



Only Parliament has authority to rewrite Constitution: Perviz Ashraf

National Assembly Speaker Raja Perviz Ashraf has commended the Pakistani journalistic community for their responsible and professional work, recognizing them as an essential pillar of the country. (Details on Page 8)



Talha emphasizes workable policies for country's betterment

Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Saturday emphasized on devising practical and workable policies for the betterment of country. Addressing the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Federal Executive Committee's meeting here in the National Press Club, he said policies of fraud, deception and lies could not lead to any progress in the country. (Details on Page 3)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Time to address energy crisis

Islamabad: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on reforms in Energy Sector at Finance Division on Saturday.



Photo: PID

Govt determined to set economy on positive trajectory: Dar

Finance Minister also discusses viable proposals to introduce reforms in energy sector

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has said that the government is determined to set the economy on a positive trajectory through introducing reforms in various sectors in order to achieve economic stability and growth.

While chairing the meeting of Reforms and Resource Mobilization Commission in Islamabad

on Saturday, the finance minister highlighted the current economic and financial outlook of the country.

The Finance Minister appreciated the efforts of the commission in recognizing issues and challenges in the exiting taxation system.

He also hailed the commission's role in devising valuable suggestions for reforms in the revenue policies for resource mobilization, ease of doing busi-

ness, and tax payer facilitation to achieve sustainable economic growth.

The meeting deliberated upon the suggestions being put forward by the Commission and agreed to come up with business friendly tax reforms after interacting with all the stakeholders.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday chaired a meeting on reforms in Energy Sector. Special Assis-

tant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Pasha, Secretary Finance, Secretary Petroleum, Auditor General of Pakistan, MD SSGCL, MDs, CEOs of Sui Companies and senior officers from Finance and Petroleum Divisions attended the meeting.

The meeting conversed about the ongoing issues in the Energy sector and discussed viable proposals to introduce reforms in the energy sector in order to

improve cash-flow, specifically in the gas sector.

The Finance Minister urged the relevant authorities in Petroleum Division, Sui Companies and PSO to make necessary efforts to improve their liquidity as early as possible.

He emphasized that it was the priority of the government to address the issues of liquidity and performance of SOEs of the energy sector to enhance economic growth of the country.

PM directs for improving electricity supply in summer



Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed to take effective measures for supply of electricity in this summer season.

He said this during a meeting with Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir who called on him in Lahore

on Saturday.

During the meeting, the Minister for Power Division briefed the Prime Minister about on-going projects in power sector. He directed to complete work on the new transmission line at earliest so that every possible facility to be provided to consumers in this summer season.

Safeguarding future generations

Armed Forces will never hesitate from any sacrifice: COAS

Army Chief says people of Pakistan were central to the unity of the state



Staff Reporter

KAKUL: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Saturday said that Armed Forces of Pakistan would never shy away from any sacrifice to stabilize, secure and safeguard the future of our next generations.

The Army Chief made these remarks as the chief guest while addressing the Passing Out parade of cadets of 147th Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Long Course, 13th Mujahid Course, 66th Integrated Course, 6th Basic Military Training Course and 21st Lady Cadet Course held at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The Army Chief said that the people of Pakistan were central to the unity of the state. "First and the foremost is loyalty to the State of Pakistan and commitment to the Constitutional role assigned to Armed Forces of Pakistan."

"To us, nothing is more sacred than the safety and security of our people and no duty is more binding than the

defence of our motherland. Go out now, and deliver to the expectations of your nation," the COAS said.

The Army imbued on the vision of our Great Quaid signifying no distinction of caste, color, creed, gender or geography, he added.

The COAS said the Armed Forces' efforts for peace should never be taken as a sign of weakness.

The COAS said, "We have the will, capability and capacity to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity and we are well aware of the ways and means to do it. I assure the people of Pakistan that we will never hesitate in rendering any and every sacrifice necessary for the defence of our sacred motherland."

"Brave soldiers of Armed Forces of Pakistan don't get fascinated with the numbers/resources of their adversaries. Armed Forces of Pakistan stand firm with their strong will and determination while fulfilling the promises of Almighty Allah as true followers," the Army Chief said.

General Asim Munir referred to the Quranic verse of Surah Al-Baqarah, translation of which is: "How many times it happened that a smaller force vanquished a bigger force by the Will of Allah."

"Significant effort is being made by our adversaries to affect state and societal cohesion through multiple efforts. There is absolutely no space for spoilers of our hard earned peace," the COAS said.

