



Army chief Asim Munir invites cricketers for Iftaar dinner

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## PSX blasts off to new record high of 67,756 points



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Pakistan's stock market blasted off to yet another all-time high on Wednesday betting on upbeat economic indicators as a dovick in inflation stoked hopes of monetary loosening — a major stimulus to commercial activity, which is directly proportional to corporate profits.

Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 index ended at 67,756.03 after jumping by a massive 869.77 points or 1.30%.

The cyclic sector stole the show on Wednesday as investors parked a lot of money in the cement and steel companies, mainly after reports of a rise in local and international cement dispatches for March.

However sectors like transport, technology and communication and commercial banking, also remained on investors' radar.

Moreover, the government's privatisation plans especially its initiative to sell off some State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) fed the market with optimism as the consensus is that these companies would turn around in terms of profitability and efficiency under private ownership.

## Contempt of court petition to be filed against IG Punjab: Hammad

Soon Times Correspondent  
PESHAWAR

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader (PTI) Hammad Azhar said on Wednesday that around 51 cases of terrorism were lodged against him by the IG Punjab. Talking to media at the Peshawar Press Club, Azhar said he filed a plea in the court to get information about the number of cases registered against him.

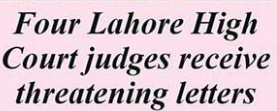
However, the IG Punjab had misrepresented the fact about the number of cases as 23, he said, adding that the IG police resorted to falsehood in the court as the total cases registered against him were 51.

He said a contempt of court would be filed against the IG Punjab.

Azhar informed the court that his business was damaged and family shattered.

He said cases of possession of petrol bombs, hand grenades pistols were made against him in many areas.

Same was the reason the IG Punjab was awarded with medal, while nothing had been proved against PTI the founder even after his arrest, he concluded.



## Four Lahore High Court judges receive threatening letters

Soon Times Correspondent  
LAHORE

Four judges of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday received threatening letters days after Islamabad High Court got similar post.

The letters were addressed to Justice Shujaat Ali Khan, Justice Shahid Bilal, Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh and Justice Alia Neelum.

# PM Shehbaz for joint efforts to enhance Pak-France economic cooperation

The situation in Gaza was also discussed in the meeting and the prime minister appreciated French peace efforts in the region.



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD (APP) - Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stressed the need for working together to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and France, particularly in the areas of trade and investment.

The ambassador handed over a congratulatory letter from French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, addressed to Prime Minister Shehbaz on his reelection.

## President Zardari lauds army's Role in safeguarding national sovereignty



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir called President Asif Ali Zardari, at the Presidency, on Wednesday.

COAS extended felicitations to him on assumed positions of president of Pakistan and Commander in Chief of Armed Forces. He also conveyed his sincere wishes for a successful tenure.

Army chief apprised the president regarding the ongoing operations of the army against terrorism and highlighted the operational preparedness against conventional threats.

COAS also informed him about military's role in development initiatives, particularly in the regions of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The president acknowledged the role of the Armed Forces of Pakistan, affirming that the army's contributions have been instrumental in safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state.

He commended the army's efforts towards social uplift of the affected areas, underscoring the unwavering commitment of the Pakistan Army to national progress.

President Zardari emphasised Pakistan's steadfast commitment against terrorism and reaffirmed the resolve to respond to terrorism with full might.

The president expressed concern over the baseless and unsubstantiated allegations levelled by a specific political party and its few individuals against the institution. He resolved to deal with such disruptive elements with iron hand.

He paid homage to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the nation. He reiterated the nation's unwavering commitment to honouring the sacrifices of the martyrs and their families.

## Pakistan wants to enhance defence collaboration with Italy, says Asif



Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Ambassador of Italy, Marilina Amelini called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday.

being part of NATO, Italian Armed Forces have valuable military expertise while Pakistan Armed Forces have rich experience in counter terrorism operations.

On the occasion, the minister said that Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with the Republic of Italy and wanted to further enhance defence collaboration, a news release said.

