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April 2023



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A Magazine for Scholarly, Literary, Political, Economic and Religious Activities

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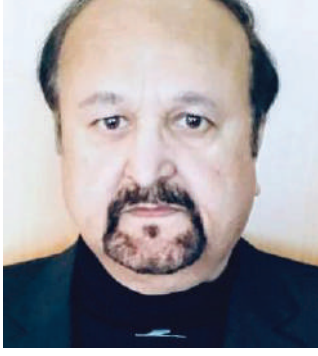


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# Editorial



Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil

4 The contemporary social and chiefly the political situation of Pakistan contradict the impartial objective of its foundation. The Muslim majority in Islamic Republic of Pakistan is reiterating the socio-political scenario of Pre-Partition India. The purpose of the creation of Pakistan virtuously entails the Muslim struggle for a separate piece of land as a political unit. Historically, by birth Pakistan has never been an Islamic Republic but only a state for the majority of Indian Muslims, for which hundreds of thousands of Muslims sacrificed their lives, prosperity, affluence and honours. Pakistan started its journey in 1947 with the population of 70 million and single leading political party, the Muslim League. Since then, the population and the number of political parties have both grown to 230 million and 164 respectively but with no appropriate leadership, consciousness and political will. The opportunistic, feudal and mercantile ruling elite have brought the country to the brink of destruction. Unfortunately, the state does not recognise the masses. The political system that should be serving the nation, has lamentably been high jacked by the immoral political elite, the power seekers. Apparently, Nation faces the three-fold main stream spoiled forces, the political, semi political and religio-political status quos. The establishment as semi political force has been committing the most dominant version of dismaying politics in Pakistan. Keeping in mind that Establishment being not the mother of the nation have limited constitutional role and portfolios. Actually, the ideology behind the creation of the country was to put all ideologies and notions under the sovereignty of God to run the state business of Pakistan; leaving a room for the establishment to interpret and dictate the "divine will" for the country. It seems that every constitutional and executive institutions only oblige the establishment. PDM regime in centre, the provincial Govern-

ments particularly the interim governments in KPK and Punjab have no concern with the issues of masses. Poverty ratio, inflation, health, education, high prices, etc. are unfortunately the issues of public but not the Government's as their sole purpose seems to contain Imran Khan and PTI. Khan's politics does not seem appropriate enough to contain the current situations. Both the ruling parties and the opposition are spreading the hatred as manipulations of the laws and misapplication of the constitution are damaging the fibre of democracy. The system of the Country is not run by the institutions but by the individuals subjecting to their purposes. Election Commission of Pakistan, police, security agencies, certain Govt. offices are only facilitating the privileged classes. Individuals, institutes and groups are only fighting for their own certain aims. Country is deprived of unity and integration which is dangerous for the solidarity of the Country. Every responsible public agency exploits the public resources in place of serving the masses putting Pakistan at risk from internal factors. Ruling elite is ostensibly compromising the national solidarity and national integration for political gains. Religious assemblages like JUI, JI, etc. are efficaciously covering for the maladministration of the political regimes. The problem for PML-N is the return of Nawaz sharif, future government and a way out with their corruption, while khan's objectives seeming to be the restoration of his government with grace and the accomplishment of accountability. In this regard, the PDM parties and PTI with the respective support of establishment and public lead Pakistan towards an alarming state of affairs, during which media and judiciary are losing their dignity. Ultimately, this state of anarchy may amplify the socio-political and economic crunches that Pakistan undeniably cannot afford.



# President writes to PM: 'Ensure Punjab, KP polls on time to avoid SC contempt'

President said PM being head of the government was responsible for safeguarding human rights as well as fundamental rights - By: Asim Yasin

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Friday urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to ensure implementation of the Supreme Court order about the general election in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a letter to the prime minister, the president emphasised that all relevant executive authorities of the federal and provincial governments should be directed to refrain from abuse of human rights and assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold the general election in two provinces within the constitutional time-frame, in compliance of the apex court order, to avoid further complications, including contempt of court. The president said the prime minister, being head of the government, was responsible for safeguarding human rights as well as fundamental rights of every citizen of Pakistan, as enshrined in the Constitution. The president said that events that were highlighted by the print, electronic and social media had taken place in the recent past about glaring violations of fundamental and human rights needed to be brought to the premier's notice to ensure remedial measures and preventive action. President Alvi said that election to the provincial assemblies in case of their dissolution under Article 105 or Article 112, were required to be held within 90 days, under Article 224(2) of the Constitution. The top court, in its order dated March 1, had directed the electoral watchdog to propose date(s) to the president for holding the poll within 90 days or on a date that deviates to the barest minimum from the aforesaid deadline, he added. The president said that KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali was also directed by the SC to appoint a date for holding the general



election to the provincial assembly as per the time-frame. "Subsequently, the ECP had proposed holding of general election between April 30 and May 7, 2023 and general election to the Punjab Assembly were announced to be held on April 30, 2023 and the same was notified by the ECP," read the letter. The head of the state said it appeared that federal and caretaker governments in Punjab and KP advised the heads of departments concerned to show their inability to provide necessary support for holding of general election. He referred to Article 220 of the Constitution, which states that "It shall be the duty of all executive authorities in the federation and in the provinces to assist the commissioner and the election commission in discharge of his or their functions." The president underlined that in his opinion, flagrant violation of the Constitution had been committed by the executive authorities and the government departments, adding that the ECP had not implemented his announcement of holding general election in Punjab on April 30, and also blatantly violated the Supreme Court order.

The ECP announced the date of October 8, 2023, for holding general election to provincial assemblies of Punjab and KP, he added. He maintained that it was a matter of concern that the prime minister had undertaken no meaningful consultation with the president on policy issues in line with Article 46 of the Constitution, which provided that the PM should keep the president informed on all matters of internal and foreign policy and on all legislative proposals the federal government intended to bring before the parliament. He added that Rule 15(5) of Rules of Business, 1973 also highlighted the responsibility of the PM, inter-alia, to furnish such information relating to the administration of affairs of the Federation and proposals for legislation as the president may call for. In his letter, the president also drew the attention of the PM towards the seriousness of incidents of human rights violations, atrocities of police and law enforcement agencies and grossly disproportionate use of force against citizens. He said multiple fake and frivolous cases had been registered against politicians, workers, journalists and media persons; houses of political workers had been raided, and citizens had been abducted without warrants and lawful justification. The president termed the incidents of human rights violations and oppression by state machinery against innocent citizens “clear breach and violations of fundamental rights”, guaranteed by Article 4 of the Constitution, which provides for, and guarantees, citizens to enjoy the protection of the law and to be treated in accordance with the law. “This has tarnished the image of Pakistan in the international community and is casting negative repercussions on the future of democracy and state of human rights in Pakistan,” he added.

6 The president highlighted that in the World Press Freedom Index of 2021, Pakistan ranked 145 out of 180 countries, and dropped to 157 i.e. 12 points downwards at the World Press Freedom Index, 2022, which reflected

the sorry state of affairs and this year’s actions and images would further exacerbate Pakistan’s already dismal ranking. He wrote that in the recent months, media had been further suppressed and journalists had also been subjected to charges of sedition and terrorism to stifle dissent and criticism of the government. It appears that a reign of terror has been unleashed against the media persons who have independent opinions, he added.

Separately, sharply reacting to the letter, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan said on Friday President Arif Alvi should stay within his legal limits and constitutional ambit and should not become a puppet of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan. Talking to a private news channel, he alleged that violator of the Constitution and lawbreaker [President Alvi] had been holding a constitutional position. “Get the answer from Imran Khan about doing terrorism. Don’t be a puppet of Imran Khan,” the interior minister thundered. “Where were human rights when a fake case of 15-kg heroin possession was framed [against him],” Rana Sana questioned as he listed human rights violations and political persecution during Imran Khan’s term as prime minister. He continued: “Is the opposition leader put on death row according to human rights? The sisters and daughters of political opponents were put on death row in the previous rule. The bones of journalists were broken, where were human rights at that time? “Write a letter to Imran Khan to return 190 million pounds to Pakistan.

“Write a letter to Imran to own his daughter. Write a letter to Imran Khan to respond to Toshakhana and foreign funding cases in court,” he told President Alvi.

<https://www.the-news.com.pk/print/1053562-president-writes-to-pm-ensure-punjab-kp-polls-on-time-to-avoid-sc-contempt>





# No plan B other than IMF: Miftah Ismail

Matters with IMF seem to be at a standstill, says Miftah Ismail

As Pakistan's economy continues to dwindle amid financial woes and the authorities struggle to strike a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), former finance minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Miftah Ismail said matters with the global lender seem to have come at a standstill. The cash-strapped country has faced growing economic challenges, with high inflation, low forex reserves, a widening current account deficit and a depreciating currency. "The government did everything it could to keep up with the IMF," he said, when speaking during Geo News show 'Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath'. He added that there is no plan B other than the IMF in his view. Miftah, when commenting on securing funds from friendly nations, said that Pakistan must conduct high-level diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "At the moment, Pakistan is in dire need of Rs5 billion to Rs6 billion," he added. Miftah further stated that if Pakistan defaults, it will not even be good for the world. Commenting on the IMF's concern with Islamabad about providing subsidy to smaller vehicles and motorcycles, Miftah said that the Washington-based lender's question on the matter is valid. However, he also mentioned that Pakistan, too, has the answer to their query on fuel subsidy. Earlier this week, the federal government had decided to subsidise petrol up to Rs100 to motorcyclists and owners of vehicles up to 800cc — in its bid to provide relief to the inflation-hit masses. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed to provide subsidy on petrol to low-income people up to Rs100 per litre," Minister of State for Petro-



leum Musadik Malik had said. Earlier, it was decided to provide a subsidy of Rs50 per litre. The minister had said under a comprehensive strategy, subsidised petrol will be available to motorcyclists and owners of vehicles up to 800cc. Malik had further said owners of vehicles above 800cc would be charged full price. He had said the decision to provide fuel at subsidised rates will be implemented within six weeks, adding that the government will make petrol cheaper for the poor. Meanwhile, the IMF's Resident Representative for Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz, when reacting to the news of petrol subsidy, had said that the global lender was not consulted by Islamabad before it planned to increase fuel costs for wealthier drivers in order to pay for a subsidy for the country's lower-income population. "Fund staff are seeking greater details on the scheme in terms of its operation, cost, targeting, protections against fraud and abuse, and offsetting measures, and will carefully discuss these elements with the authorities," Ruiz had said.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1053754-matters-with-imf-seem-at-a-standstill-miftah-ismail>