Discounted Oil

No misunderstanding with US over oil deal with Russia: Masood Khan

WASHINGTON: There's no misunderstanding between the United States and Pakistan over Islamabad's move to buy discounted Russian oil, Ambassador Masood Khan has said, while underscoring that the reset Islamabad-Washington relationship is "transcending the past."

"We have placed the first order for Russian oil, and this has been done in consultation with the United States government; There's no misunderstanding between Washington and Islamabad on this count," he said in response to a question at a conference organized by the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute, a Washington-based think-tank, on the future of relations between the two countries.

The questioner had suggested the energy purchase from Russia could adverse impact on Pakistan's already difficult relationship with the U.S.

"They (U.S.) have suggested that you are free to buy anything below or up to the price cap (set by G-7 nations), and we have abided by that agreement," the Pakistani envoy said.

"I think Washington is fine with that," Ambassador Khan added. Last December, G7 and EU countries set a price cap of \$60 per barrel on Russian oil in a move aimed at preventing Moscow from using the revenues to finance its war against Ukraine.

Earlier this year, a State Department spokesperson said that Paki-

stan can purchase oil from Russia at a discounted price even though it has not signed the price-cap on Russian petroleum products, pointing out that Washington recognizes the pressure governments face to secure affordable fuel.

In his address to the conference, Ambassador Masood Khan said that Pakistan's ties with the United States had suffered a "brief period of uncertainty" after the U.S.-led foreign military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, when the Taliban seized control of the country.

He said the relationship with the U.S. was back on track and both sides were working to boost economic and security partnerships.

Elizabeth Horst, a senior State Department official who also spoke at the Wilson Center conference Thursday, concurred. She said the last year had helped reset the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

The two countries held mid-level defence dialogues in Washington and a counter terrorism working group in Islamabad in February and March, respectively, she said.

In this regard, the Pakistani envoy said the two states were successfully "recalibrating and rejuvenating" their relations in the wake of changing circumstances.

"The results in a short span of time are impressive," he said.

Referring to frequent high-level contacts between Foreign Minister



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Pak-US dialogues on health, energy, climate change, counter-narcotics, counterterrorism and defence and the recently held Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Ministerial Council meeting, the Ambassador said that these processes were producing results and defining pathways for future growth.

"They are also creating a structure for an overarching, multi-dimensional dialogue", he continued.

The Ambassador said that Pakistan's Foreign Minister would be attending the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Conference in Goa early next month. "The context is multilateral, not bilateral. Let's hope that this decision goes down well to bolster diplomacy."

Islamabad values Washington's encouragement to India and Pakistan to engage, he said, adding that the "US could act as a cata-

lyst to help resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute which has kept the region on the brink of war."

Cautioning about the serious perils of the policy of imbalance in South Asia, Ambassador Masood Khan also urged the US to "revive its role on strategic stability in South Asia". "It is important that the US restores - for Pakistan - Foreign Military Financing and Foreign Military Sales, suspended by the previous Administration," he said.

Pakistan, he said, seeks to forge strong ties with the US and make them stronger. "We do not believe our relations with China should affect them in any way.

We earnestly hope that the US, the shining city upon a hill, and China, an emerging power, using their statesmanship, will opt for cooperation and competition rather than a confrontation that can plunge the globe into strife or worse," he said.

"Pakistan offers to build bridges in good faith and facilitate

communication between the two powers, if they so desire, as it did back in the 1970s"

Ms. Horst, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, said that the Pak-US relationship was "one of the most consequential for each other, for South Asia and for the world."

Noting close cooperation between the two countries in a host of areas including trade and investment, climate change, security and regional security, Ms. Horst highlighted TIFA (Trade and Investment Framework Agreement) meeting that is setting the stage for greater interaction between the two countries. She termed Green Alliance and the collaboration in energy security and climate change as the new anchor to further advance bilateral ties.

"I see real future in the areas of energy and climate, trade and investment and cooperation on regional security."

On the security front, Ms. Horst observed that US was more aligned than ever with Pakistan on how to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a base for terrorism.

"We both want a region where terrorists pose no threats and borders are respected. We are looking now at how we can cooperate with Pakistan on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, anti-human trafficking and we are working to ensure that Afghanistan is never again (becomes) a base for terrorism" she said.

Centre distances itself from raid on Elahi's residence

Dar tells Qureshi he will inform his leadership of PTI's reservations

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: The federal government Saturday distanced itself from a late-night raid at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Parvez Elahi's residence in Lahore, blaming the Punjab caretaker set-up for the incident.