The defence minister stated that the exchange of military training can be mutually beneficial, as

He emphasised on the need to explore areas of cooperation in the field of joint defence production.

During the meeting latest security situation along the Pak-Afghan Border and Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability in the region also came under discussion.

# Formation of special speedy trial courts approved in Punjab cabinet meeting



Soon Times Correspondent  
LAHORE  
Punjab cabinet has approved the establishment of special speedy trial courts across the province.

The Punjab Cabinet, under the presidency of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, convened its 5th provincial session, with attendance from provincial ministers, the chief secretary, IG Punjab, secretaries of various departments, and other officials.

Approval of special speedy trial courts  
During the session, the provincial cabinet granted approval for the

## We won't tolerate any interference in judicial affairs, says CJP Isa

Soon Times Correspondent  
ISLAMABAD  
Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa Wednesday said the Supreme Court will not tolerate any interference in judicial affairs and is taking the letter by Islamabad High Court judges "very seriously".



by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and comprising six other judges — Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghani.

## SDO Nilore Irfan Rahmat Meo's crackdown on electricity thieves

● Consumer used electricity in entire plaza by stealing in Alipur  
● The consumer had his meter disconnected on arrears and was stealing direct electricity from the LT line

of the concerned police station for registering a case against the people involved in the electricity theft. A notice has been issued to collect the deduction bill from the consumer. It should be noted that the consumer was running the entire plaza by stealing electricity. The second meter installed at the plaza has also been removed. IESCO officers congratulated and appreciated SDO Nilore for catching the incident of electricity theft and gave further instructions to make it possible to eliminate electricity theft by taking indiscriminate action against the electricity thieves.





## Public Health And Welfare

Common masses need to be enlightened regarding the overwhelming challenge of population explosion as the welfare of the population is our top priority. These views were expressed by the coordinator to the Prime Minister on HSR&C, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, in a significant meeting with the Deputy Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Ms. Latika Maskey Pradhan at Ministry of Health, Islamabad. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Jameel, programme

specialist, UNFPA, Dr. Shabana, DG population, along with other senior officers of the Ministry. The meeting underscored the crucial issues related to family planning, child and maternal nutrition, and the challenges posed by population explosion. Stressing the need for family planning, the coordinator on HSR&C, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, expressed that we couldn't impose the family planning, but we would educate the common man regarding its impacts on him

and his family. He said that the Ministry of Health & UNFPA would collaborate to organise a conference on the issue and would come out with the recommendations that would help the common man to understand the negative impacts of overpopulation. Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, also referred to the world reports that Pakistan would become a water scarce country by 2030 due to its ever increasing population. Dr. Representative, UNFPA, acknowledged government

interest and actions to avert the challenges concerning to public health, unwanted pregnancies, and overpopulation. She reiterated that UNFPA would extend all its support and cooperation to the government to implement evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing unintended pregnancies. This includes promoting awareness campaigns and strengthening healthcare systems to provide quality reproductive health services.

## Growing millions



Maqsood Shahi

All the world's a stage:

Life is like a play where everyone has a role and a part to perform: from As You Like It, William Shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 7. It is need of every person to get thrived and perform his onerous task of his life according to his own desired goal. Sherazi has done and dusted his part at this age.

Sherazi a 6 year old boy hailing from a less inhabited area & Living in vicinity of Siachen is now on trending on major social media platforms, i.e. Facebook, Instagram & YouTube. He has now embarked on a new journey where every eyes is Ubiquitously on him.

In the current competitive market saturation, going viral on social media is difficult. Particularly for a child who doesn't speak the language well and doesn't have access to the internet and lives in a really

underdeveloped location. His parents' most significant guidance during this journey doesn't go unnoticed. (Siachen Village Vlog, his father also vlogs.) He magically destroys the bonds of myth with this combination. Sheraz Vlog's unique style is further enhanced by his selection of audience, topic, and above all his innocence. Because most parents in Pakistan don't let their children start vlogging at a young age, Shiraz has a target kid vlog niche that isn't saturated. Such a blogger is so uncommon in Pakistan. Although it's typical in the West, like Ryan Vlogging, which have currently 40M+ subscriber on YouTube.

