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NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

High turnout in Saudi Arabia's first bowling championship for women



The first Bowling Championship for women in Saudi Arabia is being held in three cities across the kingdom, a step in line with reforms allowing Saudi women to practice various types of sports.

The championship, held in Riyadh, Khobar and Jeddah, sets a condition that participants hold the Saudi nationality or are expats born in Saudi Arabia.

While the tournament in Riyadh witnessed a huge turnout of 200 participants, while nearly 100 entries were recorded in Al Khobar, and registration is still open for participation in Jeddah.

Razan Bakr, Member of the Federation's Board of Directors and in charge of the Media Committee and Women's Activities, in an interview with Al Arabiya English said: "In order to promote women's sport, the Federation has added three tournaments to the calendar this year, the first in Riyadh on Oct. 6, the second in Al Khobar on Oct. 13, and the third in Jeddah on Oct. 20."

Read more:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/sports/2018/10/17/High-turnout-in-Saudi-Arabia-s-first-bowling-championship-for-women.html>

Over 400 Afghan women aim to break male stranglehold on Parliament



For women in Afghanistan's Parliament, what a difference a year makes.

Last December, the government proposed 12 candidates for ministerial positions; only one was female, and she failed to win enough votes.

Now hundreds of women aim to be agents of change by standing for Parliament in elections on Saturday.

More than 400 of the 2,691 candidates are women. Their aims are to encourage a consensus among female members of Parliament and to end the reliance on factional leaders and strongmen with power and wealth.

"The young and new candidates are a powerful tool to make Parliament exercise its rights as stipulated in the constitution," said Zahra Nawabi, 28, a candidate from Kabul who has two master's degrees.

"Our priority should be women, first and foremost addressing their health. Parliament should not become a source of shame for the nation."

The practice of wealthy figures and men with power supporting their own choice of female nominees was a greater threat to Afghan democracy than the threatened attacks on the election process by Taliban insurgents, she said.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1390156/world>

Ethiopia's New Cabinet 50 Percent Women, Including Defense



Ethiopia's new Cabinet is now a record 50 percent female, including the country's first woman defense minister, after lawmakers on Tuesday unanimously approved the nominations put forward by reformist Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

"Our women ministers will disprove the old adage that women can't lead," Abiy said while presenting his choices. "This decision is the first in the history of Ethiopia and probably in Africa."

Ethiopia has faced sweeping political and economic reforms since the 42-year-old prime minister took office in April after months of anti-government protests and made pledges that include free and fair elections.

The Horn of Africa power joins a handful of countries, mostly European, where women make up 50 percent or more of ministerial positions, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and U.N. Women. French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in recent years unveiled "gender-balanced" Cabinets.

Aisha Mohammed Musa will lead Ethiopia's defense ministry. Another woman, former House speaker Muferiat Kamil, will lead the new Ministry of Peace at a time when Africa's second most populous country faces sometimes violent ethnic tensions as the wider political freedoms are explored.

Read more:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopia-s-new-cabinet-50-percent-women-including-defense/4615501.html>

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First Saudi woman presents main news bulletin on Saudia TV



Weam Al-Dakheel has become the first woman to anchor the main evening news bulletin on Saudi Arabia's main national TV station.

Al-Dakheel presented the news alongside Omar Al-Nashwan on Thursday on Saudia TV channel.

Saudis took to Twitter to celebrate her achievement and the new milestone for Saudi women.

Writer Rayan Al-Jidani said: "Her performance was distinctive in terms of concentration, presence and clear articulation. I wish her more success in her career in media with the national channel @saudiatv."

Television broadcaster Wael Rafeeq said: "Today, we are very pleased with this great development and quantum leap that the national television is undergoing."

"It is beautiful to see our national channel in this honorable image. I hope this level of dedication at work is maintained, and developments continue being executed," Twitter user @abukhaled2030 said.

@aliya_m1khan tweeted: "She is a champion. Such a strong and confident character, a great example."