A heavy contingent of Punjab Police Friday night stormed Elahi's residence to arrest him, drawing strong

criticism from the party, which has been voicing concerns against the arrests of its workers and leaders.

The more than six-hour-long police action came to a halt after Sohail Zafar Chattha, the Director General of Punjab's Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE), left the scene along with the police contingent.

Protest

HYDERABAD: Consumers and residents hold a protest to block the Subzi Mandi Chowk against non-supply of electricity from 4 days in Ghareeb Nawaz Colony old Sabzi Mandi area.



Photo: Online

Only Parliament has authority to rewrite Constitution: Pervez Ashraf

NA Speaker commends exemplary professionalism of journalists

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has commended the Pakistani journalistic community for their responsible and professional work, recognizing them as an essential pillar of the country.

Addressing a reception in honor of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) representatives at the Parliament House last night, Speaker credited the media for playing an instrumental role in restoring democracy by supporting politicians and ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution and Parliament.

The Speaker emphasized the Parliament's commitment to solving all problems faced by the journalistic community while urging journalists to uphold and maintain the honour and respect of the Parliament, which belongs to all. He stressed the importance of the Parliament as the home of 220 million people, and its



supremacy as non-negotiable. Additionally, he underscored the sanctity of the Constitution, emphasizing that its protection was a shared responsibility. Expressing his respect for

the Supreme Court, the Speaker highlighted the importance of avoiding conflicts between institutions in the interest of the country. He emphasized that only the Parliament holds the

authority to amend or rewrite the Constitution, if necessary.

The Speaker mentioned that the Parliament had passed a law granting suo moto authority to three judges instead of one, but the Supreme Court had halted its implementation.

The Speaker urged all pillars of the State to operate within their legal domains and work together for the betterment of Pakistan, especially during the country's challenging times on multiple fronts.

The Speaker also mentioned the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution, where invitations were extended to representatives from all pillars of the State, including Supreme Court judges. APP

Govt striving to steer country out of conundrum: Attaullah

SAPM on Interior says Audio-tapes of bribe for tickets expose PTI

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar said on Saturday that evidence in the form of audiotapes of getting bribe for grant of tickets to the candidates had exposed the real face of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its belief in justice.

Addressing a press conference here at Model Town, he said that from the party chief to other senior leaders, everyone had been found involved in bribery, as disclosed in the audiotapes, making rounds on the social

media. The PTI claimed itself to be a party based on justice, but its entire leadership was involved in minting money for award of party tickets, he added. He said it was a serious matter and should be investigated.

The SAPM said conspiracies had been hatched against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) from day one, and the recent audio-leaks had strengthened its stance about wrong and unjustified disqualification of Nawaz Sharif on the basis of only an Iqama. He demanded that investigations should be held into the audio-tapes, so that

facts could be brought to the fore and action could be taken against conspirators.

Atta Tarar regretted that the nation paid huge price for disqualification of Nawaz Sharif in Panama case, as the speedy process of development in the country was stopped after that. The PML-N government started various mega projects in 2013, and overcame various challenges including load-shedding. People faced tough situation after 2018, as nothing was done for their welfare by the PTI government, except for looting the national resources mercilessly, he said.

The SAPM said the PML-N believed in supremacy of the law and justice for everyone, as nobody was above the law.

The PML-N leadership faced jails and courts for years in fabricated cases, registered against them during the PTI regime, though nothing was proved against anyone. He said the PTI leaders including its chief were avoiding the courts to appear in cases registered by investigation agencies.

To a question, Atta Tarar alleged that Moonis Elahi was involved in corruption of billions of rupees in Lahore masterplan,

and now he was sitting abroad to avoid investigation against him and other leaders, who were involved in corrupt practices. He said reckless corruption was committed in the Punjab province during the PTI government, where Ahsan Jamil Gujjar and his wife Farah Gogi were acting as the front persons. He said a puppet chief minister Usman Buzdar was appointed on the recommendation of Imran Khan's wife.

CEC Sikandar Sultan may face SJC reference

FAISALABAD: District Election Commissioner (DEC) Irfan Kausar on Saturday sought an inquiry of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja.

In a letter written to the ECP secretary, the DEC also sought a complete record of the assets owned by the CEC and his elder son. The letter also sought details of CEC's assets before and after Mr Raja became the election chief. On the other hand, Mr Kausar demanded details of the minutes of the DDWP meetings held in 2022 and 2023 and funds released to the PWD. Agencies

IK sees 'ill intentions' behind PDM's bid to hold polls post-budget

PTI, govt holding talks over conducting polls simultaneously

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Saturday saw the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government's "ill-intentions" behind its proposal to hold elections simultaneously after this year's budget.

