

## Deputy PM Mawlavi Kabir meets scholars, influential figures of Balkhab



KABUL: Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan for Political Affairs

Mawlavi Abdul Kabir met with a number of scholars and influential figures of Balkhab district of

Sar-e-Pul province, his office said in a statement Sunday. In the meeting, Sharif Balkha-

bi spoke on behalf of others and said: "It is only possible in the Islamic system that the gate of officials is open to the nation without any discrimination and we are happy that people share their problems face to face with the related officials."

He also shared his suggestions and problems with the Deputy Prime Minister, especially regarding the mining and hiring of local residents in Sar-e-Pul province, according to the statement.

Deputy Prime Minister Mawlavi Abdul Kabir thanked the elders of Sar-e-Pul and assured that their problems will be addressed.

"The Islamic system was created for the sake of the people and with their support and its purpose is to serve the people," the statement quoted the Deputy Prime Minister as saying.

**The Kabul Times**

## Reforms and pay-scale salaries commission holds meeting



KABUL: A meeting, expected to arrange pay-scale salaries for the Islamic Emirate employees, was held with the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Mawlavi Abdul Salam Hanafi on the chair, on Sunday, a statement from his office said.

Members of the commission

for regulation of salaries and representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, Livestock and Education attended the meeting, the statement said.

The forthcoming 1402 solar year's pay-scale, budget and financial plan as well as assessment of the last year's achievements,

have been discussed in the meeting, the statement said.

The meeting also insisted the prevention of inflation in employment, job interferences and paying special attention to professionalism in the forthcoming year, the statement said.

**The Kabul Times**

## All Afghans should join hands for country's development, Deputy PM

KABUL: The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs

Mawlavi Abdul Kabir met with a number of Shiite commission members, the Deputy PM office

said in a statement Sunday. In the meeting, Mohammad Amir Bazel and Ali Akhlaqi, mem-

bers of the Shiite Commission, on behalf of others, shared the problems of the Shiite community with the political deputy Prime Minister and assured their all-around cooperation with the Islamic Emirate, according to the statement.

In the meeting, Deputy PM emphasized on the unity and solidarity among Afghans and said: "Now is the time for all Afghans to join hands for the development and prosperity of Afghanistan."

"The Islamic Emirate is the common home of all Afghans, there is no discrimination or difference among anyone. Fortunately, gap between the nation and the government has been removed," the statement quoted Deputy PM as saying.

The Deputy Prime Minister assured of the IEA's all-out cooperation with the Shiite community and said their problems will be addressed duly.

**The Kabul Times**

## Minister Delawar meets Afghan businessmen based in Pakistan

KABUL: Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Shaikh Shahabuddin Delawar met with a number of Afghan businessmen living in Pakistan, here in Kabul, a

statement from the ministry said Sunday.

According to the statement, in the meeting the two sides exchanged views on the investment

situation in Afghanistan, attraction of investors in mining projects in Afghanistan and the mineral resources of the country.

**The Kabul Times**



## Afghanistan cuts down custom duty on key food items

KABUL: Afghanistan Ministry of Finance (MoF) has said that following the decision of the leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), the customs

duty on key and basic food items in the country has been reduced from 50 to 70 percent this year.

In a statement released by the country's ministry of finance

says as a result of the IEA leadership decision, the customs duty on key food items has been reduced to the value of 6.7 million AFG this year.

"To prevent from increasing in the prices of basic food items (flour, wheat, cooking oil, rice, sugar and others) in the country, the customs duty on basic food items has been decreased from 50 to 70 percent, the MoF statement added.

During 11 months of the fiscal year 1401, a discount worth 6.7 billion AFG has been dedicated, according to the Ministry.

It is the first time the country's ministry of finance has reduced in customs duty on basic food items. Based on reports, the MoF has collected more than 100 billion AFG from the country's customs in the past 11 months.

**The Kabul Times**



## Poppy land destroyed in Laghman

MEHTARLAM: Provincial counter-narcotics personnel of Laghman eradicated 25 acres of poppy lands in Alishang district of the province, Bakhtar News Agency reported Sunday.

Qari Idris director of the Counter-Narcotics Department of Laghman province told the state-

run agency that 25 acres of poppy lands have been destroyed in different areas of Alishang district.