Al-Dakheel previously worked for CNBC Arabia and was an intern at Dar Al Hayat Newspaper.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1375701/media>

Iranian Women Attend Men's Soccer Game, Standing Firm Against State Ban and Hardline Threats



After decades of activists peacefully campaigning against Iran's state ban on women in sports stadiums, dozens of females were allowed to watch a men's soccer match between the national team and Bolivia on October 16 in Tehran.

Immediately after a limited number of women were allowed into the capital city's Azadi Stadium to watch a men's home game for the first time in 35 years, Iran's attorney general threatened to "confront" anyone who allows the "trend" to continue.

"The authorities in Iran are trying to prevent women and men from being treated equally, but Iranian women are standing firm and step-by-step chipping away at the ban on their presence at stadiums," said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

"Temporarily relaxing the ban is not enough," said Ghaemi. "President Rouhani, who has spoken out for women's rights, should forcefully and publicly push to officially end this notorious ban."

Iran is the only country in the world that bans women from sports stadiums.

Read more:

<https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/10/iranian-women-attend-mens-soccer-game-standing-firm-against-state-ban-and-hardline-threats/>

Four women appointed to key jobs at Jeddah Municipality



Jeddah Mayor Saleh Al-Turki has appointed four women to key positions in the municipality in an unprecedented move toward female empowerment in Saudi local government.

The appointments are expected to pave the way for similar decisions across the Kingdom, increasing the contribution by women to the growth of local communities and the country as a whole.

"Jeddah is a big city that is even growing bigger and we need to keep up with this growth. I have actually appointed qualified people of both genders in a number of departments in the municipality," Al-Turki told Arab News.

He said the municipality provided services to all beneficiaries, regardless of their gender.

In the reshuffle, the municipality's general directorate for female services has been renamed the female municipality branch, and will be headed by Maryam Ahmed Abu Al-Aineen, who will be directly affiliated with the deputy mayor.

Rasha Ghazi Al-Muhanna has been appointed director of Dhahban branch municipality, and is directly linked to the assistant deputy mayor for services.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1362891/saudi-arabia>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Tensions high in Kerala as Hindu temple opens gates to women



A standoff is under way in the south Indian state of Kerala, where mainly female protesters are attempting to stop other women from entering the Sabarimala temple.

On Wednesday, the Hindu shrine will open its gates for the first time since 28 September, after the supreme court struck down an entry ban on women of menstruating age. The judges ruled the ban against girls and women aged between 10 and 50 as discriminatory and, therefore, unconstitutional.

The decision triggered a public outcry in Kerala, with some female devotees saying it was more important to uphold religious tradition than be swayed by notions of gender equality.

Thousands of protesters gathered on the roads leading to the hilltop temple and heckled any woman they suspected was going there. On Tuesday, the protesters intercepted all oncoming vehicles to prevent female passengers from visiting the shrine, one of Hinduism's holiest. Female journalists have also been attacked.

One devotee who was walking to the temple with her son and daughter was forced to turn back by hecklers, despite a heavy police presence.

Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/17/kerala-hindu-temple-opens-women-sabarimala-india>

Indian Schoolgirls Beaten With Sticks for Challenging Sexual Harassment



Thirty-six Indian school girls between the ages of 10 and 14 were hospitalized because they stood up against sexual harassment Saturday night.

A large group of teenage boys and their parents attacked the young girls at their boarding school Triveniganj, in the northeastern state of Bihar, the Guardian reports. It all started when the girls were playing in a sports area and the teenage boys taunted them with sexually inappropriate comments. Six boys and one woman were arrested.

"They had been always teasing us and scribbling dirty words on the walls of our school," Guida, one of the targeted students, told the Guardian about the boys' behavior leading up to the incident.

Some of the girls fought back verbally and physically, and they were able to ward off the harassers temporarily. The situation escalated when the boys and their parents came back 20 minutes later and assaulted the girls with bamboo sticks and iron rods, police reported.

According to Guida, the boys and parents dragged them by their ponytails, and kicked and punched them. She said the attackers were upset "because we had protested [against] their sexual advances."

Read more:

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/indian-schoolgirls-bihar-beaten-sexual-harassment/>

India launches first sex offenders register amid wave of assaults



India has launched its first national register of sex offenders in a bid to stem crimes against women as the country reels from a series of high-profile rape cases.