His innocence and imperfect command of Urdu are two other distinctive aspects of his content. When young children try it, it becomes really compelling even if it may seem amateurish. Particularly, Punjabi people enjoy it. Everyone is extremely entertained by it. He has currently amassed 1.6 million followers on Instagram, 1.3 million on Facebook, and 1.13 million on YouTube in just two months. Which is simply incredible. Until a couple of years ago, Most Elders specifically and general Mass particularly have had red eye on those teenagers and students who were noticed online. Now, This Scenario had changed substantially

and evidently with the Rapid increase in technology and Globalisation. Muhammad Sheraz has broken this trend by using such platforms to garner huge audience, Fame, Respect and money at large.

In our society, Still yet, but comparatively less from the past. It has become common to criticize on negative aspects and talent of a person unreasonably. Whether, I don't know it's a form of jealousy or any thing else that they discourage & bulldoze neophytes before their bloom.

It is desire of thousands to enjoy superb moments with celebrities, to get social approval and make a career through different platforms. And social media is most of effective one, Budgetary and accessible for all and sundry. Sherazi has done and dusted despite myriad impediments as he shows in his vlogs. How life is hard in Siachen Valley. Hopefully you have gone through it and observed through critical lenses. Muskan and Sheraz has won heart of millions beyond Pakistan while reshaping & Restructuring norms and setting a new dynamic.

The most stunning thing is that Sherazi has introduced GB Culture and Tradition to his Million of followers across the border. More compellingly and imperatively. He is now spearheading climate related issues in Gilgit Baltistan, as it is most vulnerable area in Pakistan regarding to climate change. Concurrently some people see him as a young climate advocate.

Sherazi is now among top notch YouTubers. Had become most subscribed personality in GB his native land in a very little period of time, since then, he started recently he was in Karachi, amidst celebrities and in most celebrated program 'Shane-e-Ramadan' hosted by Wasim Badshahi as sheraz jokingly called before appearing in first session. Creativity takes courage, and Muhammad Sheraz has that courage whatsoever, Recently he met with PM Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The PM gesture is praiseworthy. Encouraging young mind and creativity is what we need at this very crucial time where the nation is

## Addressing Environmental Challenges in Pakistan, with a Focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

Dr Noaman Saeed Khattak

Pakistan, including the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), faces a myriad of environmental challenges that threaten the well-being of its people and ecosystems. From deforestation and water scarcity to air pollution and climate change, these challenges demand urgent attention and concerted efforts from both individuals and the government. This essay will explore the environmental challenges confronting Pakistan and KP and propose strategies to overcome them, highlighting the roles of both individuals and government. Environmental Challenges: Deforestation: Rampant deforestation, driven by timber logging, agricultural expansion, and urbanization, has depleted KP's forests, leading to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and adverse impacts on local communities. Water Scarcity: KP, like many parts of Pakistan, grapples with water scarcity due to erratic rainfall patterns, mismanagement of water resources, and the depletion of groundwater aquifers, posing serious challenges for agriculture, industry, and human consumption. Air Pollution: Rapid industrialization, vehicular emissions, and the burning of fossil fuels contribute to air pollution in KP's urban centers, leading to respiratory illnesses, environmental degradation, and reduced quality of life. Climate

Change: Pakistan is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and shifting rainfall patterns, which pose risks to agriculture, water resources, and human settlements. Strategies to Overcome Environmental Challenges: Reforestation and Afforestation: Government initiatives to promote tree planting and conservation efforts, coupled with community-based forestry programs, can help restore degraded landscapes, conserve biodiversity, and mitigate the impacts of deforestation. Water Management: Implementing efficient water management practices, such as rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, and water recycling, can help alleviate water scarcity in KP. Additionally, investing in water infrastructure and conservation measures can enhance water security for both rural and urban communities. Pollution Control Measures: Stringent regulations and enforcement mechanisms are needed to control industrial emissions, promote cleaner technologies, and reduce vehicular pollution in KP's urban areas. Public awareness campaigns and incentives for adopting eco-friendly practices can also contribute to reducing air pollution. Climate Resilience: Developing climate-resilient infrastructure, such as flood defenses, drought-resistant crops, and early warning systems, can help

