sixth century B.C., Buddha began his teachings, which later on spread

throughout the northern part of the South-Asian subcontinent. It was towards the end of this century, too, that Darius I of Iran organized Sindh and Punjab as the twentieth satrapy of his empire.

There are remarkable similarities between the organizations of that great empire and the Mauryan empire of the third century B.C., while Kautilya's Arthashastra also shows a strong Persian influence, Alexander of Macedonia after defeating Darius III in 330 B.C. had also marched through the South-Asian subcontinent up to the river Beas, but Greek influence on the region appears to have been limited to contributing a little to the establishment of the Mauryan empire. The great empire that Asoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, built in the subcontinent included only that part of the Indus basin which is now known as the northern Punjab.

To be continued....

## Showbiz

### Jodie Foster still 'role model' to Natalie Portman?

Natalie Portman reflects on talking to Jodie Foster and how it made the actress feel



Natalie Portman revealed that she still idealised Jodie Foster, and the reason is a legitimate one. The Black Swan actress opened up on a recent episode of the Smartless podcast, about Jodie Foster approaching her, after she heard the actress' speech about being sexualized as a young actor. Foster's career catapulted when she was 12 years old and was cast in Martin Scorsese's Taxi Driver as a child sex worker. Meanwhile Portman was 11 years old when she played a role in Léon: The Professional, which was her acting breakthrough as well. "I did a speech at a Women's March about being sexualized as a young actress, and she reached out to me after that, and we talked and it was amazing," Portman said. "She's still a role model."

Portman also talked about learning how to protect herself from predators at a young age on-set by exhibiting a tough behaviour on the outside. "That kind of projection of seriousness protected me in a way," she said. "Cause I feel like it was almost a warning signal like, 'Oh, don't do shit to her.' Not that anyone ever, you know, deserves it or is asking for it. But I felt like that was my unconscious way of doing it."

## Tech

### Scientists discover hidden pattern in birds feather that makes them fly

A thorough examination of hundreds of preserved bird specimens from collections in museums worldwide has found that the bird's ability to fly is made possible by a certain set of feather rules, Science Alert reported. These newly discovered rules allow scientists to better predict which dinosaurs could fly too. "One of the most successful vertebrate lineages on our planet is theropod dinosaurs, which includes birds," says palaeontologist Jingmai O'Connor of the Field Museum of Natural History. He added, "One of the reasons that they're so successful is their flight. One of the other reasons is probably their feathers because there's such a versatile structure."

These new findings may put an end to several long-standing paleontological arguments on whether dinosaurs ever learned to fly. Examining the wing feathers of 346 different species of birds from museums around the world, Field Museum of Natural History ornithologist Yosef Kiat, discovered an interesting trend. All flying birds, from the small-



est hummingbird to the largest eagle, had 9 to 11 asymmetrical flight feathers called primaries. However, the number of primary feathers in flightless birds varied immensely. "It's really surprising that with so many styles of flight, we can find in modern birds, they all share this trait of having between nine and eleven primary feathers," Kiat adds. "And I was surprised that no one seems to have found this before." Looking at fossils up to 160 million years old, the researchers identified which bird ancestors shared these traits and were therefore likely to have been able to fly.

## People in 20s more likely to be unemployed due to poor mental health: study

Young women are 1.5 times more likely to be badly impacted by mental illness, such as anxiety, bipolar disorder, or depression

As per a report advocating for action on Britain's mental wellness problem, individuals in their early 20s are more likely to be unemployed due to mental illnesses than compared to people in their 40s, The Guardian reported.

According to a study by the Resolution Foundation, people with mental health issues in their early 20s may not have had access to a stable education, which may lead them to be un-

employed or work in low-paying positions. Official statistics from 2021-2022 show that 34% of individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 reported having symptoms of a mental illness, such as anxiety, bipolar disorder, or depression. It is a significant increase from the 2000 figure of 24%, and young women are 1.5 times more likely to be badly impacted.

One in three young non-graduates with a com-

mon mental condition is presently unemployed, highlighting the severe economic effects of poor mental health on those who do not attend college.

Louise Murphy, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation said, "To address this mental health crisis, we need better support services in currently underserved colleges and much better provision for those resitting exams so that everyone has qualifications to build on." According to the research, which demanded government intervention, 79% of those between the ages of 18 and 24 who are unemployed as a result of illness only have GCSE-level or lower credentials.



## Health



## Ashrafi calls for action against harassers of woman in Arabic-inscribed Kurta



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Monday strongly condemned the harassment faced by a woman wearing a Kurta inscribed with Arabic script.