Hundreds of acres of poppy lands in Alishang, Dawlat Shah and Badpash districts have earlier been eradicated, according to the agency.

The related organs of the Islamic Emirate are making effort to continue fighting drugs by eliminating all poppy cultivated lands, part of the government plans to reduce the vicious phenomenon to nil countrywide.

**The Kabul Times**





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### Food for thought

*"Hijab has direct link to morality of individuals in society."*

## Afghan students' complaints in India should be investigated

Reports released about the problems and complaints of the Afghan students, suggest that they have been in trouble due to the non-issuance of visas by the Indian government and the expensive consular services of the Afghan embassy in New Delhi.

While the Afghan embassy has said its daily affairs were going smoothly and the related staff are trying to solve the problems of Afghan refugees, students complain that they are charged high fees for sticker visas and other necessary consular services.

Both the students and the Afghan consulate officials express their own reasons for the available issues.

According to a report released by the private Pajhwak Afghan News, Afghan refugees, including students living in India complained that the embassy was charging high fees for consular services and reduced working days of its staff as well as was not ready to issue new passports, while the embassy rejects the claim and says 'its services charges are the cheapest and appropriate and the lack of passports is a general issue.'

About the reduction of the working days of the consular services, the embassy said 'three days in a week, are dedicated to collecting documents and information from the clients.'

Afghans are reportedly facing trouble due to failure of the embassy to distribute new passports. Without passport, they cannot rent houses, they are not allowed to spend a night in a hotel and are deprived of many other facilities.

Many of up to 3,000 Afghan students who are busy studying in different Indian universities who have traveled to Afghanistan for vacation, were unable to return to India for developing their studies.

On the other hand, India's visa policy, after political changes in mid-August 2021 in the country, has put most Afghans in trouble. However, the Afghan diplomatic mission has long promised to resolve the problems.

Both Afghan and Indian diplomatic missions in both countries should keep their consular services continue as besides other needs, hundreds of Afghan patients have to travel to India for treatment.

The political changes should not impact the situation or the impact should be temporal as the consular services directly relate to the ordinary people and citizens of either sides.

Anyway, Indian-based Afghan embassy should mostly focus on consular services, as the Afghan refugees including students, businessmen and other Afghans living in that country directly need the legal daily affairs.

The embassy should do its best to offer cheap, easy and more accessible services for the Afghans living in India, where they are facing heavy economic problems.

Also, the foreign ministry of the Islamic Emirate should task a team to investigate the issue in the near and resolve the problems of the Afghan refugees in India.

## Afghanistan should not be isolated, Russian representative

*She said: "Afghanistan should not be isolated and any attempts to politicize humanitarian assistance is immoral and unacceptable, she stressed, noting that the independent assessment must be based on consultations with the country's authorities."*



The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) appreciated the extension of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and has considered it a positive and constructive step for the country.

Spokesman of the Islamic Emirate Zabihullah Mujahid said that the extension of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is a productive and positive step towards strengthening of diplomatic relations of the world coun-

tries through the mission with the Islamic Emirate.

"More engagement and relations of the Islamic Emirate with the United Nations Organization or another of the world countries through diplomatic channels will help in development of the two sides' relations and also it is a constructive step towards recognition of the Islamic Emirate," Mujahid said.

Members of the United Nations Security Council has renewed the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another year.

other year.

The 15-member council jointly adopted two resolutions, the first was about the extension of the UN Assistance Mission for another year in Afghanistan and the second one was about the formation of an independent inspector team with a unified approach to assess the situation of Afghanistan and report back to UNSC.

The meeting was participated by representatives of some countries including the

United States of America (USA), China and England, while they stressed over the continuation of girls' education, and maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan.

U.S. Representative for Special Political Affairs, at UN Security Council Rabert Wood, said: "The United States supports United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and we are proud to support the extension of UNAMA for another year and its mission is vital for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan."

With the extension of UNAMA's mission, the UN will have the opportunity to continue its work to restore the ability of Afghans in maintenance of human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls and the members of other minorities.

China representative Sun Zhejiang also welcomed the extension of UNAMA's mission in Afghanistan and stressed that mutual respect and dialogue, rather than pressure and sanctions, are necessary to find a true solution to the many crises Afghanistan is facing.

He added, that the international community's priorities should be relieving the humanitarian crisis, promoting socioeconomic development and supporting engagement with the Afghan authorities, adding that unilateral sanctions that exacerbate the humanitarian crisis should be given close attention.

