



**LIBRARY ON WHEELS.** An Afghan child holds a book out of the window of a bus library in Kabul, Afghanistan. Inside the blue bus are rows of neatly stacked books for children, hundreds of them in both Dari and Pashto, the two main languages in Afghanistan. And small tables and stools for the kids to sit on as they discover the joys of reading. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul)

## Library on wheels brings joy of books to Afghan kids

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turning day-to-day.

University student Siyam Barakati, 21, is one of the five-member team on the bus. He is the storyteller and his job is to read to the smaller children who cannot yet read.

"It is really enjoyable for me to be with kids. For a short time, I forget every-

thing else," he said. "It's a good feeling."

For 10-year-old Sameer, books are his new friends — and a source of knowledge to pass on.

"I read a book here, and learn something from it," he said. "Then I go home and tell the story to my sisters, and I get to learn more."

## Pakistan's first trans TV anchor hopes to change perceptions

By Zaheeruddin Babar and Zarar Khan  
The Associated Press

**L**AHORE, Pakistan — Marvia Malik has made history in Pakistan by becoming the first transgender newscaster in a conservative Muslim country where members of her community are taunted in public, ostracized by family, and targeted in violent attacks.

Pakistan officially recognized transgender as a third gender in 2012, but transgender people are largely confined to the margins of society, with most forced to survive by begging, dancing, and prostitution. Sex-reassignment surgery requires a court order, family approval, a psychiatrist's note, and a medical recommendation.

At just 21 years old, Malik is already breaking down some barriers. In early March, she became the first transgender woman to strut along the catwalk at a fashion show. But she says her true passion is journalism, and she's thrilled to be the face of the evening news on the private Kohenoor network in her native Lahore.

"Our society treats transgender people shamefully, degrading them, denying them jobs, laughing at them, and taunting them," Malik said. "I want to change that."

Like many transgender people in Pakistan, Malik had a difficult childhood. She was bullied by classmates, and her parents forced her to leave home after graduating high school. She took refuge with other transgender women and worked as a beautician to put herself through journalism school.

"My parents never accepted me as their child," she said. "They will never accept me."

It's a different story at the television network, where she says she has been welcomed with open arms.

"I cannot express the love and respect I have received here since I began work," she said. "I have not felt any discrimination."

Some of her colleagues were initially resistant to the idea, said Junaid Ansari, the station manager who hired her, "but I decided to give her a chance."

He said Malik is "doing fine" reading headlines, and promised she would face no discrimination. He said her performance had even inspired him to hire a second transgender woman, to work as a copy writer.

There are other signs of change elsewhere in the country. A boy scout troop in the southern port city of Karachi enrolled 40 transgender youths in March. After the Supreme Court ordered the government to list



**TRANSGENDER FIRST.** Pakistan's first transgender newscaster, Marvia Malik, poses for a photo in the control room of a local television channel in Lahore, Pakistan. Malik has made history in Pakistan by becoming the first transgender newscaster in a conservative Muslim country where members of her community are taunted in public, ostracized by family, and targeted in violent attacks. (AP Photo/K.M. Chaudary)

transgender as a third gender on ID cards, the national agency responsible for issuing them said it would employ transgender people at its offices across the country.

The decision to recognize a third gender was seen as a step in the right direction by transgender women, who previously were forced to identify themselves as men, leading to more severe forms of discrimination. Many hope they will eventually be recognized as women.

Transgender people face greater peril in more conservative areas of Pakistan, where Islamic extremists associate them with homosexuality and prostitution. In the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 55 transgender people have been killed in recent years and hundreds more assaulted, according to Farzana Jan, the president of Trans Action Alliance, a local rights group.

The most recent killing took place when gunmen opened fire on a rickshaw carrying a transgender woman who went by the name Pinky and her male companion. Both later died of their gunshot wounds. No arrests have been made, and police say they are investigating.

Malik said she was "shocked" to hear about the latest killing, and plans to organize protests demanding that those behind such attacks be held accountable.

"I have made history in my country, and I vow to use my

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## South Korea's coast guard rescues all 163 after ferry hits rock

By Kim Tong-Hyung  
The Associated Press

**S**EOUL, South Korea — South Korea's coast guard said it rescued all 163 people from a ferry that hit a large rock in waters off the country's southwestern coast. At least six people sustained minor injuries.

A coast guard official said the ferry's 158 passengers and five crew members were taken to shore on four coast guard vessels and a number of civilian fishing boats. The rescue operation went smoothly because the ferry wasn't flooded and didn't lose its balance despite the crash off islands in Sinan County, he said.

The coast guard initially said the ferry was carrying 187 passengers, but later



**WATER RESCUE.** A ferry that hit a large rock is seen in waters off Sinan County, South Korea. The coast guard said it rescued all 163 people from the ferry after it hit the rock in waters near the country's southwestern coast. (South Korea Coast Guard via AP)

revised the number to 158.

The official said it appeared the ferry hit the rock when trying to avoid a fishing boat while traveling in foggy waters.

Rescue workers treated six people for minor injuries caused from the shock of the crash, which left the ferry's front pushed

atop the rock, he said.

Another coast guard official, from the nearby port of Mokpo, said his department planned to question the ferry's captain and crew members to investigate the cause of the crash. Tests from alcohol detectors showed none of them had been drinking before the accident, he said.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity, citing office rules.

The area is not far from where a ferry sank and killed more than 300 people in 2014, triggering a national outpouring of grief and soul-searching over lax safety standards.

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