The budget is traditionally presented within the first two weeks of June and the federal government has maintained that it would be too early to hold general elections the next month, stressing for holding polls later this year.

The federal government and the opposition party PTI are in negotiations over a date for holding elections across the country on directions of the Supreme Court — and a final meeting is expected next week.

"The government" is saying that



first, it would pass the budget, and then hold the election. This shows its 'ill-intention,' Khan — who was ousted as the prime minister in April last year — said during a session with PTI workers in Lahore.

The deposed prime minister said his party would be ready to move forward with the negotiations if the government dissolves the national and provincial assemblies before May 14.

The Sindh and Balochistan assem-

blies and the National Assembly have not yet been dissolved, while the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa legislatures were dissolved in January on Khan's directions.

Civil society has urged political forces to reach a consensus over the elections and end the persistent impasse, which has severely hurt Pakistan's fragile economy.

And Khan is insistent that his party does not want to delay the elections, stressing that "we will not accept polls after the budget" — as suggested by the ruling coalition.

"If the hope of elections ends, then Pakistan could face a worse situation than Sri Lanka. I am not frightening you; I am just expressing my opinion," the PTI chief told his workers. Agencies

Martyred soldiers of Lakki Marwat attack laid to rest

People from all walks of life attended the funeral prayers, says ISPR



RAWALPINDI: Funeral prayers of three Pakistani soldiers, who were martyred while fighting terrorists in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat district a day earlier, were offered at their respective hometowns on Saturday, the military said in a statement.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Naib Subedar Taj Mir, 40, a resident of Nowshera district; Havaladar Zakir Ahmed, 38, a resident of Abbottabad district; and Sepoy Abid Hussain, 29, a resident of Dera Ismail Khan district were laid to rest with full military honours.

The military's media wing said that the soldiers embraced martyrdom while fighting terrorists on the night of April 27-28, 2023.

A large number of serving and retired military and civil officials, along with relatives and people from all walks of life, attended the funeral prayers.

"These sacrifices only strengthen our resolve to eliminate the menace of terrorism from Pakistan, InshaAllah," said the statement.

Read more: Seven terrorists killed in Lakki Marwat attacks

Seven terrorists were killed as security forces gallantly fought off three assaults within a short span of time in the night between Thursday and Friday in Lakki Marwat.

The first attacks unfolded as a motorcycle-borne suicide bomber exploded himself near a security forces post. The blast was followed by a fierce exchange of fire between the troops and assailants.

"A Motorcycle borne Suicide bomber exploded himself near security forces post in Lakki Marwat followed by a fierce fire exchange between own troops and terrorists," the ISPR said, adding that the troops effectively engaged the terrorists, killing four them.

Three more terrorists were killed in two encounters in Amir Kalam and Tabji Khel areas, according to the military's media wing. They included terrorist commander Musa Khan. "Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the seven killed terrorists," the statement said. Agencies

SC to hear petitions against bill reducing CJP's powers on May 2

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court would hear the petitions filed against the bill reducing the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan on May 2.

An eight-member bench of the SC-CJP Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Sayyad Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha Malik, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Shahid Waheed — would take the petitions.

Advocate Muhammad Shafay Munir, Raja Amer Khan and Chaudhry Ghulam Hussain filed the petitions under the article 184(3).

The petitions argued that the Supreme Court was an independent body and all judges, including the CJP, should exercise their powers without any interference from the other institution.

According to the petitions, the Supreme Court and its corpus as defined in Article 176 consist of CJP

and so many other judges as may be determined by the parliament or, until so determined, as may be fixed by the president. It is clear that the CJP is the centrifugal force and the entire fabric of the apex court is webbed around it. The independence of the judiciary and of each of the judges and its CJP is declared as an aim enunciated in the preamble to the Constitution; the same is a part of the objective resolution and thus a substantive part of the constitution, the petitions emphasized.

The SC, led by CJP with its judges, must be independent of all executive or legislative transgress so as to perform their constitutional obligations in providing justice to the people of Pakistan. The same cannot be allowed to be compromised with regards to the function of the judicial organ of the state, the judges or CJP or their independence as provided in the constitution, it was added in the petition.