Meanwhile, a representative of the Russian Federation Anna M. Evstigneeva said, the Council's unanimous support is a signal to the people of Afghanistan of the entire international community's commitment to assisting their long-suffering country and it is crucial to maintain the pragmatic cooperation of UNAMA with the de facto [Islamic Emirate] authorities.

She said: "Afghanistan should not be isolated and any attempts to politicize humanitarian assistance is immoral and unacceptable, she stressed, noting that the independent assessment must be based on consultations with the country's authorities."

She further said that its report should be balanced and must reflect real challenges, including the freezing of Afghan assets and the impact of unilateral sanctions.

On the other hand, Afghans appreciated the extension of UNAMA's mission in Afghanistan and said that there is a hope that the international community will recognize the Islamic Emirate in the near future, and the works are necessary to ensure lasting peace, stability and sustainable development should be done in the country.

"The international community must work on a procedure to provide job opportunities and solve permanently the problems of Afghan people," said the people.

This is to be noted that most of the representatives of the world countries emphasized that the doors of schools and universities should be opened for women and girls.

Shukria Kohistani





# Tree plantation & horticulture in the light of science & Quran

## Part I

We are witnessing these days a vast tree plantation campaign, which is launched every year from late February and continues until the end of the month of March. During this period of time, millions of saplings are planted by the people and relevant institutions of the Islamic Emirate in different parts of the country.

In the opening ceremony of this campaign, the Islamic Emirate (IEA) officials by pointing to the harmful impacts of the wars of the past four decades on the country's environment, encouraged the people to plant saplings and protect them so that in this way they can reduce these harmful impacts on the environment caused by chemical substances used by foreign invaders.

Therefore, the past history and the spiritual and financial value of tree plantation and horticulture have been explained in this article.

The history of horticulture goes back to 3000 BC in Egypt, where Egyptians used to plant trees such as grapes, dates, and olives.

To produce these products, they went for plantation pruning, irrigation, and field preparation. Later, the Romans and Rome turned to this profession.

Varo Marcus T, a Roman writer, in his book 'Roman Farm Management' has recalled of grapes, pears, apples, figs and nuts.

Meanwhile, Elder Plane also wrote about the breeding of some fruits 77 years BC in his book titled 'Natural History'.

For example, in his book, he mentioned four types of apricots, six types of peaches, nine types of cherries, nine types of plums, 29 types of figs and 41 types of pears. Also, 500 years back from today, the Romans were familiar with grafting, crop rotation and using of animal manure.



Subsequently, at the end of the 5th century, with the expansion of Islam and the scientific progress, the agriculture and horticulture became very popular and important to Muslims as most of the Islamic countries as Iraq, today's Syria and India turned to producing various horticultural products.

At the beginning of the 14th century, considerable progress was made in horticulture in Italy and France.

Later on, the cell has been discovered by Robert Hooke. The practical classification of plants by Carline and successive studies by Gregor Mendel are considered to be the most important innovations and discoveries of this period during the 16th century.

Finally, during the 20th century, with the progress in various fields of science, especially the production and cultivation of modified seeds, fertilizers, chem-

ical spices and agricultural machinery, many changes took place in agriculture and horticulture as the developments in this field in the last 100 years (especially the last academic year) has been estimated to be more than 100 centuries estimated before.

In the light of Quran, tree plantation and horticulture are considered as important. In the Holy Quran, the word "tree" is mentioned under various titles in most cases, and we mention a few of its words as examples:

In Quran's Surah "Naml", after referring to the creation of the heavens and the earth and falling the rain from the sky, the gardening and plantation have been mentioned and it makes human aware of this important point that they should think of the quality of creating life in trees:

[More precisely], is He [not best] who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you

rain from the sky, causing to grow thereby gardens of joyful beauty which you could not [otherwise] have grown the trees thereof? Is there a deity with Allah? [No], but they are a people who ascribe equals [to Him].