The database will be accessible only to law enforcement agencies and not to the public, with 440,000 names registered, including those convicted of rape, gang rape, child sex crimes and sexual harassment, according to a home ministry statement.

It will also provide their photos, addresses and fingerprints, without compromising "any individual's privacy".

"The National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) ... will assist in effectively tracking and investigating cases of sexual offences," the ministry said in the statement late Thursday.

The register comes as a spate of sexual assault cases have rocked the country, which was named the most dangerous in the world for women by experts in a survey published by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in June.

Earlier this week, police arrested the principal and four staff members of a boarding school in northern India over the rape of a teenage student.

Read more:

<https://gulfnews.com/news/asia/india/india-launches-first-sex-offenders-register-amid-wave-of-assaults-1.2280836>

Egypt's Sunni authority says all sexual harassment 'forbidden'



Egypt's highest Sunni Muslim authority has said there can be no justification for sexual harassment, in a country where many people often blame women themselves for the widespread problems they face.

In a statement Al-Azhar blasted all forms of harassment as "a forbidden act and deviant behavior" and said "the one who carries it out is a sinner."

"Criminalizing sexual harassment must be absolute and free from any condition or context," the statement released Monday said.

"Justifying sexual harassment with the behavior or clothing of the woman is a misunderstanding, for sexual harassment is an assault on the woman and her freedom and dignity," it said.

Some 60 percent of women in Egypt said they had been victims of some form of sexual harassment during their lifetimes in a 2017 report from U.N. Women and Promundo.

Three-quarters of men and 84 percent of women polled said that women who "dress provocatively deserve to be harassed."

The divisions have been highlighted by a recent debate over a video posted on the internet by an Egyptian woman showing a man making unwanted advances on her in a Cairo street.

Read more:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2018/Aug-28/461458-egypts-sunni-authority-says-all-sexual-harassment-forbidden.ashx>

Morocco introduces law to combat violence against women



A law to combat violence against women in Morocco entered into force on Wednesday, following years of heated debate and after thousands called for action in a recent gang-rape case.

For the first time women in Morocco have legal protection from "acts considered forms of harassment, aggression, sexual exploitation or ill treatment".

The new law also paves the way for victims of violence to be offered support.

Families minister Bassima Hakkaoui hailed the legislation as "one of the most important texts strengthening the national legal arsenal in the area of equality of the sexes," in an interview with the official MAP agency.

The text was first drafted five years ago and was adopted by parliament in February, following lengthy debate.

But the law has been deemed inadequate by some, with the former women's minister Nouzha Skalli arguing it fails to take into account "international definitions" of violence against women.

She has highlighted the example of marital rape, which is not criminalised under the new legislation.

Read more:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/9/12/morocco-introduces-law-to-combat-violence-against-women>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Women soon to be able to divorce husbands



Women in Pakistan may soon be able to divorce their husbands without going to courts, according to a document being worked out by the government, a top official told The News on Friday.

Although this provision is part of marriage document or Nikahnama under the current Pakistani law, it is almost never offered to a bride-to-be at the time of marriage, leaving women with no option but to go to court to seek divorce, which is called Khula.

The Khula process is not only costly and tedious, but also enables men to exploit women wanting separation. Under the proposed changes to marriage documents, the language of Nikahnama will be changed to make the rights of women clear.

Also the nikahkhawan (a person who performs the marriage) will be legally bound to consult the bride on whether she wants her husband to give her right to dissolve marriage.

"The nikahkhawan will be legally bound to inform the bride of her right to ask for dissolution of marriage," Qibla Ayaz, Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), told The News.

Read more:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/383020-women-soon-to-be-able-to-divorce-husbands>

Algeria bans wearing of full-face veils in administration



Algeria Prime minister Ahmed Ouayhia has banned female public sector employees from wearing veils that cover their faces.

In a letter sent to ministers and regional governors on Thursday, Ahmed Ouayhia cited reasons of identification for the move. Civil servants, he wrote, need to "observe the rules and requirements of security and communication within their department, which impose their systematic and permanent physical identification."