He, in a video message, said the incident, which took place in Lahore, had sparked outrage and brought significant attention to the issue of cultural and religious tolerance.

Ashrafi said the woman was reportedly subjected to verbal abuse and harassment by individuals who objected to the Arabic script on her attire. However, he said investigations revealed that the script had no sacred connotations and was merely decorative, a common feature in clothing worn in many Arabic-speaking countries.

Ashrafi emphasized that such acts of harassment not only violate the fundamental principles of Shariah but also tarnish the image of Pakistan and Islam globally. He called for swift and decisive action against the perpetrators, urging law enforcement authorities to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their actions. Furthermore, Ashrafi highlighted the importance of respecting individual choices and freedoms, including the right to dress according to one's cultural or personal preferences. He stressed that Islam promotes tolerance and respect for diversity, and any form of harassment or discrimination goes against its teachings.

Ashrafi said this incident had reignited discussions about the need for greater awareness and education regarding cultural and religious diversity in Pakistan. He expressed solidarity with the woman and called for a more inclusive and tolerant society where individuals are free to express themselves without fear of persecution or harassment.

Ashrafi urged the government to take concrete steps to protect the rights and dignity of all citizens, regardless of their background as the outcome of this case will undoubtedly have far-reaching implications for the country's reputation and its efforts to promote a more inclusive and harmonious society.

He also praised Syeda Shahrbano Naqvi, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Gulberg as a pivotal figure in defusing a potentially volatile situation surrounding the woman's attire adorned with Arabic script. APP



ABU DHABI: Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to UAE and Dr. Abdelouahhab Zaid Prof., General Secretary, Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation, signed the MOU signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Abu Dhabi. The signing ceremony was witnessed by H.E. Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence of the UAE. APP

## Decisive leadership, calculated response to oppressing forces helped liberate Nagorno-Karabakh: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD: Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Monday said the decisive leadership and calculated response, upholding international laws, ensuring territorial sovereignty of a nation-state to the oppressing forces of Armenia enabled the Republic of Azerbaijan to liberate Nagorno-Karabakh. Addressing a seminar titled, "Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing: A Crime against Humanity, the 32nd Anniversary of the Khojaly genocide", jointly organised by the MUSLIM Institute and the Azerbaijani Embassy, the Senate Defence Committee Chairman termed the Nagorno-Karabakh Genocide as a dark chapter of human history. In February 1992, Armenian forces reportedly seized the Azeri-populated town of Khojaly. Armenian militants started the massacre of civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. In this massacre 613 innocent Azerbaijanis, including 106 women and 83 children, were massacred. Eight families were exterminated, four hundred and seventy-six people were permanently disabled and a total of 1275 people were taken hostage.

Senator Mushahid said there were double standards of the so-called international community when it came to the ethnic cleansing or genocide of Muslims in any part of the world.

"In 1974, the then Türkiye Prime Minister Mustafa Bulent Ecevit sent forces to fight the occupant forces in the Northern Turkish Cyprus to halt a massacre and genocide whereas another example of such brave action is of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev who said despite global two-faced politics and tactics fought against Armenian occupation and achieved its liberation. Pakistan was first to support the defence action and as per global laws by Türkiye in Northern Turkish Cyprus," the Senator said.



However, during the course of time Pakistan and Türkiye stood like a rock with President Aliyev on his stance on Nagorno-Karabakh, he said, adding, "The biggest lesson is that sometimes the leadership has to show decisive action."

Earlier a one-minute silence was observed to honour the martyrs of Khojaly genocide and later a brief documentary highlighting the history of Genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh by the Armenian occupant forces and unbridled violence and atrocities against the innocent Azerbaijanis and fateha (prayer) was also offered for Khojaly martyrs. Senator Mushahid mentioned that he and Senator Walid Iqbal were the first to declare Khojaly massacre recognition as genocide through their joint resolution approved by the Senate of Pakistan.

Türkiye Ambassador Dr Mehmet Pacaci in his keynote address said the forum was convened to acknowledge a dark moment in history that left a deep mark in our hearts, as several people got killed, disabled with a over thousand captured during the conflict and many went missing.

"We feel great pain for our brothers and sisters massacred in Khojaly. The brutal massacre in Khojaly is a permanent standing history and we share a deep reverence for Azerbaijan in our hearts. The relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan is defined as one nation two states," he added.