communities in KP adapt to the impacts of climate change. Moreover, integrating climate change considerations into urban planning and development policies can build resilience and sustainability. Roles of Individuals and Government: Individual Responsibility: Individuals can contribute to environmental conservation by adopting sustainable practices such as reducing energy consumption, conserving water, practicing waste segregation and recycling, and participating in tree planting and conservation activities. Government Action: The government plays a crucial role in formulating and implementing policies, regulations, and programs to address environmental challenges. This includes investing in renewable energy, enforcing environmental laws, promoting sustainable land use practices, and fostering public-private partnerships for environmental conservation. Addressing environmental challenges in Pakistan, particularly in KP, requires a comprehensive approach that integrates efforts from both individuals and the government. By adopting sustainable practices, promoting conservation efforts, and implementing proactive policies, Pakistan can build resilience, protect its natural resources, and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

## PHC moved for quashing 11 cases against Sher Afzal Marwat

Soon Times Correspondent PESHAWAR

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has been moved for quashing 11 cases against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat. Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah will hear the application of Sher Afzal Marwat. The court has directed the PTI leader to appear in person today (Wednesday). It may be noted that 11 cases have been registered against PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat under various sections. Earlier on March 25, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) had



granted bails to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Omar Ayub Khan and Scenabaa Tahir in May 9 cases. Attending judge Ijaz Asif heard the case and granted them the

bails. On March 18, the Lahore Special Anti-Terrorism Court had granted interim bails to Omar Ayub Khan till April 20 in five cases.

### THE PUNJAB EMPLOYEES' SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTION, (DIRECTORATE SOCIAL SECURITY)

HOUSE NO.178, CHATHA TOWN, LAHORE ROAD, SARGODHA

#### PROCUREMENT OF FURNITURE/FIXTURE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY HOSPITAL, SARGODHA FOR THE YEAR 2023-24

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from Firm/ General order Supplier entitled with PESSL Govt. Departments and autonomous bodies in the field of supply of furniture/ fixture and whose Social Security Contribution is being deducted, who have deposited their renewal for the year 2023-24.

Firm/ General Order Supplier would be eligible for issuance of Tender who have valid registration Certificate for the year 2023-24 with active certificate of all applicable taxes i.e. PRA (Punjab Revenue Authority)/ Income Tax, GST etc. and firm shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with Government Departments/ Autonomous Bodies in the court of law and no special report of Inspection is pending against them. Conditional tenders will not be entertained.

Interested bidders may obtain the bidding documents alongwith detailed specifications and instructions from the office of the undersigned from the date of publication of this tender on submission of written request on original letter head along with payment of non refundable tender fee Rs. 10000/-. The bidding document can also be download from PFPRA Website www.pfp.ra.gov.pk & PESSI Website www.pessi.org.pk/2023-24.

The bidding shall be done through Single Stage - Two Envelopes Bidding procedure, as per Rule 38(2)(a) of Punjab Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules, 2014. The sealed envelopes shall be marked as "TECHNICAL PROPOSAL" and "FINANCIAL PROPOSAL" and in bold and legible alphabets in separate envelopes.

The Technical Bids shall accompany (2%) Bid Security of the estimated price of this tender in the form of CDR/Bank Guarantee/ Demand Draft/ Pay Order in the name of Director Medical DSS Sargodha. Interested bidders may submit their bids by 24.04.2024 @ 2.00 pm in the office of the undersigned which shall be opened on 25.04.2024 @ 11.00 am in presence of representatives of the participating firms/ Bidders.

Procurement shall be governed under Punjab Procurement Rules 2014 (as amended upto Date) the tender can be cancelled at any stage as per Rule 35 of PFPRA Rules, 2014.

