

Pakistan mourns death of Kulsoom, wife of ex-PM

Kulsoom Nawaz, the wife of former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif, died of cancer in London

Islamabad, Pakistan

Kulsoom Nawaz, the wife of former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif, died of cancer in London yesterday as her husband remains locked up in jail in his home country following his fall from power.

Nawaz, 68, who was first lady of Pakistan three times, was diagnosed with lymphoma in August last year and had been receiving treatment at a private hospital in London for months.

“Yes, the death of Begum Kulsoom Nawaz is confirmed,” Maryam Aurangzeb, a spokesperson of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Sharif’s party, told AFP.

Pakistani media reported that she had been put on life support and a ventilator earlier in the day.

Sharif was ousted from the premiership a month before his wife’s diagnosis.

He and the couple’s daughter Maryam Nawaz had left her in London and returned to Pakistan on July 13 this year in a bid to motivate support for the PML-N days before a general election.

They were immediately jailed for corruption, with the party losing the July 25 vote to Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

Sharif had been banned from running



Kulsoom Nawaz (courtesy of Yahoo)

and his return was seen as a failed gamble to save his political legacy.

Conspiracy theories claiming that Nawaz was actually healthy, and that the Sharifs were faking her illness to gain sympathy, swirled in the final weeks of the acrimonious campaign.

Nawaz had been at her husband’s side



Mrs. Kulsoom Nawaz was a brave woman

IMRAN KHAN,
PRIME MIINISTER

throughout his decades-long political career, which saw him become prime minister of Pakistan three times while facing military coups, prison and exile.

“She was a brave lady,” Siddiq-ul-Farouq, a stalwart party loyalist, said, describing her as well-educated and dignified.

‘Devastating’

For years Nawaz stayed out of politics, focusing on the couple’s family and home life. The couple have four children.

But after Sharif was first imprisoned following a military coup in 1999 Nawaz stepped into the limelight, Farouq said.

“She told her father-in-law, ‘Dad, I have to go out,’ and he replied, ‘Daughter, you must go,’” he recounted.

Nawaz took over leadership of the par-

ty, defying house arrest to attend street rallies standing up to General Pervez Musharraf and demanding her husband’s release. Sharif was eventually allowed to go into exile in Saudi Arabia in 2007.

“She fought against cancer with a lot of courage,” Farouq added.

The newly-elected Khan, a former cricket hero who had campaigned against the Sharifs for his entire 22-year-long political career, sent his condolences Tuesday.

“The Pakistan High Commission in the UK has been directed to provide all possible assistance to facilitate the heirs of Mrs. Kulsoom Nawaz,” his office said in a statement.

“Mrs. Kulsoom Nawaz was a brave woman,” Khan was quoted as saying in the statement.

The US Embassy in Islamabad as well as the leaders of other political parties also sent condolences, as Pakistani social media was quickly flooded with messages.

“Feeling so sorry for Maryam and Mian sahib (Nawaz Sharif),” tweeted one user, Mobeen Shafaat. “They had to leave her behind, I don’t know what they’ll be going through right now. Devastating.”

Others speculated on whether Khan’s government would allow Sharif or his daughter to return to London to collect Nawaz’s body.

57 murders a day in S.Africa : minister

Cape Town, South Africa

South Africa’s murder rate rose again last year, official statistics showed Tuesday, with over 20,000 people killed across the country -- about 57 a day -- as police admitted they were struggling to keep control.

A total of 20,336 people were murdered in the 12 months to March this year, a rise of 6.9 percent over the previous year and one of the sharpest increases since the end of apartheid 24 years ago.

“Fifty-seven a day -- that’s how (many) South Africans are murdered. It borders close to the war zone, while there is a peace. And there is no war in South Africa,” Police Minister Bheki Cele told lawmakers in Cape Town.

Hanoi urges residents to stop eating dog meat

Hanoi, Vietnam

Hanoi officials urged residents yesterday to ease off eating dog meat, saying the popular dish is tarnishing the city’s image and risks spreading rabies.

Roasted, boiled or steamed, dog meat can be found in markets and food shops across the capital city famed for its tasty street food, and the meat is traditionally eaten with rice wine or beer.

But Hanoi People’s Committee on Tuesday warned residents to lay off canine meat to prevent the spread of rabies and other animal-borne diseases.

It also urged them to stop eating cat meat, often dubbed “little tiger” on Vietnamese menus, which is less popular than dog but still readily available in rural areas.