However, the Khojaly massacre was a reminder of the fact that what happened when the world community remained indifferent to human rights violations in an illegally occupied territory, that's why his country and the Muslim nations were concerned about Israeli genocide in Gaza, he added. APP

## Mushaal urges world to take notice of rising incidents of custodial rape by Indian forces in IIOJK

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussean Mullick urged the international community and human rights organizations to take notice of the rising tendency of custodial rape and using rape as a weapon of war by inhuman and brutal Indian forces.



Mushaal, who is also the wife of unlawfully incarcerated senior Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, said that the brutal occupation forces had been using sexual abuse of women in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as a weapon of war for over last seven decades but the international community and world powers observed criminal silence in this regard. She said that the notorious Indian law enforcers involved in the heinous crimes, were given a license to carry out all inhuman, immoral and unlawful acts to silence the dissenting voices in the occupied valley. Mushaal pointed out that the dirty and ugly face of India was exposed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which revealed that India had recorded 275 cases of custodial rape between 2017 and 2022, adding that these incidents, documented across various states, involve perpetrators from law enforcement, armed forces and other custodial facilities, reflecting a misuse of power under the guise of state protection.

"The SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment recalled that incidents such as the gang rape in Kunan Poshpora in 1991, the double murder and rape in Shopian and the gang rape of young Asifa Bano are among the most harrowing examples of the nightmare faced by women in Kashmir."

She stated the NCRB showed that even Indian women were not saved from these mentally sick Indian forces, which clearly indicated that they were not human beings rather they were beasts, who did not even know anything about humanity and women's rights. Mushaal highlighted that the gravity of the situation could be judged from the fact that over 11,000 cases of sexual violence have been reported since 1989 in IIOJK, leaving nearly 23,000 women widowed and over 107,805 children orphaned. She said Indian fascist forces could cross all limits of brutalities and inhuman acts but they could not dampen the courage of Kashmiri freedom fighters.

## 67 winning candidates out of 114 to become members KP Assembly for first time

PESHAWAR: Around 67 winning candidates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa out of the total 114 notified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to become Members Provincial Assembly (MPAs) for the first time.

According to data released by ECP KP, these 67 new MPAs belong to 13 districts of the province. While 47 winning candidates have remained MPAs in previous terms.

The ECP KP has so far issued notification of 114 members out of the total of 145 as winning candidates. The assembly will be completed with the issuance of notification of 31 more members. Among these new MPAs, the maximum are from the Peshawar district where electorates choose 11 fresh candidates as their representatives in the legislative

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## First Pakistani Astronaut wins scholarship for space exploration

ISLAMABAD: Borderless Labs Inc (BLINC) has awarded First Pakistani Astronaut, Namira Salim with a scholarship to train as an orbital scientist Astronaut, to further her path in space exploration.

"By partnering with Borderless Labs Inc. (BLINC), Namira Salim will be embarking on an ambitious journey and will train at esteemed US institutions, including the International Institute of Astronautical Sciences (IIAS)," said Mac Malkawi, Founder, CEO and President of BLINC.

"I will undergo rigorous training as a scientist Astronaut, designed to prepare me for future private orbital missions around the Earth and beyond, as they become available, at the advent of commercialization of space, which makes the final frontier Accessible to All," said Namira Salim who will also be trained for Extra Vehicular Activity (EVA or spacewalks) and survival in Lunar and Martian gravity. According to the press note, Namira Salim is a Pakistani polar explorer and artist known for becoming the First Pakistani Astronaut and a pioneer astronaut with Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic on 6th October 2023. APP

## Doors of CM's office opened for ruling, opposition members: Maryam

LAHORE: Newly elected Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz has assured that the doors of CM office and her heart will remain opened for ruling and opposition members round the clock. In her first speech on floor of the assembly as chief minister on Monday, she thanked Allah Almighty for giving her respect and congratulated the speaker and deputy speaker on assuming their respective offices. "I hope that under your leadership, the House will hold democratic values high," she stressed. Maryam Nawaz regretting the absence of the opposition members said she wished they were here. "Being democratic workers, we understand how important it is to compete in politics. We have also faced difficult times when every tide was against us, and cruelty and brutality were inflicted on us. But thank God, we did not leave the field," she stressed. She said she wished the opposition members were present to create commotion during her speech.