# Pakistan eyeing more stringent blasphemy law despite growing outrage

By: Diana Chandler

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (BP) – Pakistan's lower house of parliament has passed a bill strengthening punishment for blasphemy despite international outcry and security concerns among Christians and other religious minorities there. Blasphemy already carries punishment as severe as death in the majority-Muslim country, but the Criminal Laws Bill amendment passed Jan. 17 in the National Assembly would increase jail terms from three years to 10 years for insulting the prophet Mohammad's companions, wives and family members, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) reported. Fines of more than \$4,343 (1 million Pakistani rupees) would accompany prison time. The unanimous passage of the Criminal Laws Bill on Jan. 17 makes it likely the bill will gain final passage and the president's signature within months, Christian Solidarity Worldwide told Baptist Press. "The ease with which it passed the lower house does not bode well," a CSW spokesperson said. "It is likely to pass again." CSW Founder and President Mervyn Thomas is among many international religious freedom advocates expressing concern. "Existing blasphemy legislation has resulted in extra-judicial killings and countless incidents of mob violence based on false accusations," Thomas said in a press release. "Policymakers have ignored the long-standing demands of civil society organizations and minority community leaders for the repeal of the blasphemy laws or, at the very least, the introduction of procedural amendments to curb the misuse of these laws." At least 16 individuals received the death penalty for blasphemy in 2021, the U.S. State Department said in its 2021 Inter-



national Religious Freedom Report, but added the country has never carried out its death sentences in such cases. Instead, those suspected or convicted of blasphemy, as well as attorneys representing those accused and leaders advocating for the repeal of blasphemy laws, face repercussion and death by angry mobs. After Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab Province and a prominent critic, tried to reform blasphemy laws, his bodyguard killed him in 2011. Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian sentenced to death by hanging in 2010, was released from death row in 2018 after the Pakistan Supreme Court reversed her conviction. She was safely transported out of the country under cover of secrecy. Pakistan is widely noted for religious persecution despite religious freedom stipulations in its national constitution. Religious freedom advocates cite Pakistan's blasphemy laws and its inability to protect religious minorities from societal persecution and violence. In its Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List, the United States Commission on Internation-



al Religious Freedom (USCIRF) highlights 55 individuals detained or imprisoned for blasphemy charges in Pakistan. Among those named are Tabitha Gill, a Christian nurse accused of blasphemy in January 2021 by her colleagues and beaten and tortured by hospital staff. In December 2021, a violent mob killed and burned the body of Sri Lankan national Priyantha Kumara over blasphemy allegations, USCIRF said. Pakistan's blasphemy laws are poorly defined and require low standards of evidence, CSW said. The statutes criminalize anyone who insults Islam, including by "outraging religious feeling," and are often used as a weapon of personal revenge against religious minorities including Christians. "Pakistan must do more to protect its most vulnerable minority communities by upholding its international obligations and guarantees enshrined within the country's constitution," Thomas said, "and the international community must hold the government to account for where it fails or refuses to do so." The U.S. State Department deems Pakistan a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, a designation USCIRF also recommended. The Open Doors U.S. 2023 World Watch List of Christian persecution deems Pakistan the seventh most dangerous country for Christians. In its 2023 Global Prayer Guide, Voice of the Martyrs describes Pakistan as a "restricted" country where all "Christians face difficulties, discrimination and persecution because of their Christian identity." VOM encourages widespread prayer for the repeal of blasphemy laws there, and for the "courage, wisdom and protection" of Christians there.

<https://mbcpathway.com/2023/01/27/pakistan-eyeing-more-stringent-blasphemy-law-despite-growing-outrage/>

## Amazon loses bid to throw out case by UK drivers seeking worker rights



Amazon.com Inc has lost a bid to throw out three sample lawsuits brought by British delivery drivers seeking employment rights including the minimum wage and holiday pay. More than 1,400 drivers who deliver Amazon parcels are suing in a London employment tribunal, arguing they should be classed as employees rather than self-employed contractors. Amazon says it has no contractual relationship with the drivers and applied to throw out the claims at a hearing last month. However, in a ruling made public on Monday, a judge said the lawsuits against Amazon should proceed. The tribunal ruled that it could not be "virtually certain" that the drivers would not be able to establish that they have a "worker relationship" with Amazon. The claimants' lawyer Kate Robinson said in a statement that the ruling was a "huge success" for the drivers. "Amazon needs to recognise the value of the drivers delivering on their behalf and give them the rights we believe they are entitled to," she said. An Amazon spokesperson said: "We're hugely proud of the drivers who work with our partners across the country, getting our customers what they want, when they want, wherever they are. "We are committed to ensuring these drivers are fairly compensated by the delivery companies they work with and are treated with respect, and this is reflected by the positive feedback we hear from drivers every day." <https://t.ly/5zu->

# Why is Scotland building a memorial for Indian and Pakistani soldiers?

Some four million soldiers from India and Pakistan fought alongside British soldiers during World Wars. - By: Vidushi Tiwari



A project is now under way to build Scotland's first permanent memorial to the sacrifices of south Asian soldiers who fought in both World Wars. Some four million soldiers from the British Indian army (BIA) fought alongside British soldiers during World Wars One and Two. The BIA contributed 1.5 million servicemen to the fight in the first World War, of whom 74,000 died and up to 100,000 were injured. In the Second World War, there were 2.5 million servicemen from the BIA – 87,000 died and up to 150,000 were injured. The subcontinent also provided supplies worth £479m in WW1 (equivalent to £25bn in today's money) and £1.3bn in WW2 (equivalent to £53bn in today's money) to the UK.

## 'Special' Scottish connection

Scotland has a special connection with the BIA through a mainly Indian-Muslim contingent from the Punjab region called "Force K6", which was a mule transport corps during WW2. Force K6 arrived in Marseilles in December 1939 to join the war effort, and the

regiment was later evacuated out of Dunkirk. They spent the next three and a half years in the UK, and were moved to Scotland to train with British infantry brigades. Fourteen of them died in Scotland while training in harsh conditions with British troops the evacuation, with nine of them laid to rest at Kingussie Cemetery.

## 75 years of independence from British rule

Now, in an effort to raise awareness of "past conflicts and the invaluable contributions" of the four million troops, veterans secretary Keith Brown said that work on a new Scottish memorial will begin. Coinciding with the 75th year of independence from British Rule for both Pakistan and India, approval for the memorial comes after a six-year campaign by the charity Colourful Heritage.

"The people of Scotland owe a considerable debt of gratitude to those who fought and died on our behalf, including those from Commonwealth nations who came to aid this country





during its time of need,” Brown said. “The bravery and commitment of the British Indian Army was vital in defending the freedoms we enjoy today and deserves recognition.” Omar Shaikh, founder of Colourful Heritage, said: “...the memorial for us is not the target, it is a means to an end. “That end is to ensure that everyone in Scotland and Europe understands the contribution of BIA towards protecting this country and understands the shared values between the soldiers that were on the front line, be they from Europe or south Asia.” The memorial will be built in the grounds of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and will include a chattri (dome) design for the roof and natural stone columns to match the museum’s famous architecture. The final design adopts ideas sent in by more than 100 young people from across Scotland, and will have a digital aspect to engage younger generations as part of education visits. A project team has been established to oversee the building of the memorial, and architect Stuart Shand has started to procure the materials.



### **Fitting commemoration to forgotten sacrifices’**

“Reading aloud in the Scottish Parliament the names of the soldiers who lost their lives was an incredibly poignant moment for me, and I’m proud to have been involved in the campaign for a memorial,” said Anas Sarwar, Scottish Labour leader. Sarwar, who has worked with Colourful Heritage since the start of the campaign, added: “A permanent memorial to the soldiers of the BIA who fought alongside British troops is a fitting way to commemorate their forgotten service and sacrifice for generations to come.” Pam Gosal, Scottish Conservative MSP for West Scotland, said: “As the first female MSP from an Indian background, I wholeheartedly welcome the news that the BIA memorial in Glasgow is to go ahead. “I will be proud to see the four million-plus soldiers from the British Indian Army receive the recognition they deserve. “While this is a proud time for all those with connections to India, it will also provide the opportunity for future generations to learn about the brave sacrifice made by these soldiers. “I would like to congratulate Colourful Heritage for their success in making this memorial a reality, and I thank everyone who played their part in making this happen.

<https://news.stv.tv/scotland/why-is-scotland-building-a-memorial-for-indian-and-pakistani-soldiers-at-glasgows-kelvin-grove-museum>



# Supreme Court rules against immigrants in temporary status seeking green cards

By: Ariane de Vogue



Washington(CNN)The Supreme Court held on Monday that the government can block non-citizens who are in the US under a program that temporarily protects them from deportation in certain situations from applying for a green card if they entered the country unlawfully. Justice Elena Kagan wrote for a unanimous court. "Today's decision is not just a setback for those immigrants currently in Temporary Protected Status who did not enter the United States lawfully; it also reinforces the barriers that Dreamers would face until and unless Congress provides a statutory path to some kind of permanent lawful status," said Steve Vladeck, CNN Supreme Court analyst and professor at the University of Texas School of Law. "The Executive Branch may have some authority to confer forms of temporary legal status on those who crossed the border without permission, but the Supreme Court today reinforced, however indirectly, that only Congress can provide a permanent answer," he added. The case concerns Jose Sanchez and Sonia Gonzales, a New Jersey couple who came to the US illegally in 1997

and 1998 and now have four children. Their youngest was born in the US and is a citizen. Following a series of earthquakes in El Salvador in 2001, they applied for and received Temporary Protected Status, which shields foreign nationals present in the US from removal if they have been subject to armed conflicts or environmental disasters in their homeland. In 2014, the couple sought to apply to "adjust" their status to become lawful permanent residents and apply for a green card. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services denied their application, noting that they were ineligible to apply because they had not entered the country legally and never been formally admitted to the US. The case confronted two sections of immigration law: one that says that those in TPS should be considered as "maintaining lawful status," and another that says in order to adjust status, an individual in TPS must have been admitted lawfully. Kagan said that the conferral of TPS status does not make an unlawful entrant like Sanchez eligible for a green card. Kagan said that there was "no dispute" that Sanchez



entered the US "unlawfully, without inspection." She said that a "straightforward" application of immigration law supports the government's decision to deny him status as a lawful permanent resident because he was not lawfully admitted. "He therefore cannot become a permanent resident of this country," Kagan concluded. Currently, there are about 400,000 people with TPS status in the country and 85,000 have managed to adjust status.

Although a district court ruled in favor of the couple, an appeals court reversed. It held that TPS does not "constitute an admission." In court, Amy M. Saharia, a lawyer for Jose and Sonia Gonzales, argued that having been admitted is "inherent" in the TPS status. But Michael R. Huston, assistant to the US solicitor general, drew a line between status and admission, arguing against the couple. The government said that while Congress had made some individuals eligible to adjust their status if they met certain criteria and had a sponsor, it was not available to those who had not made a lawful entry. Huston said the government had "reasonably determined" that Congress did not "establish TPS as a special pathway to permanent residents for non-citizens who are already barred from that privilege because of pre-TPS conduct." He urged the court to defer to the position taken by the agency in the case and he noted that there are "tens of thousands" of TPS holders who have adjusted their status, but they had been lawfully admitted as a student or an au pair or a temporary worker. He said that TPS holders know that it is a temporary form of relief from removal and that it "will not last forever." At an early point in the case, the Trump administration had argued that those in the TPS program could never try to get green cards. The Biden administration's position leaves open the opportunity for the government to change its mind. <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/06/07/politics/supreme-court-immigrants-green-card-case/index.html>

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

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May Allah be with you - Amen

# London mosque hosts grand reopening after 2015 fire damage



A mosque in south London is hosting a grand reopening after a fire in 2015 badly damaged its administration building. Hundreds of people are expected to visit Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden for an inauguration of the new complex. It is reopening with an ornate, geometric frontage following the £20m improvement project. The mosque is said to be the largest in western Europe, with space for 10,500 worshippers, according to its website. The fire on 26 September 2015 left about 50% of the administration building's ground floor damaged as well as part of the first floor and a section of the roof. Only a handful of worshippers were inside the mosque when the blaze started, with 70 firefighters called out to the scene. London Fire Brigade station manager Philip Morton said at the time the mosque itself had "escaped completely unscathed". Its administration building has

been rebuilt as a five-storey complex with two large multipurpose halls, offices and guest rooms. The 5.2-acre (2.1-hectare) mosque serves the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, who raised the funds for the rebuilding project. Later this evening, the religious centre is set to host the 19th annual National Peace Symposium. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the worldwide head and Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is set to inaugurate the new complex and deliver a keynote address. Parliamentarians, academics and faith representatives are expected to attend.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-64834188>



# One of the World's Oldest Cities is 4,000 Years Older Than the Pyramids

There's an ancient city in Syria that is said to be one of the oldest cities globally, so old that it even predates the Egyptian pyramids. Called Tell Brak, this ancient city dates back to when history itself was not being written.