Not so many women wear the niqab in Algeria, where the hijab — a scarf that covers the head and neck, but leaves the face clear — is the most popular.

Read more:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1390441/middle-east>

India's top court rules adultery no longer a crime



Adultery is no longer a crime, India's top court ruled on Thursday, declaring a colonial-era law that punished the offence with jail time unconstitutional and discriminatory against women.

The more than century-old law prescribed that any man who slept with a married woman without her husband's permission had committed adultery, a crime carrying a five-year prison term in the conservative country.

A petitioner had challenged the court to strike down the law, describing it as arbitrary and discriminatory against women.

"Thinking of adultery from a point of view of criminality is a retrograde step," unanimously declared the five-judge bench of the Supreme Court.

Women could not file a complaint under the archaic law nor be held liable for adultery themselves, making it solely the realm of men.

The court said it deprived women of dignity and individual choice and "gives license to the husband to use women as a chattel".

"It disregards the sexual autonomy which every woman possesses and denies agency to a woman in a matrimonial tie," said Supreme Court Justice DY Chandrachud.

Read more:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/27/indias-top-court-rules-adultery-no-longer-crime/>

India's Supreme Court rules to allow women in ancient Hindu temple while menstruating



In a burst of progressive activism, India's Supreme Court in September delivered a slew of judgments that overturned colonial era laws and questioned government overreach. In the past month, the country's top court legalized homosexuality, decriminalized adultery and clipped the scope of a government biometric program, bowing to demands from privacy activists.

The latest, on Friday, gave all women the legal right to enter into an ancient Hindu temple, which for centuries has been closed to female devotees between the ages of 10 and 50, essentially the years in which women menstruate.

"Historically women have been treated with inequality," said Dipak Misra, India's chief justice, in one of his final judgments before he steps down next week. "Society has to undergo a perception shift."

India's Supreme Court often makes decisions that its politicians and bureaucrats won't. Unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, which hears only a few dozen cases every year, India's top court tackles a wide range of issues from garbage dumping to women's empowerment. It accepts "public interest litigations" — an idiosyncratic legal tool that gives all Indians access to the country's top court.

Read more:

<https://nationalpost.com/news/indias-supreme-court-rules-to-allow-women-in-ancient-hindu-temple-while-menstruating>

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Swiss canton votes to ban burqa in public



Voters in the Swiss canton of St Gallen voted this weekend to ban facial coverings, including Islamic veils such as the burqa and niqab, in public spaces.

The law was approved by 66.65% of voters, but turnout only reached 35.8%.

The northeastern canton of St Gallen becomes only the second out of 26 cantons to do so, after Ticino, in the south, introduced a similar law in 2016.

The new legislation states that "any person who renders themselves unrecognisable by covering their face in a public space and thus endangers public security or social and religious peace will be fined".

The Islamic Central Council of Switzerland condemned the ban as "another sign of the social Islamophobia that is rampant" in the country.

In a statement issued on Sunday, it recommended that women continue wearing full-face veils, arguing that the wording of the law means police officers will have to use their discretion to determine whether a person whose face is hidden is a threat to the public.

It also said that it will closely monitor the situation and consider legal action if necessary.

Read more:

<https://www.euronews.com/2018/09/24/swiss-canton-votes-to-ban-burqa-in-public>

RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Gender differentials and state variations in suicide deaths in India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990–2016

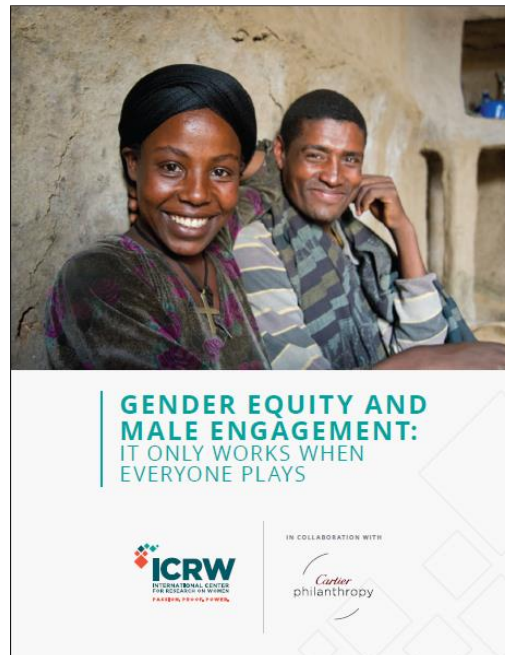
Background: A systematic understanding of suicide mortality trends over time at the subnational level for India's 1.3 billion people, 18% of the global population, is not readily available. Thus, we aimed to report time trends of suicide deaths, and the heterogeneity in its distribution between the states of India from 1990 to 2016.