DIRECTOR MEDICAL  
DSS SARGODHA  
Director Medical  
Punjab Social Security, Sargodha



## Govt is supplying modern agricultural equipment to the farmers at subsidy: Mehtab Yasin

Soon Times Correspondent

Sargodha: The government is continuing to take emergency measures to ensure the stability of the agriculture sector and the prosperity of the farmers. Supplying modern agricultural equipment to the farmers is a link in this chain, which will make it

possible to achieve more production in less time with less cost and labor. These views were expressed by Deputy Director Development Mehtab Yasin while speaking on the occasion of the draw for the distribution of modern agricultural equipment to the farmers at Kisan Hall organized by the Agriculture

Department's Field Wing. He said, 56 types of agricultural machinery are being provided to farmers in the first phase. Initially, 2 farmers from each agricultural center are being provided with various modern agricultural implements at a subsidy of Rs.5 lakh. Speaking at the event, Director of Agricultural

Engineering Sargodha Faheem Ahmed said, the supply of more modern agricultural equipment will be ensured to the farmers and they will be relieved of the difficulties and problems they are facing with reference to seeds, fertilizers and agricultural medicines. Deputy Director of Agricultural

Engineering Sargodha Israr Hussain Kazim said, Nawaz Sharif Kisan Card is also a link in the same chain in which it will be possible to provide loans of 150 billion rupees with 30 thousand rupees per acre to 5 lakh small farmers. Training of farmers will also be organized. Consultant Nespak Rana Arsalan

and farmers from across the district participated. Mehtab Yasin announced the name of the successful farmers after the draw. On this occasion, 2/2 candidates from each center were declared successful and names of 6/6 farmers were selected for the waiting list.

## President of Pasban Welfare Society meets Pir Hamid Aziz



Soon Times Correspondent  
Nowshera Soon Sakasars:

President of Pasban Welfare Society  
Khushab Shakeel Ahmad Chaudhry and

Statistician Faheem Akhtar of Nahang met Sahibzada Pir Hamid Aziz Astana Aliya Makaan Sharif. Shakeel Ahmad Chaudhry presented the gift of "Irfan Al-Quran", the easiest Urdu translation of the Quran by Syed Muhammad Wajih Al Seema Irfani Chishti Sundar Darbar Sharif Multan to Pir Sahibzada Hamid Aziz. On this occasion, Shakeel Ahmad Chaudhry said, Syed Muhammad Wajih Al Seema Irfani Chishti wrote the Urdu translation of Quran "Irfan Al-Quran" in 40 days and recorded it in Shalimar Recording Company in his own voice. Faheem Akhtar said, we pay tribute to the valuable religious and spiritual teachings of Hazrat Abdul Aziz, Hazrat Abdul Hameed and Hazrat Aziz Ahmed from Astana Aliya Makaan Sharif.



Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Alwan-e-Sadr.

## Reply sought from KP speaker on contempt plea for not administering oath on reserved seats



Soon Times Correspondent  
PESHAWAR

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has sought reply from speaker and the deputy speaker in contempt of court case for not administering oath to the lawmakers elected on reserved seats of

the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. Justice SM Ateeq Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali conducted hearing of the contempt petition filed by the opposition parties in the Peshawar High Court. During the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer said the court had ordered the

elected members of the assembly to take oath on reserved seats. Despite court orders, the oath was not administered to them on the reserved seats. The petitioner's counsel said the speaker and deputy speaker of the assembly violated the court orders. Therefore, contempt of court proceedings should be initiated against them, he said. The court, while issuing notices to speaker and deputy speaker, directed them to submit their reply on next hearing date.

A day ago, the elected members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly had filed a contempt petition in the Peshawar High Court on the issue of delayed oath to members on reserved seats. It may be recalled that on March 27, the Peshawar High Court, while accepting the petition of opposition members in case of oath on reserved seats, had ordered the speaker to administer oath to the members.