It is older than old, so ancient that it predates the most ancient Egyptian pyramids by around 4,000 years. The city known today as Tell Brak remains shrouded in mystery. Although we don't know what the settlement was called more than 8,000 years ago, evidence suggests that people referred to the city as Nagar at one point in history. Despite being one of the most ancient cities on the planet's surface, its history, evolution, and fall have been anything but clear for historians. In fact, we didn't even know the city existed until old Spy satellites from the US snapped images of the desert in the middle east, revealed the faint remnants of an ancient city. This ancient site is one of the best examples of archeology aided by aerial photography.



industrialized than today. The researcher and his colleagues documented around 10,000 previously unknown archeological sites thanks to the Corona Spy images. The U.S. ran the CORONA spy satellite program between 1959 and 1972. During this time, the spy planes crisscrossed the skies snapping countless images of military infrastructure and innumerable archaeological sites.

## A city buried by sand and history

### Tell Brak; an ancient city older than the pyramids

Imagine all the treasures that remain hidden beneath the surface, waiting to be spotted, uncovered, and revealed to the world. The remnants of the ancient city were photographed by a US spy satellite and located in 50-year-old imagery by Dartmouth College anthropology professor Jesse Casana. Professor Casana spent years studying and analyzing Corona Spy photographs of the Middle East. These images are of great importance because 50 years ago when the images were snapped, the countryside was much less

The remnants of the city are located in the Khabur plain, a region in northeastern Syria, not far from the borders of Turkey and Iraq. Considered one of the largest ancient sites in what is known as northern Mesopotamia, an ancient settlement predating the city is known to have existed as far back as 6,000 BC. This means that more than 8,000 years ago, people already settled in the area. Erected in a strategic position, Tell Brak was built on a major route from the Tigris Valley northwards to the mines of Anatolia and westwards to the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. The city was likely highly regarded and acknowledged as an important commercial center, evidence

of numerous workshops found at the site. Excavations have also revealed evidence of mass production of bowls and other items made of obsidian and white marble. Stamp seals and sling bullets have also been excavated from the ancient city layers. It suggests the cities inhabitants engaged in numerous craft activities, including basalt grinding, flint-working, and weapon making. Archeological excavations also suggest that the urban-based society was based on rain-fed agriculture. Seals recovered at the site have been dated to the pre-Akkadian kingdom and revealed the use of four-wheeled wagons and war carriages. Although much of the city's history remains shrouded in mystery, Contemporary cuneiform tablets excavated from Ebla suggest that during the third millennium Nagar was one of the dominant cities in this part of northern Mesopotamia. Moreover, scholars argue the city was also a major point of contact at the interface between the cities of the Levant in the west and those of Mesopotamia. The earliest levels of the city that have been excavated are thought to date back to the mid-fifth millennium BC and include some of the most massive buildings of the site, some of which date back as far as the end of the Ubaid Period. Nagar's importance reflects its position at the western margins of Mesopotamia itself and controlling routes to the West and the Tigris and the south. Although the city was of great importance and evolved greatly during the fourth millennium BC, it shrank in size at the beginning of the third millennium BC, just at the end of the so-called Uruk period, only to expand again around 2,600, precisely when it became known among people as Nagar. Eventually, the ancient city became the capital of a regional kingdom that controlled much of the Khabur valley. Today, the archeological settlement consists of a large—40 meter-high—central mound and various smaller “orbiting” mounds around it. The site covers a

total area of nearly 300 hectares. Archaeological excavations suggest a settlement of unknown—perhaps of a much smaller—dimension at the site before 4,200 BC. It was positioned at the center of the complex. However, its oldest remnants are buried deep beneath layers of buildings erected on top of it during later periods. Although not many excavations have taken place at Tell Brak, the discoveries made by experts are nonetheless more than rewarding. One of the most prominent discoveries made at the site is a non-residential structure that, according to experts, must have been gigantic. Although only a small part of the structure has been excavated, the building is thought to have had a large entrance with large towers covering its sides. Built with red mud bricks wall 1.85 meters thick, the remnants of the construction stand 1.5 meters today. Radiocarbon dating of the structure suggests it existed around 4,400 BC. The first excavations at the site took place in the 1930s by Max Mallowan, husband of Agatha Christie, who accompanied her husband in various excavations both in Syria and Iraq. Mallowan's central discoveries were the “Eye Temple” believed to date back to the 4th millennium BC, with its deposits of hundreds of small stone “idols,” and the “Naram-Sin Palace,” a discovery which confirmed that Mesopotamian political power was already there in the north during the 3rd millennium BC. The Naram-Sin palace was a huge storage and administrative building located at the southern edge of the city. The ancient city was destroyed by the Assyrian empire around 1,300 BC, failing to regain its importance. As a result, it disappeared from history records during the early Abbasid era.

<https://www.thearchaeologist.org/blog/one-of-the-worlds-oldest-cities-is-4000-years-older-than-the-pyramids?format=amp>



# An ICC warrant against Putin is good – and hypocritical



It's good that the ICC has charged Putin with war crimes. But what about the blood on the hands of the US and Israel? - By: Andrew Mitrovica

As faithful readers of this column may know, I write a lot about hypocrisy. Sometimes, it disappoints me. Sometimes, it offends me. Sometimes, it angers me. But state-sanctioned duplicity, in particular, never surprises me. Still, I try to call it out wherever and whenever I see and hear it, if only to let the hypocrites and their enablers know that someone, somewhere, has exposed their, at times, infuriating insincerity. I will begin with the career hypocrites at the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague which will then lead me to the career hypocrites at the US White House, State Department and Pentagon. Late last week, the ICC made out an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin after the global court concluded that the Russian leader had committed war crimes in connection with the abduction and deportation of thousands of Ukrainian children since Russia's invasion in February 2022. The ICC found that Putin and another Russian official bore personal criminal responsibility for the forced "resettlement" of Ukrainian children. The ICC defended its decision to charge Putin with a war crime and seek his arrest by insisting "that the public awareness of the warrants may contribute to the prevention of the further commission of crimes". Western and European capitals and establishment news media have universally cheered the ICC for taking the necessary step of issuing – for the first time – a warrant against a leader of one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Officials and diplomats described the ICC's tricky gambit as "the start of the process of accountability" that confirms that Putin is "a pariah" responsible for "crime[s] of aggression."

This, despite the fact that the unprecedented move is largely symbolic since Moscow does not recognise the court's jurisdiction or extradite its nationals. Now, before I am accused of being a Putin "stooge" or "lackey" by commentators or readers more interested in hyperbole than the truth, I have written often of my deep and abiding antipathy towards Russia's grotesque, crimes-against-humanity-happy president who is little more than a thug. I am glad that the ICC has charged Putin with a war crime. He has earned it. But here's the hypocritical rub. There are other leaders of other nations – including the United States and Israel – who regard themselves as exempt from the ICC's authority and who have also earned being charged with war crimes by the court. Apparently, according to the ICC, a string of American presidents and soldiers who launched a string of disfiguring wars on several still scarred continents and set up a covert, international abduction and torture racket have never, ever committed a war crime of any sort. Apparently, according to the ICC, a cocksure British prime minister and his soldiers who joined their evangelical American cousins to invade Iraq and Afghanistan, destroying countless towns and cities and killing and making refugees of millions of innocents, have never, ever committed a war crime of any sort. Apparently, according to the ICC, so-called "elite" Australian soldiers who murdered scores of Afghan civilians, including slicing children's throats as part of a sick initiation ritual, have never, ever committed a war crime of any sort. Apparently, according to the ICC, a slew of

Israeli prime ministers, soldiers and their proxies who have, for generations, targeted Palestinian kids, women and men and “civilian infrastructure” in the occupied West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza, Lebanon and beyond, have never, ever committed a war crime of any sort. If the ICC found the belated courage to accuse the US, Britain, Australia or Israel of war crimes and serve arrest warrants for any number of current and former heads of state, that could, in the court’s words, “contribute to the prevention of the further commission of crimes”. Of course, like Putin, the US and Israel would dismiss any charges instantly as having no legal merit. Give it a try, I say. Let the Americans and Israelis wail like colicky babies, too. In any event, the hypocrite-in-chief, US President Joe Biden, welcomed the ICC’s actions as “justified” and having made “a very strong point”. In the next sentence, Biden revealed his and America’s blatant hypocrisy when he qualified his congratulatory remarks by reminding reporters that the US does not recognise the ICC’s jurisdiction. “But the question is – [the ICC is] not recognised internationally by us either,” Biden said. Indeed, on September 2, 2020, the US slammed the ICC as “broken and corrupted” and derailed a probe into possible war crimes in Afghanistan by imposing sanctions on the court’s top prosecutor who had the audacity to investigate the dubious conduct of American soldiers. In an obscene quid pro quo, the ICC dropped the probe after then-US President Donald Trump and company dropped the sanctions. Then, on March 3, 2021, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken blasted the ICC prosecutor in a press release for having opened an “investigation into the Palestinian situation”. “The United States firmly opposes and is deeply disappointed by this decision,” Blinken howled. “The ICC has no jurisdiction over this matter. Israel is not a party to the ICC and has not consented to the Court’s jurisdiction, and we have serious con-

cerns about the ICC’s attempts to exercise its jurisdiction over Israeli personnel.”

Well, well, well.

The US applauds the ICC when it charges Russia with war crimes and excoriates the same body when it starts looking into whether America committed war crimes in Afghanistan and Israel against besieged Palestinians. The Pentagon has compounded the president’s hypocrisy by reportedly refusing to share with the ICC evidence gathered by US intelligence services of Russian atrocities in Ukraine for fear that providing the court with such incriminating information may set “a precedent that might help pave the way for it to prosecute Americans”. Translation: Yes, the Pentagon believes that Putin is a bad guy who has done bad things to good people in Ukraine. The Pentagon also believes that if it gives the ICC stuff that may help prove that Putin is a bad guy who does bad stuff to good people, it might lead to America’s “good guys” in battle fatigues ending up in the same dock in the Hague because the court might suddenly discover that they have done lots of bad stuff to good people, too. And America can’t have that. The New York Times says that President Biden hasn’t decided yet whether he agrees with the Pentagon or not. My guess is that the hypocrite-in-chief will side with the hypocrites-in-uniform. Otherwise, other hypocrites-in-suits in Congress and newsrooms will cackle that the president has betrayed America and its good guys in battle fatigues.