Maryam said, "I am a chief minister for everyone, including those who did not vote for me. The doors of my office and the doors of my heart are always open for the opposition." She further thanked the members of the allied parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), PML-Q and PML-Zia. Maryam Nawaz thanked the 125 million people of Punjab who voted her to the assembly and vowed to serve them indiscriminately. "My presence here is an acknowledgment of the services of a political worker who endures hardships," she remarked, adding that history had been created today, even if she was minused. "This is an honour for every daughter of Pakistan, as the first woman chief minister of Pakistan is standing before them today. I pray that this continues after me," she added. "We have reached here after passing through a difficult phase." The newly elected Punjab Chief Minister insisted that she did not have revenge against anybody in her heart, and said she thanked those who inflicted cruelty and vengeance upon her. "Despite the hardships, I think the opponents have done me a favour by passing me through the hardships for which there is no substitute." INP

## Women empowerment crucial for promoting peace and stability: US Envoy



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He expressed delight in seeing representatives from fourteen U.S. minority-serving institutions and the All-Pakistan Women Universities Consortium at the event.

He said diversity is the cornerstone of progress and innovation, and President Biden has underscored that in America, "Diversity is our strength; the promise of America is that it is big enough for everyone to succeed." "It is through diversity that we gain access to a multitude of perspectives, ideas, and talents, propelling us forward into a brighter and more inclusive future," he added.

The ambassador said, "Today, we celebrate diversity in all its forms, including Regional, Cultural, Linguistic, Ethnic, Age, Religious belief, Gender, and others." He said, "In particular, we focus on the essential role of women in society and the importance of advancing women's inclusion." The United States, he said, is committed to sup-

porting Pakistan in its efforts to advance diversity in all its forms. "We will continue to collaborate on initiatives that promote diversity, including programs focused on education, healthcare, and economic development. Through partnerships between our governments, civil society, and the private sector, we can create lasting change that benefits us all," he added.

This conference marks a significant stride in aligning with the United States' commitment to Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion and our joint development objectives.

It serves as a platform to elevate local research, specifically focusing on inclusive approaches to climate resilience and advancing women's empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, it reinforces our commitment to collaborate with Pakistan on climate-smart agriculture, clean energy, and water—all fundamental to the U.S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework. He said today every country is grappling with climate change and disaster management, and the US acknowledged the indispensable role of everyone present, especially women and academia, in crafting solutions to the many challenges we face. "Given the unequal impacts of climate change, the unique contributions from Pakistani women universities offer promising insights into challenges and opportunities," he added. He thanked guests from American universities for traveling to attend and sharing their expertise with partners in Pakistani universities. APPP

## Senate passes seven private members' bills, refers four to committees

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday passed seven bills and witnessed the introduction of four private members' bills which were referred to the relevant committees for further consideration.

Moved by PML-N Senator Kamran Micheal, the House passed the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2023 as reported by the Standing Committee. However, an amendment proposed by the mover in the bill was also adopted.

PTI Senator Seemee Ezdi moved the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Easements (Amendment) Bill, 2023 as reported by the Standing Committees. Both bill were passed by the House.

The House passed four other bills including the Injured Persons (Medical Aid) (Amendment) Bill, 2023; the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023; the Federal Institute of Management Sciences Bill, 2023 and the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Technology Bill, 2023. These bills were moved by PTI Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani; JI Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, Independent Senator Naseeb Ullah Bazai and PTI



Senator Fida Muhammad.

The bill introduced in the House included the Equal Scales of Salary and Allowances Bill, 2024; the Wapda University Islamabad Bill, 2023; the Universal Health Coverage Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024. MQMP Senator Khalida Ateeb moved the Equal Scales of Salary and Allowances Bill, 2024 which

aimed to ensure uniform and equal scales of salary, allowances and compensation in the autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, statutory bodies, corporations, companies, authorities and other organizations or entities under the administrative control, directly or indirectly, or having share the capitals, of the Ministries and Divisions of the Federal Government and

ancillary matters to end discriminatory, exploitative and inconsistent pay packages. She also moved the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Chair bill referred it to the committee.

PTI Senator Fawzia Arshad moved the Wapda University Islamabad Bill, 2023 which aims to provide for the establishment of Wapda University Islamabad. PTI Senator Sania Nishtar moved The Universal Health Coverage Bill, 2024 which aims to provide for Universal Health Coverage in Pakistan through establishment of a two-pronged health financing window, health insurance and a catastrophic health expenditure prevention fund-based health financing window.

PML-N Senator Afnan Ullah Khan requested to defer the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024. (Insertion of new sections 160A and 160B in the PPC and subsequent amendments in Schedule II of the Cr.PC). The Chair deferred the bill on the request of the mover. A bill—the Aliz Institute of Arts and Sciences Bill, 2024—was deferred due to the absence of the movers. APP