## Alleged connivance of utility stores management; Citizens deprived of cheap flour

Soon Times Correspondent  
Sargodha:

In the complaint made by the prominent social leader Malik Saadullah to the Regional Manager Malik Hayat, it was informed that the in-charge of Utility Stores Intiaz Abad Muhammad Younis instead of providing flour, sugar, ghee and other subsidized goods to the common citizens, sales to a few businessmen. Among them are toll owners from whom in charge earns 20,000 rupees per day by

giving 20 sacks flour, 40 boxes of ghee and 40 kg of sugar per day at subsidized rate. Due to this, the poor and deserving people in this area are not getting these goods. Social leader Malik Saadullah said that I went to the utility store on the complaints of dozens of people in the area where this disgraceful business is going on. The Regional Manager has been apprised of all the circumstances. If the situation does not improve, we will protest to end the ongoing corruption and looting in this branch.

## MPA moves resolution seeking prohibition of early marriage of girls

LAHORE  
A resolution has been moved in the Punjab Assembly against early marriage of young girls.

In a significant move aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of young girls, Sara Ahmed, a member of the provincial assembly (MPA), has submitted a resolution in the Punjab Assembly Secretariat, addressing the issue of early marriage. The resolution calls for a ban on marriages involving girls under the age of 18 and highlights the detrimental consequences associated with such unions. Citing grave repercussions of early marriage, the resolution underscores the vulnerability of young girls to violence, exploitation, and various health risks. It emphasises the critical role of healthy mothers in fostering a strong and balanced



society.

The resolution stresses the importance of raising public awareness about the serious threats posed by early marriages. It advocates for stringent measures to ensure that marriages are not solemnised until individuals reach the legal age of 18 and provide valid identification, such as a Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC), to the marriage (nikkah) registrar. This initiative reflects a concerted effort by the Punjab Assembly to address a pressing social issue and uphold the rights of young girls.

## Govt has named our sisters in cases of arson & encirclement: Saira Raza

Soon Times Correspondent  
Sargodha:

On the instructions of District President Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Women Wing Pakistan Kanwal Shozab General Secretary Women Wing North Punjab Saira Raza along with other women was present to express solidarity on the occasion of the appearance of Alia Hamza and Sanam Javed in ATC Court Sargodha. Speaking to the media on this occasion, Saira Raza said, this fake government imposed on Pakistan has made our political women leaders suffer by naming them in cases of arson and encirclement in different districts of Punjab at the same time. On the one hand, the fake government talks about women's rights and on the other hand, it is humiliating innocent



women by filing false cases. We will not allow this the government to succeed in its false propaganda. Our sisters who are in jail are getting more morale. The day is not far when Imran Khan will come out of

jail and free Pakistan from this fake government. It is our demand that the cases of our women leaders should be heard on merit and they should be released as soon as possible.



## Taylor Swift officially declared a billionaire by Forbes



New York  
Taylor Swift was officially named a member of the three-comma-club, as Forbes confirmed rumors estimating her wealth exceeds a billion dollars. The financial news outlet said she is the first artist to achieve billionaire status solely on the basis of her music, and estimated she has a \$1.1 billion fortune.

Other industry heavyweights who've hit the mark -- Rihanna and Jay-Z among them -- have earned their massive wealth in part via fashion brands, alcohol companies or entertainment holdings, among other interests.

Along with her vast songwriting catalog, Swift staged the first billion-dollar tour ever -- the ongoing Eras Tour has boosted economies and delighted fans around the world.

## COAS to host Iftar for Green Shirts in Pindi post-Kakul training



### RAWALPINDI:

As the Pakistan cricket team continues its diligent training at the fitness camp in Kakul, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir is set to host an Iftar on April 7 in Rawalpindi for the national team.

The Men in Green are currently part of a fitness camp in Abbottabad, where they are training and working out at the Army School of Physical Training (ASPT).

The fitness camp, as per sources, was earlier set to conclude on April 8; however, it will now wrap up a day before on April 7 with the players heading straight to Pindi for Iftar with the army chief during the ongoing holy month of Ramadan.