The views expressed in this article are the authors’ own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera’s editorial stance.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/3/20/an-icc-warrant-against-putin-is-good-its-also>

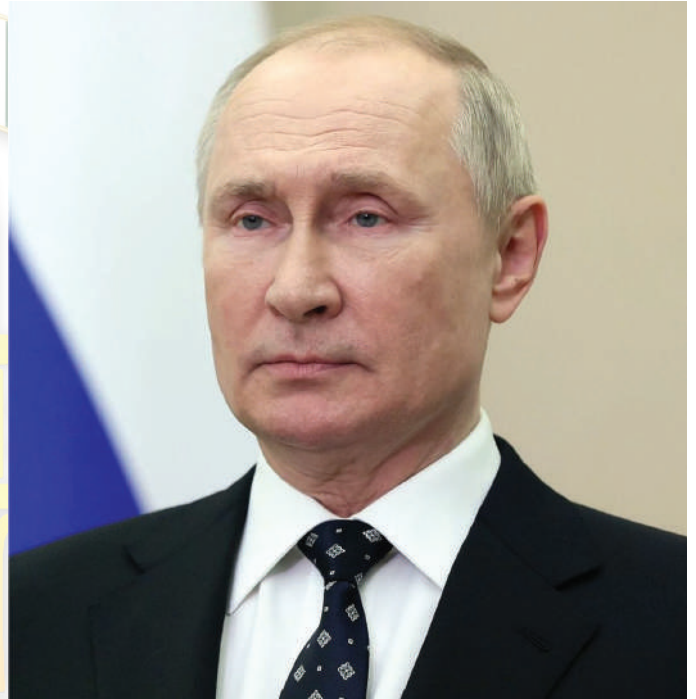


# Is the US constantly misreading Russia?

The late Irving Kristol was painfully insightful about both Russia and Ukraine

By: Reuven Brenner

Although US President Joe Biden's "shock" pronouncements declaring that he wants Vladimir Putin out and both a regime change and prosecuting Russian leaders for crimes against humanity have become scarcer, these statements reflect a misunderstanding of what led to the conflict in Ukraine and what can be done to stop the war. I know of only one US observer, the late Irving Kristol, with whom I was in touch during the early 1990s about Russia, who forecast then the sequence of events that led to the present conflict. He concluded that "watchful waiting is what we need more in our foreign policy," rather than impetuous military aid and interventions. In a Wall Street Journal op-ed on February 11, 1994, he explained how he reached this conclusion. He wrote that "the notion of a cordon sanitaire of East European nations integrated into NATO is not and never will be acceptable to any Russian regime. Fortunately, it is also not acceptable to the nations of Western Europe and the US, which have no intention of blithely issuing 'security guarantees' to the newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe." Russia, he continued, "always has had a limited imperial dimension." Since the fall of the Soviet Union, these ambitions focused on the 14 of so "nation states" that emerged after the fall. Kristol noted that none of them were either economically or politically viable (singling out Ukraine as having been particularly corrupt), and concluded that – like it or not – they would end up being semi-protectorates of Russia, though with more autonomy than before. He was painfully insightful about both Russia and Ukraine. "Back in 1954," Kristol wrote, "Nikita Khrushchev blandly gave the



Crimean Peninsula to the Republic of Ukraine, then a Soviet puppet. But the majority of the population of Crimea is Russian, and they just voted in a referendum to dissociate themselves from Ukraine." This was 1994. Crimean authorities held that three-part referendum on March 27, 1994, though the Ukrainian president at the time, Leonid Kravchuk, declared it illegal. This referendum was based on the 1992 decision of the Crimean Supreme Council that declared independence, based on what would be the outcome of a referendum that August. That did not take place until 1994, when 80% of Crimeans voted for the 1992 proposals of negotiating for independence. This was five years before Putin appeared on the horizon. Kristol added that subsequently the Ukrainian government miscalculated and provoked the very large Russian minority in eastern Ukraine. And so, he concluded, "a Russian-Ukrainian showdown looms, one that

Russia is bound to win.” That win would mean Russia conferring “something of protectorate status on those 14 new nations (Ukraine included)... Only Russia is in a position to prevent a dozen new Bosnias, which could threaten its own multiethnic condition,” and would do so. What then can the US and the West do now to stop the conflict? The vast majority of economists’ suggestion over decades, that there is nothing wrong with the Russian kind of massive centralization of power, led to misjudging the impact of centralizing policies everywhere, in both domestic matters and concerning Russia’s foreign policy.

### **Folly of ‘shock treatments’**

Kristol warned against overly activist policies and suggested managing the situation when there is no other solution in sight. I would only add that to achieve a more rapid ceasefire, the West should give Ukraine enough support to increase its negotiating power (and forget about Crimea and some of its eastern territories), but also take further steps to induce Russia to come more quickly to the negotiating table. This is not the first time that the US has made the mistake of announcing “shock treatments” to Russia. It did so 40-plus years ago too, with nothing good coming out of it. As I played a minor part at the time in the debate, here is the background of why I was even asked to give my take on this issue, and the sequence of events that led to my discussions with the late Yegor Gaidar, Russia’s acting prime minister at the time.

Having passed the first 15 years of my life under communism, with both my parents arrested without any charge (luckily they were released relatively quickly), I was astonished to find that the most popular textbook on economics in Western universities (for some 50 years, translated into dozens of languages) was by Paul Samuelson, who noted that “it is a vulgar mistake to think that most people” under communism were miserable.

A revision in the 11th edition omitted the word “vulgar.” The 12th edition in 1985 dropped the sentence, substituting with the question: “Were economic gains under communism worth the political repression?” – a euphemism for the tens of millions killed and starved. Lacking all insight into human nature or proper governance, Samuelson, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, got the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1970 for his pompously titled *Fundamentals of Economic Analysis*, which was nothing more than first-semester calculus in a decent math department. I did not know in the early 1990s when I noted the above in my books, what an October 8, 2021, New Yorker article (“Is It Time for a New Economics Curriculum?”) now reveals. Many warned MIT not to use Samuelson’s writings because they were neither “objective nor mature,” and that he was more a political hack than a scientist. To his credit, Samuelson made no secret that this is indeed what he was: In 1990 he admitted, “I don’t care who writes a nation’s laws – or crafts its advanced treaties – if I can write its economics textbooks.” MIT let him, and politicians put him in the limelight, implicitly suggesting that centralization and government being the solution to every problem – domestic or foreign – has “scientific” foundations. Recent events in the Virginia education system wanting to prevent teaching about gulags and Mao Zedong’s starvation marches had precedents. If Samuelson’s impact had been only in ivory towers, it would not be of particular interest. But as the debate about Ukraine suggests, those involved with treaties concerning foreign affairs in both the US and Western Europe have been influenced and have seriously misread Russian politics. Russia is as centralized now as it was under the “communist” label. Top party members continue to rule with the secret police; only the words changed: They bestowed favors to oligarchs rather than to party bureaucrats,



who now have been labeled “managers.” I saw that when Gaidar invited a small group of which I was member to discuss immature US academics’ suggestions of “shock therapy.” We said it made no sense, as Russia lacked institutions to administer such shock (details are in my 1994 book Labyrinths of Prosperity), but did not manage to convince him. Some gradual changes might have worked – but shocks, no. Not then, not now. Briefly, labels changed, but Russia is pretty much as it was under the czars, then “communism,” and now under Putin: Regimes have been discarded, but centralization and the Motherland’s ambitions remained. Unfortunately, Western perceptions were mistaken repeatedly: that Russia can be changed quickly; that the West can force it to change with one shock or another; or – as bad a mistake as the previous two – that, as the Samuelson teaching went, there was nothing wrong with Russia’s traditional centralization of powers.

This article draws on Reuven Brenner’s Labyrinths of Prosperity (1994) and Force of Finance (2002).

<https://asiatimes.com/2023/03/is-the-us-constantly-misreading-russia/>

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## Ramadan 2023: Saudi Arabia's new guidelines for Umrah pilgrims explained

With thousands of people hoping to fly to Saudi Arabia for Umrah this Ramadan, authorities have issued advisories on the new guidelines that were put in place recently. In the UAE alone, the demand for Umrah packages surged three-fold days before the holy month began. Saudi Arabia, however, has emphasised that it is well prepared for the influx of pilgrims.

**Going on Umrah once is enough this Ramadan:** The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah (MoHU) has reminded the faithful that "one pilgrimage is enough" for the holy month. "Performing Umrah only once during Ramadan can help provide other pilgrims the chance to perform their rituals with ease," the MoHU said. This would also keep the crowd under control and ensure a smooth journey for pilgrims.

**Book an appointment online:** Earlier this week, Saudi authorities said Umrah pilgrims are now required to book their slots through the Nusuk or Tawakkalna apps, according to media reports. Umrah agencies in the UAE had noticed a "big improvement" in the application channels this year as procedures have been eased. A bulk of pre-bookings have been completed in the run-up to Ramadan.

**Stick to your date and time slot :** As the holy month began, the authorities have issued another alert, reminding pilgrims to follow the date and time they had booked for Umrah. The authorities confirmed that a 'sufficient' number of slots have been opened for the pilgrimage, and dates were organised "in coordination with the Ministry of Hajj and the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques", according to reports.

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/ramadan/ramadan-2023-saudi-arabias-new-guidelines-for-umrah-pilgrims-explained?amp=1>

# China brokers deal for Saudi and Iran to normalise relations in major diplomatic coup

The agreement to restore ties 'within two months' was reached after four days of meetings between delegates from the long-time foes. - By: Campbell MacDiarmid



China has brokered a deal for Iran and Saudi Arabia to resume diplomatic relations, in a major diplomatic coup for Beijing that appeared to leave the kingdom's US ally out in the cold. The agreement to restore ties, including embassies and missions, "within two months" was reached after four days of meetings in the Chinese capital between delegates from the long-time foes, the two countries said in a joint communique with China. "The agreement includes their affirmation of the respect for the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in internal affairs," the statement added. Hossein Amirabdollahian, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, later hinted at further news to come, saying all three nations were in support of "more regional steps." The breakthrough marked China's emergence as a key player in Middle Eastern politics as the United States and the West pivot away from the region. "This is a big deal," said Michael Stephens, an

associate fellow at RUSI. "Not because Saudi and Iran have patched things up... but because the US was nowhere near it. Shifts are happening very, very fast."

## **'De-escalate tensions in the region'**

The US last night attempted to downplay the significance of the changing global power dynamics. President Joe Biden told reporters on Friday: "The better relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the better for everybody." The Biden administration has called China's rise the single greatest geopolitical threat to the US of the 21st century, though John Kirby, a spokesman for the National Security Council, declined on Friday to criticise its role in brokering the rapprochement. Mr Kirby rejected the notion that Beijing was filling a void in the Middle East left by the US. "I would stridently push back on this idea that we are stepping back in the



Middle East,” he said, adding that Riyadh kept Washington informed of the talks with Iran. “We support any effort there to de-escalate tensions in the region.” Israel’s opposition leader said the deal represented a massive failure for Benjamin Netanyahu, who has sought to bring Saudi Arabia on side as part of an alliance against arch-enemy Iran under the US-brokered Abraham Accords. “It’s a collapse of the regional defence wall that we began to build against Iran,” Yair Lapid said on Friday, and “a total and dangerous foreign policy failure of the Israeli government.” “This is what happens when you are occupied all day by an insane legal project instead of handling Iran.” It came as diplomats are exerting efforts to end the civil war in Yemen where Iran supports the Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia supports the exiled government in Aden. Riyadh cut ties with Tehran in 2016 after protesters attacked its diplomatic posts in Iran following Saudi Arabia’s execution of a prominent Shiite cleric, Nimr al-Nimr.

After the United States unilaterally withdrew from Iran’s nuclear deal with world powers in 2018, Tehran embarked on an increased programme of uranium enrichment, increasing tensions across the region as Israel and Saudi Arabia warned of the threat of a nuclear armed Islamic republic. Tensions have since remained high between the arch rivals – with Riyadh representing the most powerful Sunni state in the region and Tehran the biggest Shiite power – with a devastating attack on the heart of Saudi oil production attributed to Tehran. “This is a victory for dialogue, a victory for peace, offering major good news at a time of much turbulence in the world,” said Wang Yi, China’s top diplomat. China has also sought to establish itself as a mediator in the Ukraine war, offering a peace plan to both parties that has so far gained little traction. Mr Wang said Beijing will continue to play a constructive role in handling hotspot issues in the

world and demonstrate its responsibility as a major nation. “The world is not just limited to the Ukraine issue,” he said. As Mr Biden seeks to pivot to confront a resurgent China, Beijing stepping in to lead diplomatic efforts in the Middle East indicated a major change, said Mr Stephens.