The Holy Quran also mentions trees and plants as the "resources" of human life, and sometimes it considers them as "livelihood", that is, the means of fulfilling human needs, and gives them a special dignity as the Almighty Allah says in Surah 'Abasa':

Let the human reflect on the food he eats, how We pour down rain in abundance, and split the earth, splitting, how we made the grain to grow, grapes, and fresh fodder, and the olive, and the palm, the densely treed gardens, and fruit and pastures, for you and for your herds to delight in

To be Continued  
Abo Elyas Jahadwal

# Ramadan; month of virtue, revelation of the Holy Quran

One of the five pillars of Islam is fasting, which is obligatory for every Muslim, both men and women to fast for a month in a year, and it is the month of virtue and mercy, the month of deliverance from the fire of hell and month of forgiveness of sins and it is the month of hospitality by the Almighty Allah.

With the arrival of the Holy month of Ramadan, all Muslims

Ramadan is a good time to avoid bad habits, such as smoking, and taking snuff or other things because we have to fast all day long. Decrease in blood cholesterol and preventing of heart attacks is another virtue of Ramadan.

The reward of other deeds performed by Muslims are recorded by angels while the rewards and virtues of the holy month of Ramadan are recorded by Allah Al-

Fasting increases the filtration of all the harmful substances from the body such as the reduction of diabetes and fat. Also, fasting helps avoid bad habits.

During fasting, the digestive system rests, and normal physiological function, especially the production of digestive secretions, continues. Energy dissipation also follows a gradual pattern. But fasting does not stop the production



get ready for celebrating the holy month worldwide.

Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic year; Ramadan is a time when Muslims from all over the world dedicate themselves to working on their spirituality and the doors of hell are closed in the holy month of Ramadan and the devil cannot tempt the Muslim in this month.

mighty Himself.

Besides being an order of the Holy Islam, fasting has many benefits for health, and one of them is resting the digestive system, and helping to lose weight.

While Muslims just consider fasting as a religious commitment to Allah and only a few people are aware of the health benefits of fasting.

of fatty acids in the stomach that is why patients with gastric ulcers are advised to fast with caution. With all these benefits, a number of Afghans are worried about food prices being out of control this month, saying the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should control prices during the holy month of Ramadan.

Mohammad Daud

# Thought and Deed

Humans are well-born and Allah has given them the power of thinking within all living beings. They should think positively, do positive for the society and facilitate their society through their positive thoughts, mental practice and depending on themselves.

Hey humans! You have the quality of thinking and possess the wit, so you should serve your community, but besides this, some of you are worse than the things which don't have any wit or knowledge but serve the community. Wish some of humans were impressed by those things and paid for the rights of humanity.

For example, bridges are always in service for humans. If there is raining, if there is freezing or if there is a wind so they stay constant-very honestly and load many heavy packages on their shoulders to serve humans, and

never disobey.

Now think about the humans. Are there any people who have loaded the packages of others on their own shoulders? Are there any people who have helped others without any purpose? Then you will realize that how much endurance and honesty is there in each human as compared to the bridge. You may find no endurance or honesty.

In fact, those humble bridges are better than those arrogant and selfish humans. Have you ever thought that how many people are going around the earth? How many things are there on the earth? And for how many things the earthworks as resources? What do you think? Will the humans pay the rights of the earth? Will the humans compete with earth in providing services? These are the questions which need to be answered.

answered.

Trees are standing erect and straight all the time, just to serve the humans and bear joyful fruit for them to eat.

They don't sell their fruit to humans. And never give the human those fruits which are full of pain and they never expect something in return.

Look at the blue sky. Sometimes it becomes blue, sometimes cloudy and sometimes rainy. Fruits become ripe and are always in the service of humans. But you may find a few numbers of the humans in service for others humans.

Hey human! What kind of thoughts and deeds do you have? As your activities are worse than your thoughts, so let's learn some of the wisdom from the sky, bridge or ear.

Ustad Sayed Asghar Hashimi

# Trade, transportation pact to be signed between Kabul, Tehran

KABUL: Afghanistan and Iran will soon sign a commerce and transit agreement, the country's Ministry of Commerce and Industry said Sunday.

The ministry said on its website that it has discussed the agreement in a meeting with the Iranian Minister of Industry.

"The Iranian said should reduce the costs so that we can make goods available to consumers at lower and reasonable prices and ensure better business," the ministry said.

Customs services should be provided at the two nations' customs offices twenty-four hours a day, the ministry's official website quoted Ahmad Saeed Siddiqi, deputy of the Herat Chamber of

Commerce and Investment said saying.