## Cambodia's ex-leader Hun Sen becomes senate president



Phnom Penh  
Former Cambodian leader Hun Sen was promoted to senate president on Wednesday, taking over a key ceremonial role less than a year after handing power to his son.

Hun Sen stepped down in August after nearly four decades of iron-fisted rule, passing the baton to his eldest son Hun Manet following a landslide win in national polls held without any significant opposition parties.

In February his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won 55 seats -- including his own -- out of 58 in the senate election, with the opposition Khmer Will Party taking the remainder.

On Wednesday senators unanimously voted to approve Hun Sen as president of the senate after King Norodom Sihamoni convened its first meeting.

The position allows Hun Sen to act as acting head of state when the king is overseas.

Addressing the senators after the vote, Hun Sen thanked them for the "honour".

"It is my first time to sit on such a high chair," he said, saying he would use the second-highest ceremonial role -- only superseded by the king -- to further Cambodia's international diplomacy. There are 62 senators, with 58 elected in February by 125 MPs and more than 11,000 local administrators, mostly members of Hun Sen's party.



## Muslim leaders reject chance to break bread with Biden as anger over Gaza festers

**He added, "It's not good enough to tell people Donald Trump is going to be worse."**

### WASHINGTON

Last year President Joe Biden hadn't even spoken a word at the White House celebration of Ramadan before someone shouted out "we love you." Hundreds of Muslims were there to mark the end of the holy month that requires fasting from sunrise to sunset. There are no such joyous scenes during this Ramadan. With many Muslim Americans outraged over Biden's support for Israel's siege of Gaza, the White House chose to hold a smaller iftar dinner on Tuesday evening. The only attendees were people who work for his administration.

"We're just in a different world," said Wa'el Alzayat, who leads Emgage, a Muslim advocacy organization. "It's completely surreal. And it's sad."

Alzayat attended last year's event, but he declined an invitation to break his fast with Biden this year, saying, "It's inappropriate to do such a celebration while there's a famine going on in Gaza."

After rejections from Alzayat and others, he said the White House adjusted its plans Monday, telling community leaders that it wanted to host a meeting focused on administration policy. Alzayat still said no, believing that one day was not enough time to prepare for an opportunity to sway Biden's mind on the conflict.

When the Democratic president took office three years ago, many Muslim leaders were eager to turn the page on Donald Trump's bigotry, including his campaign pledge to implement a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States."

But now Democrats fear that Biden's loss of support among Muslims could help clear a path for his Republican predecessor to return to the White House. This year's election will likely hinge on a handful of battleground states, including Michigan with its significant Muslim population.

"There are real differences between the two," Alzayat said. "But emotionally, there may be no differences for some folks. And that's the danger."

## A fire in a tailoring shop in India kills 7, including children



### NEW DELHI

A fire in a tailoring shop on Wednesday killed seven people, including two children, in the Indian city of Aurangabad, police said.

The blaze created panic in part of the business district of the city in Maharashtra state.

Authorities suspect that the deaths occurred due to smoke inhalation. The New Delhi Television cited city police chief Manoj Lohiya as saying.

Authorities were investigating the cause of the fire in the city nearly 340 kilometers (210 miles) northeast of Mumbai, India's financial and entertainment capital.

Fires are common in India, where builders and residents often flout building laws and safety codes.

## Bodies of 6 foreign aid workers slain in Israeli strikes are transported out of Gaza



### RAFAH, Gaza Strip

The bodies of six foreign aid workers killed in a series of Israeli strikes were transported out of the Gaza Strip and into Egypt on Wednesday ahead of their repatriation. Egypt's state-run Qahera TV reported.

The deadly strikes have renewed criticism of Israel's wartime conduct and highlighted the perilous conditions aid workers face in trying to deliver food to the besieged enclave, where experts say nearly a third of the population is on the brink of starvation.

The three British citizens, a Polish citizen, an Australian and a Canadian American dual citizen worked for World Central Kitchen, an international charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés. Their Palestinian driver was also killed, and his remains were handed over to his family for burial in Gaza.