“The US burned its leverage through inconsistency, it’s as simple as that,” he said. In the first decade of the 21st century, the Middle East was critical for the US as it invaded Iraq and relied on Saudi Arabia for its domestic oil needs. Today though the US imports less than 10 per cent of its oil from Saudi Arabia, while the vast majority of Beijing’s energy needs are met by the Gulf and Iran. Successive administrations under former president Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Mr Biden have downgraded the strategic importance of the Middle East, even as Washington continued to lead regional diplomatic efforts, such as the push for normalisation that saw the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain recognise Israel in 2020.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/03/10/china-brokers-deal-iran-saudi-arabia-resume-diplomatic-relations/>

# What is Nowruz and how is the Persian New Year celebrated?

Some 300 million people celebrate the Persian New Year, which has been observed for 3,000 years in different regions. Here's what we know about the festivity. - By: Al-Jazeera Staff



Nowruz – No-Ruz or Farsi for “new day” – is an ancient festival celebrating the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. More than 300 million people celebrate the Persian New Year, which has been observed for more than 3,000 years in different regions, including the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and others. Here is what to know about the festivity.

## What is Nowruz?

Nowruz is a celebration that marks the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one and is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, which usually takes place on March 21. The celebrations last for 13 days, and it's an opportunity to reflect on the past and set intentions for the future. The festival is rooted in Zoroastrianism, a religion practised in ancient Persia that predates Christianity and Islam. According to The United Nations cultural agency (UNESCO), the return of spring has great spiritual significance, representing the triumph of good over evil and joy over sorrow. “The Spirit of Noon, known as Rapithwina, who was considered to be driven underground by the Spirit of Winter

during the cold months, was welcomed back with celebrations at noon on the day of Nowruz according to Zoroastrian tradition,” UNESCO said. The celebration is part of UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the United Nations General Assembly of 2010 proclaimed March 21 as International Nowruz Day.

## Who celebrates Nowruz?

Given its origins, the festivity is marked in countries with significant Persian cultural influence, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is also observed by minority communities in the Americas, and Europe, including in cities like Los Angeles, Toronto, and London.

## How do people celebrate Nowruz?

The celebrations vary from country to country, but some common traditions are shared. Some include symbolic preparations with fire and water and ritual dances that sometimes involve jumping over fires. The flames symbolically purge the bad experiences from the previous year. Before the start of Nowruz, a



traditional spring cleaning takes place in the houses, while, during the celebration, people reunite with family and friends. Right before the arrival of the new year, families gather and exchange wishes, with the eldest distributing sweets and young children receiving coins and presents. But one of the most important traditions lies in preparing the Haft-Seen table.

### **Haft-Seen table during Nowruz**

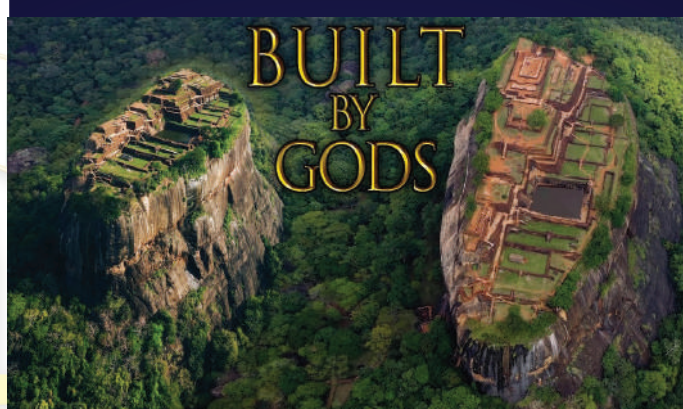
The Haft-Seen table, or the table of seven things that start with the letter S, is a family activity. It usually starts by spreading a special family cloth on the table, and then it is followed by placing the seven S items. These can include:

- Sirkeh (vinegar): Represents age and patience that often comes with ageing
- Sikkeh (coin): For wealth and prosperity
- Seer (garlic): For good health
- Seeb (apples): For health and natural beauty
- Sabzeh (wheat): For rebirth, renewal and good fortune
- Samanu (wheat pudding): A sweet dessert for wealth, fertility and the sweetness of life
- Sumac (berries): For the sunrise and the celebration of a new day

Besides these elements, the table might also include a mirror to symbolically reflect the past year, painted eggs to represent fertility, a goldfish to represent new life, and candles to show light and happiness. A variety of food dishes are prepared during the festivity, but “ash-e resteh” or noodle soup is usually served and is believed to symbolise the “many possibilities in one’s life”, according to research conducted by Harvard University. Special sweets, including baklava and sugar-coated almonds, are also believed to bring good fortune and are shared during the celebration. Other dishes include fish served with special rice with green herbs and spices, symbolising nature in spring.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2023/3/21/what-is-nowruz-and-how-is-it-celebrated>

## **Sigiriya - Ancient Sky City Built With Advanced Technology**



One of the most impressive places in Sri Lanka is Sigiriya, a site often named the 8th wonder of the world. Sigiriya was also home to an ancient city that sat atop the monolithic rock towering 650 feet over the town of Dambulla in the Matale District of Sri Lanka. The site attracts thousands of tourists daily and has been a UNESCO heritage site since 1982. Many believe that the giant monolithic rock looks unnatural because of its perfectly flat top, which almost looks like it's been cut at a precise angle. The locals believe this ancient site was built thousands of years ago by an ancient Hindu god, named Ravana, who was part of an advanced race of beings known as the Asura. These deities are said to have come down from the sky and ruled over portions of humanity. There are strange scoop marks and holes in the rock, and at the top, there are bricks, marble blocks, and an enormous granite water tank found in the middle of the site. How all of them were built and how ancient carried the materials to the top is still unexplained.

<https://www.thearchaeologist.org/blog/sigiriya-ancient-sky-city-built-with-advanced-technology?format=amp>

# Ramadan 2023: Fasting hours and iftar times around the world

The pre-sunrise to sunset fast lasts anywhere from 12 to 18 hours, depending on where in the world you are. - By: Mohammed Haddad

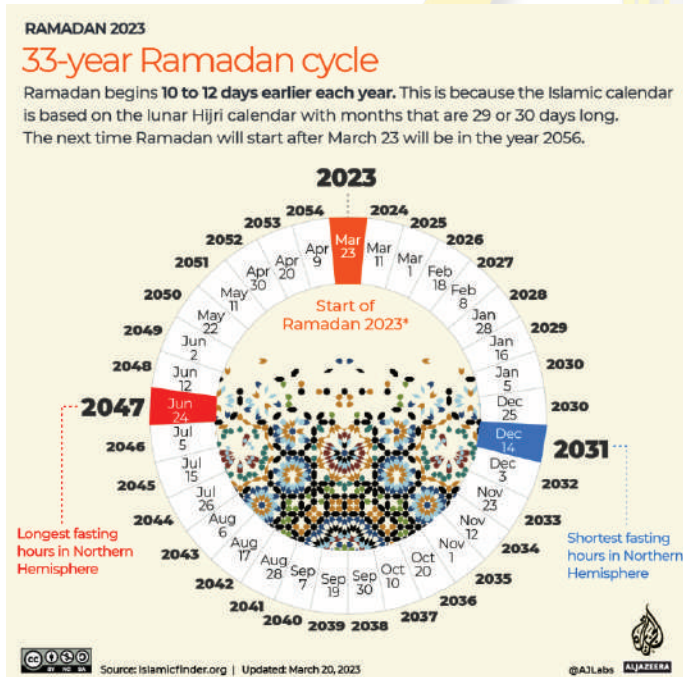
The Muslim holy month of Ramadan will begin on Thursday. The pre-sunrise to sunset fast lasts anywhere from 12 to 18 hours, depending on where you are in the world. Muslims believe that Ramadan is the month when the first verses of the holy book Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad more than 1,400 years ago. The fast entails abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations during daylight hours to achieve greater “taqwa”, or consciousness of God.

observed twice in the year 2030 – first beginning on January 5 and then starting on December 25. The next time Ramadan will start after March 23 will be 33 years from now – in the year 2056.

## Fasting, iftar times around the world

The number of daylight hours varies across the world. Muslims living in the world’s southernmost countries, such as Chile or New Zealand, will fast for an average of 12 hours while those living in northernmost countries, such as Iceland or Greenland, will have 17-plus hours fasts. For Muslims living in the Northern Hemisphere, the number of fasting hours will be a bit shorter this year and will continue to decrease until 2031, which is the year Ramadan will encompass the winter solstice – the shortest day of the year. After that, fasting hours will increase until the summer solstice – the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. For Muslims living south of the equator, the opposite will happen. The predawn meal to start the daily fast is called suhoor, while the breaking of one’s fast after sunset is called iftar. Click or hover over the dots on the map below to see the suhoor and iftar times on the first day of Ramadan 2023. In extreme northernmost cities, such as Longyearbyen in Norway, where the sun does not set from April 20 to August 22, religious rulings have been issued to follow timings in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, or the nearest Muslim country. Below are the average number of fasting hours in cities around the world. Actual fasting hours and times will vary by day, as well as calculation methods:

**Which cities have the longest fasting**



## Why does Ramadan start on different dates every year?

Ramadan begins 10 to 12 days earlier each year. This is because the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar Hijri calendar with months that are 29 or 30 days long. This year, the first day of fasting in Mecca will be on Thursday, March 23, Saudi Arabia announced on Tuesday. Because the lunar year is shorter than the solar year by 11 days, Ramadan will be



## hours?

- Nuuk, Greenland: 17 hours
- Reykjavik, Iceland: 17 hours
- Helsinki, Finland: 17 hours
- Stockholm, Sweden: 17 hours
- Glasgow, Scotland: 17 hours
- Amsterdam, the Netherlands: 16 hours
- Warsaw, Poland: 16 hours
- London, UK: 16 hours
- Astana, Kazakhstan: 16 hours
- Brussels, Belgium: 16 hours
- Paris, France: 15 hours
- Zurich, Switzerland: 15 hours
- Bucharest, Romania: 15 hours
- Ottawa, Canada: 15 hours
- Sofia, Bulgaria: 15 hours
- Rome, Italy: 15 hours
- Madrid, Spain: 15 hours
- Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: 15 hours
- Lisbon, Portugal: 14 hours
- Athens, Greece: 14 hours
- Beijing, China: 14 hours
- Washington, DC, US: 14 hours
- Pyongyang, North Korea: 14 hours
- Ankara, Turkey: 14 hours
- Rabat, Morocco: 14 hours
- Tokyo, Japan: 14 hours
- Islamabad, Pakistan: 14 hours
- Kabul, Afghanistan: 14 hours
- Tehran, Iran: 14 hours
- Baghdad, Iraq: 14 hours
- Beirut, Lebanon: 14 hours
- Damascus, Syria: 14 hours
- Cairo, Egypt: 14 hours
- Jerusalem: 14 hours
- Kuwait City, Kuwait: 14 hours
- Gaza City, Palestine: 14 hours
- New Delhi, India: 14 hours
- Hong Kong: 14 hours
- Dhaka, Bangladesh: 14 hours
- Muscat, Oman: 14 hours
- Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: 14 hours
- Doha, Qatar: 14 hours
- Dubai, UAE: 14 hours

- Aden, Yemen: 14 hours
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: 13 hours
- Dakar, Senegal: 13 hours
- Abuja, Nigeria: 13 hours
- Colombo, Sri Lanka: 13 hours
- Bangkok, Thailand: 13 hours
- Khartoum, Sudan: 13 hours
- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: 13 hours

## Which cities have the shortest fasting hours?

- Singapore: 13 hours
- Nairobi, Kenya: 13 hours
- Luanda, Angola: 13 hours
- Jakarta, Indonesia: 13 hours
- Brasilia, Brazil: 13 hours
- Harare, Zimbabwe: 13 hours
- Johannesburg, South Africa: 13 hours
- Buenos Aires, Argentina: 12 hours
- Ciudad del Este, Paraguay: 12 hours
- Cape Town, South Africa: 12 hours
- Montevideo, Uruguay: 12 hours
- Canberra, Australia: 12 hours
- Puerto Montt, Chile: 12 hours
- Christchurch, New Zealand: 12 hours

Ramadan greetings in different languages  
Various Muslim-majority nations have a personalised greeting in their native languages.