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment asked the officials of Islamic Emirate and Iran to reduce customs fees.

Some Iranian businessmen also underlined the expansion of commerce and the cooperation of the two nations in the creation of facilities for businessmen.

"Given the good authority that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the two countries have, the meetings held by the ministers of the two countries can make things easier, and the opening of Iran's commercial center in Kabul is a step toward this," said Samana Abdullahi, the director of the Iran-Afghanistan Trade Center,

as quoted by a private TV channel, Tolownews.

"The trade center also has a priority in the area of transferring technical science and bringing the infrastructure needed by Afghanistan in various industries, such as agriculture, the construction industry, food, and medical equipment," said Hossein Azari, CEO of the Iran-Afghanistan Trade Center.

According to data from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the yearly worth of exports and imports between Afghanistan and Iran is two billion dollars, and attempts are being made to raise this figure to ten billion.

The Kabul Times

# Silkworks and silk weaving, tradition in Afghanistan

Silk weaving dates back thousands of years and kept thousands of Afghan families in business. The people especially women are still weaving silk products in various parts of the country, particularly in Herat, a province in the country's west that has a long tradition of producing silk used to weave carpets and silk.

Decades of war and fighting have put negative impacts on silk weaving and its business in the country. Now that security has improved following the Islamic Emirate (IEA) takeover, people particularly women have once again turned to weaving silk, but sales of silk products have fallen, and the market for silk weaving in Herat has shrunk.

According to the weavers, poor-quality fabrics imported from neighboring countries have replaced domestic silk fabrics, such as winter blankets and handkerchiefs. The once flourishing silk trade that it was so proud of has been threatened by cheaper foreign imports which threatened generations of silk making families.

Silk weavers believe that some traders have started importing Chinese and Pakistani silk products which are sold in low prices in Afghanistan markets. Therefore, people have turned to buying foreign silk products as they're cheaper than those made or produced by Afghans.

Despite that there's no good market for silk products in Afghanistan, Afghan silk weavers say they have not stopped the silk weaving profession. According to

silk weavers in Herat, silk weaving is the profession of most families; therefore, they will not stop the silk weaving profession.

Based on reports, thousands of people and their families are involved in silk weaving which aims to provide a means of subsistence and potentially lead the international market access for silk producers in the country.

Herat is famous for its mulberry trees which the silkworms feed on and thrive in the dry climate. The popular wool and silk Afghanistan carpets made by different segments of the people can sell for a price that can cost thousands of U.S. dollars.

Carpets are Afghanistan's best-known export, woven most-

ly by women and children in the north of the country, a trade which once employed, directly or indirectly, six million people, or a fifth of the country's population, although that figure has dropped sharply in recent years.

In recent years cheaper silk has been bought as an alternative but as with any material which is cheaper to produce and buy, the quality is also lessened. For example, a pure, silk scarf might cost some 300 - 500 afghani, whereas a synthetic type of silk which could be imported from China, Pakistan and other neighboring countries would cost lower than 200 afghani.

The silk market is located in a historic site in Herat's ancient city.

Only four of the several weaving machines that were once present in this market are still in use. In Herat's silk market, the price of natural threads has doubled recently and Afghanistan-made silk products have the best quality and cost higher than those imported from regional countries particularly Pakistan and China.

Once there had been silk business in the region. People still know about the Silk Road that came into being from the 1st century BC, following efforts by the Yuezhi and Xiongnu in the Tarim Basin in north west China to consolidate a road to the Western world and India.

Saida Ahmadi





	USD		GBP		INR		PKR		EUR		IRR		AED
01		01		1000		1000		01		1000		01	
	AFN		AFN		AFN		AFN		AFN		AFN		AFN
86.80		107.50		1080		305		94.00		1.90		24.40	



## Quake kills 13 in Ecuador, 1 in Peru, causes widespread damage

A strong earthquake has shaken Ecuador and Peru, killing at least 14 people, damaging homes and buildings, and sending panicked residents into the streets.

The US Geological Survey reported a magnitude 6.7 earthquake on Saturday in Ecuador's coastal Guayas region. The tremor was centred about 80km (50 miles) south of the country's second-biggest city, Guayaquil, which anchors a metro area of more than three million people.

The earthquake did not appear likely to generate a tsunami, authorities said.