Methods: As part of the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2016, we estimated suicide death rates (SDRs) for both sexes in each state of India from 1990 to 2016. We used various data sources for estimating cause-specific mortality in India. For suicide mortality in India before 2000, estimates were based largely on GBD covariates. For each state, we calculated the ratio of the observed SDR to the rate expected in geographies globally with similar GBD Socio-demographic Index in 2016 (ie, the observed-to-expected ratio); and assessed the age distribution of suicide deaths, and the men-to-women ratio of SDR over time. Finally, we assessed the probability for India and the states of reaching the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of a one-third reduction in SDR from 2015 to 2030, using location-wise trends of the age-standardised SDR from 1990 to 2016. We calculated 95% uncertainty intervals (UIs) for the point estimates.

Read more:

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2468-2667%2818%2930138-5>

Gender Equity & Male Engagement



Meaningful engagement with men and boys is increasingly recognized as critical to advancing gender equality and equity. It is necessary not only for women's empowerment, but also to transform the social and gender norms that reinforce patriarchy and inequality and harm both women and men. The primary challenge embedded in this work is how to engage men and boys effectively without instrumentalizing them as a pathway to women's empowerment or marginalizing women and girls in the process. Success requires a firm understanding of the conceptual underpinning of male engagement work, how it has been brought to bear in practice, and to what effect.

In this report, supported by Cartier Philanthropy, ICRW provides a historical overview of the nearly 40-year-old male engagement field, as well as guidance for stakeholders on how to support the funding, design, and implementation of programming that engages men and boys in transforming gender norms.

For a direct link to publication:

<http://www.cartierphilanthropy.org/uploads/media/5acb7ba53fb8f/icrw-maleengagementbrief-webready-v5-150dpi.pdf>

Study finds less corruption in countries where more women are in government

A greater representation of women in the government is bad news for corruption, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* by researchers Chandan Jha of Le Moyne College and Sudipta Sarangi of Virginia Tech.

In a cross-country analysis of over 125 countries, this study finds that corruption is lower in countries where a greater share of parliamentarians are women. The study further finds that women's representation in local politics is important too - the likelihood of having to bribe is lower in regions with a greater representation of women in local-level politics in Europe.

"This research underscores the importance of women empowerment, their presence in leadership roles and their representation in government, said Sarangi, an economics professor and department head at Virginia Tech. "This is especially important in light of the fact that women remain underrepresented in politics in most countries including the United States."

Less than a quarter of the members of the U.S. Senate are women and only 19 percent of the women in the U.S. House of Representatives are women. It is also noteworthy that the United States never had a women head or president.

Read more:

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-06/vt-sf1061418.php

For a direct link to publication:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268118300933?via%3Dihub>

Pressing for progress: women's rights and gender equality in 2018



This report looks at the state of women's rights in Great Britain in 2018.

It assesses the progress on women's rights since 2013 and makes recommendations to the UK and Welsh governments, in areas including:

- enhancing the status of international human rights in domestic law
- gender-based violence, harassment and abuse
- participation in political and civic life
- access to civil justice
- human trafficking and modern slavery
- detention and asylum
- health, living standards and social security
- work and education

The report has been submitted to the United Nations as part of our work on monitoring the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the international human rights treaty that focuses specifically on equality between women and men in all areas of life.

Read more:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/pressing-progress-women%E2%80%99s-rights-and-gender-equality-2018>

For a direct link to publication:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/pressing-for-progress-womens-rights-and-gender-equality-in-2018-pdf.pdf>

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