“Ramadan Mubarak” and “Ramadan Kareem” are common greetings exchanged in this period, wishing the recipient a blessed and generous month, respectively.



<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/20/ramadan-2023-fasting-hours-and-if-tar-times-around-the-world>

# Egypt announces new Great Pyramid discovery

**A team of international archaeologists used high-tech instruments to find a sealed-off chamber above the entrance to the Pyramid of Khufu. They expect to find more such chambers in the future.**

Egyptian antiquities authorities on Thursday made public the discovery of a hidden chamber inside the 4,500 year old Pyramid of Khufu — formerly known as the Pyramid of Cheops — or the Great Pyramid of Giza. The discovery, which was credited to scientists from the ScanPyramids project, was announced by archaeologist Zahi Hawass and Minister of Tourism Ahmed Eissa. ScanPyramids, initiated in 2015, is an international project that uses various high-tech instruments employing non-invasive infrared thermography, ultrasound, 3D simulations and cosmic-ray radiography to study the structures. Scientists say they used that technology to discover a sealed-off corridor above the main entrance to the pyramid. The corridor, which is not accessible from outside the structure, is nine meters (29.5 feet) long and two meters (6.5 feet) wide. After the discovery was made, scientists fed a small diameter (6 millimeter: 1/4 inch) Japanese endoscope through a crack between stones to attain images of the space from inside.

## **Archaeologists want to know what else may be inside the structure**

Archaeologists say they do not know what purpose the corridor served. Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, suggested the corridor may have been designed to redistribute weight above the main entrance or around another as yet undiscovered chamber. Christoph Grosse of the Technical University of Munich, a leading member of the ScanPyramids project, said he hopes to uncover still more hidden secrets. Speaking of the newly discovered corridor, he said, "There are two large limestones at the



end of the chamber, and now the question is what's behind those stones and below the chamber?"

## **Major tourism magnet in cash-strapped country**

Located just outside Cairo, the Pyramid of Khufu — named after a Fourth Dynasty pharaoh who reigned from 2509 to 2483 B.C. — is one of the three structures that make up the Giza pyramid complex. The structure is the only of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World to have survived to this day. The question of how exactly the pyramids were built has confounded experts for centuries. Originally built to a height of 146 meters, the Pyramid of Khufu now stands at 139 meters. The mystery surrounding them has also made them a main tourist attraction in Egypt, which depends heavily on the tourism sector for income. The sector has suffered as a result of political turbulence since strongman President Hosni Mubarak was ousted in a 2011 uprising. Violence and the coronavirus pandemic have further crippled tourism in the cash-strapped nation.

<https://amp.dw.com/en/egypt-announces-new-great-pyramid-discovery/a-64869784>



# Forced Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights

By **Munazza Abbasi LL.B (Hons)**



## Domestic Violence Remedies

### *The Civil Law Protections:*

The Working Group has found that the existing legal framework affords a great deal of protection to children at risk of being forced into a marriage, above and beyond the civil and criminal legal measures available to protect adults from a forced marriage.

The law on the validity of marriages entered into before the age of 16 is governed under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, along with the Marriage Act 1949 (as amended) in England and Wales. The effect of which is to declare the marriage as void at law. A marriage is only considered valid when conducted at or after the age of 16.

Section 3 of the Marriage Act 1949 requires persons between the ages of 16 to 21 to obtain consent from their parents or guardians in order for their marriage to take place. Furthermore, there is a range of common law and statutory civil powers that the courts can exercise to protect children who are being forced into marriage, including the Children Act 1989, and the Education Act 1996.

Under s.17 of the Children Act, local authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their local area who are in need, and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range of services appropriate to the children's needs. It can be proposed that children who are at risk of being forced into a

marriage fall within this category.

Under s.31 of the Act, care and protection orders can be made by the courts to place a child under the age of 17 under the care of a local authority. The child then cannot be removed from the UK by anyone, without the consent of every person with parental responsibility over that child. This includes the local authority. Airport Police have successfully utilised the s.44 Children Act Emergency Protection Order provision to prevent a child being removed from the UK for the intention of a forced marriage. Legally, it is a necessary requirement for all children of compulsory school age (5-16) to receive suitable education. Parents have the responsibility of ensuring this happens, either by registering the child at school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

The period of compulsory education ends when a child reaches age 16. Under this, children are protected from being forced to leave school by their parents and then taken abroad to be forced into marriage to someone of their parents' choice.

### *Alternative methods of securing protection to victims:*

An alternative way of offering protection and support to victims of a forced marriage is by way of application for an injunction. Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996 provides two main types of injunctions. The first is a non-molestation order. In order to ensure the health, well being and safety of the victim, the

order prevents their partner or ex partner from using or threatening violence against them, or intimidating, harassing or pestering them. Breach of this will automatically constitute a criminal offence, without the need to show 'significant harm'.

The second is the occupation order that regulates who can live in the family home, and can restrict the victim's abuser from entering into the surrounding area. This can be applied for if the victim has left their home due to violence, but wishes to return and exclude their abuser.

### ***The Criminal Law Offences:***

The legal framework assisting forced marriages is rooted in the history of using the criminal justice system to address domestic violence, as previously there was no law expressly recognising and prohibiting the practice. Where a forced marriage has, or is likely to occur, a scope of criminal offences were applied. For example, taking a child abroad for the purposes of forcing them into marriage has the parents charged with child abduction under the Child Protection Act 1984.

A parent guilty of this offence is liable for imprisonment of a term not exceeding six months, or a fine, or both. A parent, who is often the perpetrator of the offence, can also be charged with the common law offence of kidnapping under the Child Abduction Act 1984.

False Imprisonment charges may be pressed against the perpetrator if there has been confinement of the victim. Likewise, s.1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 will apply for cruelty to persons under the age of 16, including neglect and abandonment.

An act by the perpetrator by which the victim apprehends the infliction of some immediate unlawful violence on them constitutes an assault, and where that unlawful violence is used on them, it will constitute a battery. The minor forms of this will constitute common assault. However, more serious cases of these may have the punishment of five years to life-time sentence, depending on the seriousness of the violence used.

Where the victim is threatened to be killed, under s.16 of the Offences against the persons Act 1861, the perpetrator can be liable to a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment. This may apply in many scenarios of forced marriages, as it is viewed as an honour crime, where this is likely to occur.

Further criminal law offences that offer increased security to victims of forced marriages, are harassment, child cruelty, blackmail, various sexual offences, theft (of passport) and public order offences, such as the offence of affray, where there is use or threat of unlawful violence causing a person to fear for their personal safety.

In any case, the "welfare of the child is of paramount consideration". An honour killing case involved a Muslim child being given to foster parents for life, who were white, British and non-religious. The Muslim father claimed that the child should be given back to him as he did not wish for his son to be raised in a British, white and non-religious family. The Court of Appeal, however, stated that the child's welfare was of paramount importance. If the child stayed with a Muslim family, he would continue to be under constant fear, with respect to the nature of the closely linked religious communities.

To be continued.....



# 2 killed, 30 hurt as Islamists clash with cops

30 houses torched as violence flares up in Panchagarh over Ahmadiyya event

Two persons were killed and at least 30 others, including seven policemen, were injured yesterday in a clash between law enforcers and supporters of some Islamist organisations who were demonstrating against a programme of the Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh.

The agitators set fire to 30 houses and four shops belonging to Ahmadiyyas, and attacked a local police station, vehicles of law enforcers and a traffic police office. According to locals and police, Ahmadiyyas organised a three-day Jalsa Salana, their annual gathering, at Ahmednagar in Panchagarh Sadar upazila. The programme was scheduled to begin at noon.

But leaders and activists of several Islamist organisations, including the Islamic Andolon Bangladesh, were staging demonstrations since Thursday demanding cancellation of the event. After Juma prayers yesterday, they gathered at the town's Chowrangi intersection, brought out a procession and started

marching towards the venue.

The clash ensued as police obstructed the procession. The agitators hurled brick chips at the law enforcers, and in retaliation, police charged batons and fired teargas shells.

At one stage, the mob took position surrounding Panchagarh Sadar Police Station and hurled brick chips targeting police around 3:30pm, said Akhterul Islam, assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of the police station. Two vehicles -- one of police and another of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) -- were damaged. The protesters also vandalised and torched a traffic police office in Dhakkamara area, said locals and police.

Besides, the agitators blocked the Korotoa Bridge, the main entrance to the town, around 4:00pm. It caused public suffering as traffic remained halted for around one and a half hours.

Around 5:30pm, the protesters marched again to Ahmednagar, an area on the town's south-eastern part where Ahmadiyya community people reside, and vandalised 30 houses and four shops.

"As we came under attack, we were compelled to stop our programme," said Mahmud Ahmed, a member of the Ahmadiyya community.



Contacted, Md Abdullah, general secretary of Panchagarh unit of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, denied their involvement in the arson and said his party men were not involved in the incident.

### **COPS HURT, BGB DEPLOYED**

At least seven policemen were injured during the violence, said the district's police chief, SM Sirajul Huda, around 8:00pm.

Police brought the situation under control and additional law enforcers were deployed to maintain law and order, he added.

Seventeen platoons of border guards were deployed in the area to maintain law and order, said a BGB statement.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, SM Sirajul Huda, superintendent of police in Panchagarh, said the deceased have been identified as Arifur Rahman, 26, and Jahid Hasan, 23.

Arifur, a resident of Masjidpara area, used to work at a local printing press, said locals.

He was returning home from a mosque after offering Juma prayers. He sustained bullet injuries in his head, said his relatives.

Arifur was rushed to Panchagarh Sadar Modern Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital but he died on the way, said the relatives.

32 <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/2-killed-30-hurt-islamists-clash-cops-3262301>

### **Universal Art Production: A name to reckon Photography and Video Production services across The UAE**



Entrepreneur Aslam Jawaid, CEO, of Universal Art Production, spoke at length about services the brand has to offer, “Universal Art Production came into existence in the year 2008 and we offer a plethora of services which range from Multimedia, Graphics, Photography, Video Production, and post-production.” Speaking about his other ventures Aslam Jawaid said, “I was an advocate High court of Sindh province in Pakistan and relocated to Dubai over a decade back. Having looked at the booming business for photography and videography services I formed a company that is into Photography and Video Production. My active interest in news and current affairs led me to open a company that is into news media and this led to the formation of HD Plus TV and Current News Dubai. We have interviewed all the dignitaries like the PM of Cabo Verde, Former Prime Minister of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf besides a host of Bollywood film and TV actors and actresses. The other site named Current News gives you the latest news from across the world. Which is updated on a regular basis and its basic aim is to target the diaspora from South Asia in the GCC.”

<https://www.currentnewsdubai.com/post/universal-art-production-a-name-to-reckon-photography-and-video-production-services-across-the-uae>



# 5,000 years old fridge along with food found by archaeologists



Be it the Harappan, Mesopotamian, or Mohenjodaro civilizations, there have been several instances when the archaeologists have discovered the roots of our current lifestyle. These discoveries have given us proof that our ancestors were way ahead of us and were abreast with advanced technologies, which we might not be knowing. Recently, one such instance happened where the archaeologists have made a fascinating discovery of the ruins of a tavern in southern Iraq that dates back almost 5,000 years. The finding is expected to shed light on everyday life in the first cities in the world. Recently, a US-Italian team made the discovery in the ancient Lagash ruins, northeast of the contemporary city of Nasiriyah, which is already known as one of the earliest urban centers of the Sumerian civilization of ancient Iraq. The town, now named al-Hiba, has become a site of significant importance to archaeologists, as in the past, many historical discoveries have been made here. It is located between the

Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It was discovered that the city was developed on four marsh islands. During Sumerian civilisation, the region was divided into city-states. Each one of them was walled in and worshipped their deity.