The tremor killed 13 people in Ecuador, while at least one person was reported dead in Peru. Authorities in Ecuador also reported that at least 126 people

were injured.

His office said that "all the ministries are activated and have sufficient economic resources to immediately repair earthquake damage". It added that 11 of the victims died in the coastal state of El Oro and two in the highlands state of Azuay.

In Peru, the earthquake was felt from its northern border with Ecuador to the central Pacific coast.

Peruvian Prime Minister Alberto Otazola said a four-year-old girl died from head trauma she suffered in the collapse of her home in the Tumbes region, on the border with Ecuador.

The initial earthquake was followed by two weaker aftershocks in the following hour, ac-

cording to the Geophysics Institute of Ecuador.

"We all ran out into the streets ... we were very scared," Ernesto Alvarado, a resident of Isla Puna near the epicentre, told the Reuters news agency, adding that some homes had collapsed.

One of the victims in Ecuador's Azuay was a passenger in a vehicle crushed by rubble from a house in the Andean community of Cuenca, according to the Risk Management Secretariat, the country's emergency response agency.

In El Oro, the agency also reported that several people were trapped under rubble. In the community of Machala, a two-storey home collapsed before people could evacuate, a pier gave way, and a building's walls cracked,

trapping an unknown number of people.

The agency said firefighters worked to rescue people while the National Police assessed damage, their work made more difficult by downed lines that interrupted telephone and electricity service.

Residents look at a building that collapsed after an earthquake shook Machala, Ecuador, Saturday, March 18, 2023.

Machala resident Fabricio Cruz said he was in his third-floor apartment when he felt a strong tremor and saw his television hit the ground. He immediately headed out.

"I heard how my neighbours were shouting and there was a lot of noise," said Cruz, a 34-year-

old photographer. He added that when he looked around, he noticed the collapsed roofs of nearby houses.

Ecuador's government also reported damage to healthcare centres and schools. Lasso said he would travel on Saturday to El Oro.

In Guayaquil, about 270km (170 miles) southwest of the capital, Quito, authorities reported cracks in houses and other buildings as well as some collapsed walls.

Authorities ordered the closure of three road tunnels.

Videos shared on social media show people gathered on the streets of Guayaquil and nearby communities.

**aljazeera**

## North Korea fires short-range ballistic missile towards sea

North Korea has fired a short-range ballistic missile towards the sea off the east coast of the Korean Peninsula, according to South Korea and Japan, the latest in a barrage of weapons tests from the state.

The missile, launched on Sunday from the Dongchang-ri site on the west coast at about 11:05am (02:05 GMT), flew some 800km (500 miles) before hitting a target, according to a South Korean military statement. Japan's defence ministry said the missile flew as high as 50km (30 miles). Seoul has condemned the recent ballistic missile launches by North Korea as a "clear violation" of a UN Security Council resolution. Soon after the launch, South Korea's Ministry of National Defense said the US deployed a B-1B strategic bomber to a joint air drill, which Seoul and Washington say they are holding to strengthen extended deterrence. The launches have also prompted criticism from Tokyo and Washington. Japanese State Minister of Defense Toshirō Ino said the missile landed outside Japan's exclusive economic

zone and that there were no reports of damage to vessels or aircraft in the area. He called the launch "a threat" to the security of Japan, the region and the international community that "absolutely cannot be tolerated".

"North Korea's behaviour threatens international peace and security, and is unacceptable," Ino told a news conference, adding Japan had protested strongly to North Korea's embassy in Beijing.

The US Indo-Pacific Command said Sunday's launch does not pose an immediate threat to US personnel or its allies. But the recent missile launches highlight the destabilising impact of Pyongyang's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs, it said in a statement. The launch comes after North Korea fired a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) into the sea between the Korean Peninsula and Japan on Thursday, hours before South Korea's president flew to Tokyo for a summit that discussed ways to counter their nuclear-armed neighbour. **aljazeera**



## Cyclone Freddy death toll in south-east Africa surpasses 500

The death toll in southeast Africa due to the exceptionally long-lasting Tropical Cyclone Freddy has risen to 522, according to authorities in Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar.