The other bodies were driven into Egypt through the Rafah crossing.

They were distributing food that had been brought into Gaza through a newly established maritime corridor late Monday when Israeli airstrikes targeted their three vehicles.



## Finland school shooting: Bullying was the motive for attack

### HELSINKI

The 12-year-old boy who shot and killed a fellow sixth-grader and severely injured two others at a school in Finland has explained that he was a target of bullying, and this was the motive for his attack, police said on Wednesday.

The boy on Tuesday brought a relative's revolver to the Viertola school near Helsinki and shot the three 12-year-olds and threatened several others. He had transferred to the school at the beginning of 2024, investigators said.

The government asked Finns to join in a day of mourning on Wednesday and ordered that flags on public buildings be flown at half-mast in a symbol of respect for the dead child. The two other pupils remained in hospital.

"We just found out today that there was this bullying behind the tragedy," lead investigator Detective Chief Inspector Marko Sarkka told Reuters. The preliminary police probe had confirmed that the boy was a target of bullying, investigators said in a separate statement. Sarkka declined to elaborate.

Police have not said whether the attacker sought to target any specific individuals.

Finland has seen a rising level of bullying in schools, with 8.6% of pupils who are now around 12 years old saying they had been targeted at least once a week, up from 7.2% in 2019, according to a 2023 study by public health institute THL.

The permit for the revolver used in

## Russia security says the US shares blame for a concert hall attack that killed 144



### TALLINN, Estonia

The head of Russia's national security council on Wednesday contended that the United States shares blame for the attack by gunmen on a Moscow concert hall that killed 144 people, even though a branch of the Islamic State group has claimed responsibility.

Since the March 22 attack at the Crocus City Hall, the deadliest on Russian soil in two decades, Russian officials including President Vladimir Putin have repeatedly claimed, without presenting evidence, that it was organized by Ukraine, which has been fighting a Russian invasion for more than two years.

An affiliate of the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack and Kyiv has consistently denied involvement.

"They are trying to impose on us that the terrorist act was committed not by the Kyiv regime, but by supporters of radical Islamic ideology, perhaps members of the Afghan branch of IS," security council head Nikolai Patrushev said at a meeting in the Kazakhstan capital Astana of security councils of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO is a nine-country regional security and economic bloc that includes China, India and Iran.

"However, it is much more important to quickly establish who is the customer and sponsor of this monstrous crime. Its traces lead to the Ukrainian special services. But everyone knows that the Kyiv regime is not independent and is completely controlled by the United States," Patrushev said.

Four suspected gunmen were captured the day after the attack in the Bryansk region, which borders Ukraine. Putin and other officials claim that the gunmen had arranged for passage into Ukraine. Six other suspected accomplices have also been arrested.

The attack came two weeks after the United States Embassy in Russia issued a warning that it was monitoring reports of planned terrorist attacks on public targets. The U.S. State Department.

## Iran vows revenge on Israel after Damascus embassy attack

### DUBAI, JERUSALEM

Israel said on Tuesday it would take revenge on Iran for an airstrike that killed two of its generals and five military advisers at its embassy compound in Damascus, raising the risk of further escalation in conflict in the Middle East.

The strike marked one of the most significant attacks yet on Iranian interests in Syria, where Israel has stepped up a long-running military campaign against Iran and groups it backs as the Gaza war has rippled around the Middle East.

Until now, Iran has avoided directly entering the fray, while supporting allies' attacks on Israeli and U.S. targets.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack, which destroyed a consular building adjacent to the main embassy complex in the upscale Mezzeh district on Monday night, killing seven members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC).

But a senior Israeli government official, speaking to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said those hit had "been behind many attacks on Israeli and American assets and had plans for additional attacks".

The embassy "was not a target", the official said. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed revenge.



Khamenei's political adviser Ali Shamkhani, in a post on X, said the United States "remains directly responsible whether or not it was aware of the intention to carry out this attack".

According to Axios citing a U.S. official, Washington told Tehran it "had no involvement" or advanced knowledge of the Israeli strike.