## **The discovery**

Following the excavations, the researchers found an open courtyard that was used for dining purposes, along with benches, an oven, ancient food relics, and a 5,000-year-old moisture-wick structure that can be compared to a 'modern-day fridge' to keep the food cool. The team also discovered conical bowls that contained the remnants of fish. The project director, Holly Pittman, was quoted by AFP as saying, "So we've got the refrigerator, we've got the hundreds of vessels ready to be served, benches where people would sit, and behind the refrigerator is an oven that would have been used... for cooking food." As Holly explained, "What we understand this thing to be is a place where people could come to eat

and that is not domestic," the archaeologists discovered evidence of beer drinking. "We call it a tavern because beer is by far the most common drink, even more than water, for the Sumerians," she said, noting that in one of the temples excavated in the area, there was a beer recipe that was found on a cuneiform tablet. As per reports, archaeologists also found a recipe for an ancient beer at the site. Also, it has been reported that excavations restarted at the site in 2019 as part of a joint project between the Penn Museum, the University of Cambridge, and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Baghdad, where they have been using new techniques such as drone photography and genetic analysis to secure data and information.

The use of these modern techniques has enabled the researchers to gain a better understanding of the Sumerian civilization and how people lived during that time. As per reports, early excavations in the area focused on religious architecture and understanding the elites, but the latest excavation focused on non-elite areas and the motive was to have a broader understanding of ancient cities. This finding has created a lot of excitement in the archeological circles and history buffs. In the past, foods have been discovered in several sites like the Mesopotamian, Sumerian and Indus Valley, but it is for the first time that a fridge like structure has been discovered. It not just throws light on the craftsmanship of the people of that time but also on how they chose a perishable item like fish to be kept in the cool box. For the first time in history such an exciting discovery has been made.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/food-news/5000-years-old-fridge-along-with-food-found-by-archaeologists/article-show/97981881.cms>

## 10 Most Incredible Finds in Egypt That Scare Scientists



The ancient Egyptians were one of the most remarkable cultures of the old world. In terms of art, architecture and science, they were light years ahead of almost everybody else - so much so that modern-day historians can't understand where their knowledge came from! Even now, there are many ancient Egyptian discoveries that historians and scientists struggle to rationalize. Many of ancient Egypt's rulers known today as pharaohs built themselves elaborate monuments and tombs, inscribing them with their names and achievements in hieroglyphics. Through painstaking excavations, research and translation, modern scholars have used these written records to trace Egypt's history and divide it into three distinct periods known as the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms with periods of relative instability in between. Ancient Egypt has many secrets to tell, and in 2022, archaeologists made some fascinating findings, including the tomb of a previously unknown queen, a falcon shrine with a cryptic message and a massive tunnel beneath a temple. Here are some of the most amazing discoveries at ancient Egyptian archaeological sites this year. In this video, we are looking into 10 Most Incredible Finds in Egypt That Scare Scientists.

<https://www.thearchaeologist.org/blog/10-most-incredible-finds-in-egypt-that-scare-scientists?format=amp>



# Physical health of mentally ill

By: Zafar Mirza

**“Our bodies are gardens to the which our wills are gardeners.” William Shakespeare**  
READERS might find it surprising to know that people with mental illness live less long than the general population. This is the case in every country. According to one study, people with severe mental illness live up to 25 years less than the general population. Why?

The high mortality rate among people with mental illness is not due to mental illness per se, rather it is the result of the coexistence or co-morbidity of physical health problems, such as cardiovascular, respiratory, metabolic and infectious diseases and cancer.

The Lancet, the oldest peer reviewed medical journal, set up a psychiatry commission which, in 2019, published a “blueprint for protecting physical health in people with mental illness”. Joseph Firth, Najma Siddiqi et al reviewed global evidence and reported that although for decades the higher prevalence of physical health issues among the mentally ill was well noted — earlier it was thought that premature mortality occurs only among people with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia (a serious mental disorder) and bipolar disorders (people with severe mood swings of depression and euphoria) — now there is evidence that individuals with any kind of mental disorder have a substantially reduced life expectancy. Indeed, suicide is more common among these people (disproportionately affecting young people and elderly women in low- and middle-income countries) as around 17 per cent of them die due to unnatural causes and it contributes to

their relatively short lives.

Research over the last two decades, though mostly in high-income countries, has shown that people with mental illness have up to double the chances of developing cardiometabolic diseases (a group of common but often preventable conditions including heart attack, stroke, diabetes, insulin resistance and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease) than those without mental illness. For patients with depression, the risk of developing cardiac disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, or obesity is around 40pc higher than in the general population. Despite many research gaps, higher rates of infectious diseases like hepatitis B and C, HIV and syphilis are also found among people with mental illness. Research that followed those with severe mental illness over 10 years in Ethiopia noted individuals dying prematurely compared with the general population, and half of the deaths were from infectious diseases.

The reasons for the high prevalence of diseases and co-morbidity in people with mental illness and especially those among them with severe mental disorders are due to factors related to patients as well as to the healthcare system. People with mental illness have unhealthier lifestyles compared to the general population, for obvious reasons — for example, self-neglect, smoking, sedentary behaviour and poor diet. These people are less able to access adequate healthcare than the general population. Even in a country like the US, people with severe mental illness are twice as likely as those without mental disorder

ders to have been denied medical insurance because of pre-existing conditions. In low- and middle-income countries such as Pakistan, where access to healthcare generally and for the mentally ill in particular is inadequate, the situation is worse.

Some physical health problems in people with severe mental illness are associated with the use of medicines for the latter. The commonly observed physical side effects of these medicines include weight gain, menstrual disturbances, sexual dysfunction, muscle spasms, tremors, rigidity, restlessness, abnormal involuntary movements of different parts of the body — for instance, the legs and lower jaw — constipation, dryness of eyes, mouth and skin, blurred vision, slow heart rate, urinary retention, sedation and more. Management of these side effects poses a therapeutic challenge to these people.

The WHO estimates that more than 80pc of people with mental health conditions, including individuals experiencing neurological and substance use disorders, are without any form of quality, affordable mental healthcare.

A mentally ill person, especially one with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or a major depressive illness, is most likely to carry a double burden of disease — ie, mental illness and physical illness. But more often than not, physical illness accompaniments in mentally ill people are ignored. A mentally afflicted person is himself/herself unable to explain their physical illness under the effect of his/her mental illness.

The physical health of people with severe mental illness is also neglected in policies and research. People working on mental health are so challenged and occupied with the lack of mental healthcare for the mentally ill and there is so much to do in this regard that the

physical health issues of mentally ill people remain under the radar.

Every column I write on almost any health issue in Pakistan, I come back again and again to the importance of primary healthcare as this is where the holistic and integrated delivery of quality health services must be reliably implemented. Now that, for the first time, mental health services have been included among the essential health services package for primary healthcare, it is time to provide proper training to health workers at primary care centres for taking care of mentally ill people including their physical health. Such trainings should also include how to identify signs of severe mental illness, and where required, how to counsel family members and where to refer such patients for advanced care of mental and physical illnesses.

It is heartening to note that attention is now being given to mental health training at the primary healthcare level. A major initiative has been taken to train general practitioners in this regard. More on this later.

As I mentioned earlier, most of the research on the physical problems of mentally ill patients, including those with severe mental illness, is done in high-income countries. Lately though, important work has been done in South Asia, including Pakistan, where for the first time these issues have been studied in the wake of Covid-19. More on this next time.

The writer is a former SAPM on health, professor of health systems at Shifa Tameer-i-Millat University and WHO adviser on UHC.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1743935/physical-health-of-mentally-ill>



# Humza Yousaf succeeds Nicola Sturgeon as SNP leader



Humza Yousaf is to succeed Nicola Sturgeon as SNP leader and Scotland's first minister after a vote of party members. Mr Yousaf defeated rivals Kate Forbes and Ash Regan in a leadership contest that exposed deep divisions within the party. The 37-year-old is the first Muslim to lead a major UK party. He is set to be confirmed as the first ethnic minority leader of a devolved government on Tuesday. Mr Yousaf is currently Scotland's health secretary and was widely assumed to be Ms Sturgeon's preferred successor, although she did not explicitly back any of the candidates in the contest. The leadership election was decided by the Single Transferable Vote system, with 50,490 of the SNP's 72,169 members casting a ballot - the vast majority of them online. Mr Yousaf failed to win a majority in the first round of voting, but won 52.1% of the votes after second preference votes from Ms Regan, who was eliminated after finishing third, were redistributed. Ms Forbes came second with 47.9% of the votes when second preferences were included, with Mr

Yousaf receiving 26,032 votes and Ms Forbes 23,890. The new SNP leader will face a vote in the Scottish Parliament - which he is certain to win - on Tuesday before becoming Scotland's sixth first minister. He had been the clear favourite with the bookmakers during the contest, although polling expert Prof Sir John Curtice said ahead of the result that Ms Forbes appeared to be more popular with Scottish voters as a whole. Ms Forbes, a member of the evangelical Free Church of Scotland, had been attacked by the SNP hierarchy during the contest over her socially conservative views on issues such as gay marriage, abortion and having children outside of marriage. Speaking after being confirmed as the new leader at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Ms Yousaf said it would be "the greatest honour and privilege of my life" to be the next first minister. And he called on the party to unite behind him after what has often been a fractious leadership contest. He said independence would be won "on the doorsteps" and pledged to kickstart a grassroots

campaign, adding: "We will be the generation to win independence for Scotland". Mr Yousaf added: "In the SNP we are a family. Over the last five weeks we may have been competitors or supporters of different candidates. "We are no longer team Humza, or team Ash, or team Kate, we are one team." Mr Yousaf also said his grandparents had arrived in Scotland from Pakistan in the 1960s barely able to speak a word of English, and would not have believed "in their wildest dreams" that their grandson would one day become first minister of Scotland. Ms Sturgeon, who was Scotland's longest-serving first minister, announced last month she was stepping down after more than eight years in the job. She said Mr Yousaf will be an "outstanding" leader as she congratulated him on his appointment, adding: "I could not be prouder to have him succeed me". It was the first time the SNP has had a leadership contest since 2004, with Ms Sturgeon being unopposed when she replaced Alex Salmond in 2014. Mr Yousaf becomes only its fifth leader since 1979, and will face the task of uniting a party that has dominated Scottish politics in recent years but which has looked deeply divided in the wake of Ms Sturgeon's resignation. Ms Sturgeon's surprise announcement that she was resigning came just three weeks after she insisted that she had "plenty in the tank" and still believed she would lead Scotland to independence. Her husband, Peter Murrell, was forced to resign midway through the campaign after it emerged the party's membership stood at 72,000 rather than the 104,000 it had consistently claimed to have. The party still faces a police probe over the use of £600,000 which was raised by activists who were told it would be ringfenced for a second independence referendum, and questions over why Mr Murrell gave a SNP a loan of more than £100,000 in June 2021. The SNP and Mr Murrell both deny they have done anything wrong, with Ms Sturgeon saying she "can't recall" when