Disaster management authorities in Malawi, which has been hit the hardest by the cyclone, reported on Saturday that the death toll there had risen to 438. Malawi's president, Lazarus Chakwera, declared a 14-day national mourning period on Thursday. There are hundreds of evacuation centres set up across the country for survivors with tens of thousands in Malawi left homeless and approximately 345,000 people affected by the heavy rains, floods and landslides. The cyclone left a trail of devastation in southeast Africa. Neighbouring Mozambique and the island nation of Madagascar have also been affected.

In Mozambique, at least 67 people died, according to President Filipe Nyusi, with 50,000 more displaced.

It is expected that the death toll in both nations will continue to climb. At least 17 people were killed in the island nation of Madagascar. Cyclone Freddy dissipated over land late Wednesday after it made a second landfall in Mozambique and then Malawi over the weekend and caused mass devastation in several regions, including Malawi's financial capital, Blantyre.

## Kuwait court nullifies 2022 parliamentary vote: State media



Kuwait's Constitutional Court on Sunday ruled that last September's parliamentary election, in which the opposition made gains, was void and that the previous assembly must be reinstated.

The move comes at a time of renewed friction between the elected parliament and government and follows the reappointment this month of the country's prime minister, whose government had resigned in the standoff with parliament.

Kuwait's crown prince last year dissolved parliament and called early polls in an effort to end prolonged domestic political feuding that has hindered fiscal reform.

However, Justice Mohammad bin Naji on Sunday said the court had declared that dissolution of parliament as void and had annulled the early elections held in September.

"The constitutional authority of the dissolved parliament

shall be restored as of the date of this ruling," he told the court session attended by reporters.

Kuwait, an OPEC oil producer, bans political parties but has given its legislature more influence than similar bodies in other Gulf monarchies.

Frequent political bickering has often led to cabinet reshuffles and dissolutions of parliament, hampering investment and reforms aimed at reducing the country's heavy reliance on oil revenue.

"Kuwait does not deserve such farces," MP Saleh Ashour said on Twitter after the court ruling.

A lawmaker from the dissolved assembly, Abdullah al-Turaiji, welcomed the move as "correcting the government's mistake in dealing with parliament."

Political stability in Kuwait has traditionally depended on co-operation between government and parliament.

**alarabiya**

## At least 19 killed in Bangladesh bus accident

At least 19 people have been killed and up to 25 were injured in Bangladesh after a bus smashed through a highway fence and plunged into a roadside ditch in Bangladesh.

The police said they suspected the driver lost control at 8am (02:00 GMT) on Sunday and hit the railing of a recently built major expressway, sending the bus, carrying more than 40 passengers, tumbling nine metres (30 feet) into the ditch.

"The death toll has risen to 19. At least 12 people were criti-

cally injured. They have been sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the capital," local police chief Masud Alam told AFP news agency after the crash in the southern district of Shibchar.

The death toll could rise further as some of the injured passengers are in critical condition, said Anowar Hossain, police official of Shibchar, where the crash occurred. The city is 80km (50 miles) from the capital Dhaka.

Road accidents are frequent in Bangladesh due to old and badly maintained vehicles and roads, as

well as poorly trained drivers. Fatal road accidents have been on the rise despite the government saying it will reduce them by 50 percent by 2030.

In July last year, nearly 400 people were killed and nearly twice that number were injured in more than 300 road accidents in the two weeks around the Eid al-Adha holidays in Bangladesh.

According to the Bangladeshi passengers' welfare association, a record 9,951 people were killed in road accidents in Bangladesh last year. **aljazeera**



## Iran court sentences two to death over shrine attack that killed 15 in October

An Iranian court has handed out death sentences to two men over an attack on a Shia shrine in Iran that killed 15 people in October and was claimed by the militant group ISIS, the official news agency IRNA reported on Saturday.

Fars Province Prosecutor Kazem Mousavi said the two men had been found guilty of charges including "spreading corruption on earth" and acting against national security, IRNA reported, adding that the sentences can be appealed.

CCTV footage broadcast on state TV showed the attacker entering the popular Shah Cheragh shrine in the southern city of Shiraz after hiding an assault rifle in a bag and shooting at worshippers tried to flee and hide in corridors.

The gunman, identified as a citizen of Tajikistan, later died in a hospital from injuries sustained during the attack.

The two men sentenced to death said during the trial that they had been in contact with ISIS in neighboring Afghanistan and helped organize the attack, Iranian media reported.

Three other men received jail sentences ranging from five to 25 years in the trial, the prosecutor said.

**alarabiya**