Rare Hermann’s tortoises stolen

Ajaccio, France

A turtle conservation park on the French island of Corsica is asking the public for help after 56 rare Hermann’s tortoises, considered a nearly threatened species, were stolen from the site.

The A Cupulatta park in Vero, about 30 kilometres (20 miles) northeast of Ajaccio, issued its appeal on Facebook on Monday after discovering the missing adult tortoises, recognisable by their distinctive black-and-yellow shells.

“These tortoises cannot be legally sold so can only be destined for trafficking,” the park wrote.

“They could contaminate wild populations with fatal germs, since they’ve been kept in captivity for a long time and have been exposed to animals and people which wild turtles aren’t used to seeing,” the park said.

“Share this message: the turtles may still be in Corsica,” it added.

ICC ‘undeterred’ after US sanctions

The Hague, Netherlands

The International Criminal Court yesterday said its work would continue “undeterred” after Washington threatened to prosecute its officials if Americans are charged with war crimes committed in Afghanistan.

“The ICC, as a court of law, will continue to do its work undeterred, in accordance with those principles and the overarching idea of the rule of law,” the tribunal said in a statement.

The Hague-based court’s response comes a day after the United States threatened to arrest and sanction court officials should they move to charge any American who

served in Afghanistan with war crimes.

White House National Security Advisor John Bolton called the Hague-based rights body “unaccountable” and “outright dangerous” to the United States, Israel and other allies, and said any probe of US service members would be “an utterly unfounded, unjustifiable investigation”.

“If the court comes after us, Israel or other US allies, we will not sit quietly,” Bolton said.

The US was prepared to slap financial sanctions and criminal charges on officials of the court if they proceed against any Americans, he added.

But in response, the ICC declared itself an “independent

and impartial judicial institution”.

It also stressed that it would only investigate and prosecute crimes when the states will not or can not do so.

The Hague-based ICC was set up in 2002 with jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute the world’s worst crimes including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The court however does not have the capacity to arrest suspects and depends on member states for their cooperation.

The United States has not signed up to the court and in 2002 Congress passed a law enabling Washington to invade the Netherlands to liberate any US citizen held by the court.

32 killed, 128 injured in attack on protesters

Jalalabad, Afghanistan

A suicide attack on protesters in eastern Afghanistan yesterday killed at least 32 people, officials said, as an uptick in violence across the war-torn country dampens hopes for peace talks and elections.

There were chaotic scenes at several hospitals as medical staff struggled to treat 128 people wounded by the powerful blast in Nangarhar province.

Gul Majid was among scores of protesters blocking the highway between the provincial capital of Jalalabad and a major Pakistan border crossing when he “heard a big bomb”.

“Then I saw flesh, blood and people wounded all around me,” Majid told AFP outside one of the hospitals.

“I am still looking for my friends. I don’t know whether they are alive or dead.”

The men had been protesting over the appointment of a local police chief, provincial governor spokesman Ataullah Khogyani said.

Provincial health director Najibullah Kamawal and Khogyani both confirmed the latest casualty toll.

The attack came hours after a double bombing in front of a girls’ school in the provincial capital Jalalabad.

Students gain weight ‘to dodge military service’

Seoul, South Korea

Twelve inventive South Korean college students deliberately made themselves overweight to dodge mandatory military service, a branch of the armed forces in Seoul said Tuesday.

The students -- all classical music majors at the same university in the capital -- took protein powder and drank a large amount of juice on the day of their physical examination, the Military Manpower Administration said.

“The classmates shared tips on how to gain weight on an online chatroom,” it said, adding they drank an especially large amount of juice containing aloe vera pulp -- considered to stay in the body longer than other food. Nearly every able-bodied



South Korean marines take part in a US-South Korea joint landing operation

South Korean man is required to enrol by age 28 in the military, for a minimum of 21 months.

Those deemed too overweight or underweight, or diagnosed

with certain diseases or disabilities, are exempted and usually assigned to positions in places like courts or public libraries.

The 12 wily students were

judged too overweight for conscription and were ordered to work for government services instead.

Two have already finished

their public service, while four are currently doing it and six are waiting to be assigned to positions at state offices.

The military said it had used “digital forensic technology” to uncover the ruse, suggesting it may have seen messages from the chatroom used by the students.

Officials have sent the case to prosecutors who will decide whether to charge the group.

If the students are later found guilty, they will have to undergo the physical examination again -- and may have to serve their time in the military after all, the army warned.

Attempts to dodge conscription are not uncommon, with efforts including deliberately dislocating arms or shoulders.