## Humza Yousaf elected SNP leader



Humza Yousaf **52.1%** Kate Forbes **47.9%**  
2nd count



Humza Yousaf **48.2%** Kate Forbes **40.7%** Ash Regan **11.1%**  
1st count

she first learned of her husband's six-figure loan. Mr Yousaf was seen as the "continuity candidate" throughout the campaign - a strong position given Nicola Sturgeon's enduring popularity with SNP members. He had by far the most endorsements from MSPs and MPs, including most of Ms Sturgeon's inner circle. That means he should have a relatively easy time putting together a cabinet and bringing the party back together in parliament. He was also the candidate best-placed to bring the Greens back into government, although they are meeting this afternoon to decide their next steps. But it is inescapable that Mr Yousaf's margin of victory was razor-thin. A big, big chunk of the SNP voted for candidates promising change. So the question now will be the extent to which the "continuity candidate" seeks to differentiate himself from his predecessor's agenda. Will he forge on with all of her policies, or seek to carve out more of an identity for himself? And given he only just won over half of his own party, will he be able to replicate Ms Sturgeon's popularity with the broader electorate when the next election rolls around? Mr Yousaf had pitched himself to some extent as the "continuity candidate" during the leadership campaign, and was forced to deny claims that the SNP establishment was doing everything it could to ensure



he won. He has often spoken of his admiration for Ms Sturgeon, but insists that he is "his own man and will do things my own way". He was on the receiving end of a withering attack from Ms Forbes in a live STV debate, when she told him: "You were transport minister and the trains were never on time, when you were justice secretary the police were stretched to breaking point, and now as health minister we've got record high waiting times". But Ms Forbes congratulated him on his success, saying: "Whatever the robust disagreements or frank exchanges of the last few weeks, I am confident we will unite behind Humza as our new party leader in the shared and common objective of independence." Ms Regan, who had always been regarded as the outsider in the contest, tweeted her congratulations to Mr Yousaf after what she described as a "lively contest" and urged everyone to "get behind Team SNP". His supporters say Mr Yousaf is a polished communicator who is best placed to unite the party and maintain the power-sharing agreement with the Scottish Greens - which had been widely expected to collapse if either Ms Forbes or Ms Regan had won. The Scottish Greens said its council had voted unanimously to continue to support the agreement with the SNP and for its MSPs to back Mr Yousaf in the vote to become the next first minister. Greens co-leader Patrick Harvie said: "This overwhelming endorsement of our arrangement will allow us to continue with the progressive, collaborative politics we know can help deliver a fairer, greener and more equal Scotland for all." Mr Yousaf was first elected in 2011 as a regional MSP for Glasgow and was appointed a junior minister the following year, before becoming justice secretary in 2018 and health secretary three years later. He will immediately face having to make a host of tough decisions, including whether to fight the UK government's block on Scotland's gender reforms in the courts - Mr Yousaf says he wants to but only if the

legal advice is that it stands a chance of success - and what to do with other controversial policies inherited from Ms Sturgeon such as the deposit return scheme and new national care service. The country's health service has seen record waiting times under Mr Yousaf's watch - although he points out that the issue is not unique to Scotland - and he will now also be ultimately responsible for an education system that has so far shown little sign of achieving Ms Sturgeon's mission of closing the wide attainment gap between the wealthiest and most deprived pupils. After being voted leader of the Scottish National Party, we ask - who is Humza Yousaf? Downing Street said the prime minister was looking forward to working with Mr Yousaf, but stressed it will be focused on the "issues that matter to people" such as reducing inflation and dealing with the cost of living crisis rather than independence. Douglas Ross, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, said he had "serious concerns" about Mr Yousaf's ability, adding: "We hope he does not lurch from failure to failure as he did when he was Nicola Sturgeon's health secretary, justice secretary and transport minister". Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar - who was at school with Mr Yousaf at the private Hutchesons' Grammar in Glasgow - said the election of a first minister from an ethnic minority background would be a "significant moment for Scotland". But he said Mr Yousaf was inheriting "the SNP's woeful record, but he has not inherited Nicola Sturgeon's mandate", and called for a Holyrood election to be held. Mr Ross and Mr Sarwar will both stand against Mr Yousaf in the first minister vote in the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday afternoon, as will Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton - although none of the opposition leaders has any prospect of winning.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-65086551>

# Five planets line up with Moon in night sky

By: Maddie Molloy and Greg Brosnan



Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Uranus, Mars, and the Moon aligned in an arc across the evening sky on Monday, with some visible to the naked eye. This is often called "a planetary parade" and was visible after sunset in the west. A good view of the horizon and clear skies offered the best chance of spotting the alignment. Last summer Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn came together in a rare planetary conjunction. The best shot at spotting the planets on Monday was away from any bright city lights, somewhere with a clear, unobstructed view. You needed to be observing early in the evening because Mercury and Jupiter quickly disappeared over the horizon. Some of the best views were from northern parts of Scotland and its islands because of clear skies. Prof Catherine Heymans, the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, watched the spectacle from Edinburgh's Portobello beach. "Planet spotting on a crystal clear night along with so many other planetary parade enthusiasts was an absolute delight!" she told the BBC. Astronomer Jake Foster from Royal Observatory Greenwich said such alignments were very particular to our perspective from Earth. "The planets aren't aligned right now, they are all spread out across the Solar System but just from our perspective, every once in a while they get close enough to each other in the sky that we're able to see quite a few at once," he said. Anglesey, north Wales, has some of the darkest skies in Europe. Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island), off the Llŷn Peninsula, has become the first site in Europe to be awarded International Dark Sky Sanctuary certification. Speaking from Anglesey, Dani Robertson, the

dark skies officer for North Wales, said the evening had been a visual treat despite a light cloudy haze. "I'm in my back garden and I can see a very nice little crescent Moon, to the top left and just above it I can see Mars, which has a lovely red glow, and a bit lower towards the horizon there's a really bright light and that's Venus," she said. "If it were clearer, I could see all of it, the only one you wouldn't be able to see is Uranus, you'd need a telescope." In Hexham, near the border with Scotland, Dan Pye from the Kielder Observatory said seeing the planets in alignment offered perspective about our place in the solar system. He said: "Over the course of the night the distance between these objects shifts as the moon goes around us, we move a little further around the sun, and the planets continue their journeys around the sun. "I think witnessing this, helps you realise that connection we have to the cosmic ballet we have with other objects in just our very local space theatre." Ms Robertson, an amateur astronomer, said that 98% of people in the UK lived under polluted skies. "It's a shame because that's our home galaxy, another part of being human that is being denied to lots of people," she said. "When we look at the night sky, things like Taurus, the Pleiades, the Moon, they've been the same for the whole of human existence." But she said that unlike other types of pollution, this one was relatively easy to fix permanently. "Once we've fixed a light to make dark skies, that's the problem solved."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-65056407>.amp



# Dubai: Gang members jailed for stealing over Dh780,000 from shipping company

**Suspicious were confirmed when the company owner reviewed surveillance camera footage and saw three of the members entering after breaking open a lock**

A gang of four people of African descent have been convicted by the Dubai Criminal Court for robbing Dh786,000 from a shipping company in the Al-Mateena area. The members monitored the site for several days, making sure that there were large sums of money inside the company's safe. The court sentenced them to six months imprisonment followed by deportation from the country. It also ordered them to pay back the stolen money. According to police records, the case took place inside a shipping company in the Al Muteena area of Dubai, when an Asian employee discovered a break in the external lock of the company's door, finding that it was not properly closed. Alarmed, she informed the owner of the company of this breach. According to his statement in the investigations, the owner entered the company's headquarters and saw that the safe had been vandalised, and that the Dh786,000 and \$50,000 it was storing inside were no longer there. When he reviewed surveillance camera footage, he saw three of the gang members entering the company after breaking the lock of the external door, with another person outside the premises monitoring the place. A policeman in the investigations stated that a Dubai Police investigation team collected inferences from the crime scene, identified the suspects after analysing their data, and tracked the vehicle that transported them once the crime was carried out. He revealed that two of the suspects were arrested in a neighbouring emirate with Dh3,000 in their possession, where they admitted that it was part of their share from the theft. While one of them admitted that his role was to monitor the place, and that he



received Dh 20,000 for his participation, the second admitted that his share in the theft was Dh50,000, also acknowledging that he had sent money back home. The policeman added that the third suspect was arrested in another emirate, and the fourth was arrested at Dubai Airport while trying to travel outside the country – so the court convicted them and passed its verdict.

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/crime/dubai-gang-members-jailed-for-stealing-over-dh780000-from-shipping-company>



چیف ایڈیٹر محی الدین عباسی

## Eid-Al-Fitar Mubarak





# Prince Harry, Elton John appear at UK privacy case

Prince Harry and pop superstar Elton John appeared at a London court Monday, delivering a high-profile jolt to a privacy claim launched by celebrities and other figures against a newspaper publisher. The publisher of the Daily Mail, Associated Newspapers (ANL), is trying to end the high court claims brought over alleged unlawful activity at its titles. Harry, who now lives in California after quitting royal duties in 2019 and launching a barrage of criticism of the British royal family, was pictured arriving at the court in central London. Adrian Beltrami, representing ANL, told the court in a written submission that Harry's case argued "suspicion and paranoia" caused by the articles containing private information led to friends being "lost or cut off as a result and everyone became a suspect". Others taking part in the legal action include actresses Liz Hurley and Sadie Frost as well as John's husband David Furnish, Doreen Lawrence -- the mother of murder victim Stephen Lawrence -- and former Liberal Democrat deputy leader Simon Hughes. Lawyers for the group told the court the pub-

lisher of the Daily Mail commissioned the breaking and entry into private property, illegally intercepted voicemail messages and obtained medical records. "The claimants each claim that in different ways they were the victim of numerous unlawful acts carried out by the defendant, or by those acting on the instructions of its newspapers, The Daily Mail and The Mail On Sunday," lawyer David Sherborne said in written submissions to the court. The alleged unlawful included "illegally intercepting voicemail messages, listening into live landline calls, obtaining private information, such as itemised phone bills or medical records, by deception..., using private investigators to commit these unlawful information gathering acts on their behalf and even commissioning the breaking and entry into private property", Sherborne said. The alleged wrongdoing dates from 1993-2011, but some went on as late as 2018, he added. Harry, also known as the Duke of Sussex, sat near the back of the court, two seats away from fellow complainant Frost. ANL has described the allegations as "preposterous smears" and a

"pre-planned and orchestrated attempt to drag the Mail titles into the phone-hacking scandal". Britain's phone hacking scandal, which first blew up in 2006, saw journalists at the Rupert Murdoch-owned News of the World hack into the voicemails of royals, celebrities and murder



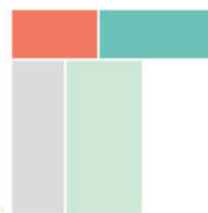


victims. It triggered the closure of the mass-selling Sunday tabloid, a mammoth police investigation, a judge-led inquiry and criminal charges that gripped Britain for years. A spokesperson for ANL also said the allegations were "unsubstantiated and highly defamatory claims, based on no credible evidence". A four four-day preliminary hearing is being held at the high court with ANL arguing that the allegations are "stale" and should be dismissed without a trial. Harry, the younger son of Britain's King Charles III, has long had a difficult relationship with the media.

His mother Princess Diana died in a car crash in Paris in 1997 after she and her companion, Dodi Fayed, left the Ritz Hotel pursued by paparazzi photographers. In 2019 while on a tour of South Africa with his wife Meghan, Harry linked media intrusion to Diana's death and spoke of his fears of history repeating itself. "I will not be bullied into playing a game that killed my mum," he told television journalist Tom Bradby, accusing sections of the media of waging a "ruthless campaign" against Meghan. "Everything that she (Diana) went through, and what happened to her, is incredibly important every single day, and that is not me being paranoid, that is just me not wanting a repeat of the past," he said.

Both Harry and Meghan have been involved in other recent legal action targeting British newspapers. The couple, whose popularity ratings have plummeted, have dominated headlines in the past few years due to a string of interviews, a Netflix series and Harry's autobiography "Spare" in which they complained bitterly about their treatment as working members of the royal family. Buckingham Palace has not responded to the claims, while the late Queen Elizabeth II famously commented that "recollections may vary".

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/world/prince-harry-elton-john-appear-at-uk-privacy-case>



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