سونی ناردرن گیس
Sui Northern Gas
Media Affairs Department | سہ ماہی روابط
@SNGLOfficial Helpline: 1199

دنیا جدید بہور ہی ہے تو ہم کیوں پیچھے رہیں

Connect n

ایپ اب ایڈوانسڈ فیچرز کے ساتھ

آپ ہوں کہیں بھی، کبھی بھی آن لائن ہولڈیاٹ سے فائدہ اٹھائیں

گیس کنکشن کی درخواست

گیس میٹر کی اوریونگی

شکایات کا اندراج

گیس میٹر کی مکمل ہسٹری

ای میل یا SMS بل کیلئے رجسٹریشن

ایپ ڈاؤن لوڈ کرنے کیلئے

QR کو اسکین کریں

GET IT ON Google Play

PDU1312-D

President directs EOBI to pay female teacher's pension within 30 days

The teacher had been deprived of her pension by the EOBI since February 2019 on the flimsy ground

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the Employees' Old Age Benefit Institution (EOBI) to issue pension to a retired female teacher within 30 days and report its compliance to the Wafaqi Mohtasib.

The teacher had been deprived of her pension by the EOBI since February 2019 on the flimsy ground that the beat officer of the complainant had verified her service period of only three years.

Expressing displeasure over the failure of EOBI to address the grievances of the complainant, the president regretted that EOBI had unnecessarily wasted its precious time by submitting representation against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib who had referred the case to EOBI for resolution within 45 days.

He also directed the secretary,



Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development to take effective measures to enhance the service delivery of EOBI immediately, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release on Saturday.

As per details, Zohra Bibi (the complainant) had stated that she served with the Oxford Public School, Hayatabad, Peshawar, w.e.f. 01-07-1996 to February 2019 (almost 23-years) and that the contribution from her salary had been deducted and this fact had been admitted by the Employees' Old Age Benefit Institution

(EOBI) that the concerned school was registered with it.

According to her, after retirement she applied for grant of EOBI's pension but to no avail.

Feeling aggrieved, she approached Wafaqi Mohtasib who passed the order in her favour but the EOBI filed a representation with the president.

The president rejected EOBI's representation and observed that the registration card dated 29-11-2006 of the pension scheme issued by EOBI was genuine and it was written on the card that the effective date was 07-05-1996; whereas the complainant was eligible for EOBI pension with effect from 01-07-1996.

He further pointed out that the contribution was deducted throughout from the monthly salary of the complainant and it was admitted by the EOBI that the concerned school was also registered with it.

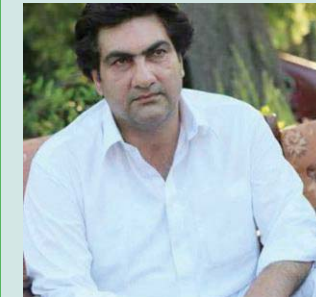
He said that EOBI had failed to computerize the complete record of that school and also failed to recover its share, if any, from the school, and resultantly the low paid female complainant was kept deprived of her due pension since February 2019.

In his decision, the president said the pension was not a bounty rather an employee earned it by dint of long, continuous and faithful service and this constituted a fundamental right to livelihood under Article 9 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, adding that this hard-earned right could not be denied to a pensioner except in accordance with law.

He noted with grave concern that EOBI failed to redress the grievance of the complainant even after clear direction of the Wafaqi Mohtasib to the agency to dispose of the case within 45-days.

Govt to celebrate Labor Day in dignified manner: Bacha

Staff Reporter



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha has announced to celebrate the Labour Day in a dignified and grand manner on May 01.

In a statement, the Minister said that directions have been issued to all provincial leaders of PPP to start full preparations regarding the Labour Day.

Muhammad Ali Bacha said that the constitutional right of forming

a union by the laborers was being taken away from the workers, which is injustice to them.

He said that the PPP is standing with the workers, farmers, youth and the poor and will support them till getting their rights.

He said that in the government of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the employees were given due shares in the national institutions.

A batch of 97 Pakistanis from Sudan arrived Karachi



ISLAMABAD: A third batch of 97 Pakistani nationals from Port Sudan arrived at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi from Jeddah via C-130 aircraft of Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

"The government of Pakistan will continue to facilitate the safe return of stranded Pakistanis," Foreign Office spokesperson on Saturday posted on her Twitter handle. APP

Sindh govt to provide better facilities to special children: Murad



Our Correspondent

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that provincial government is working persistently to provide better facilities to the special children.

He was addressing a seminar regarding Autism organized by the Pakistan Center for Autism in Karachi on Saturday. The title of the seminar was 'Challenges of Autism and its Solutions'.

The Chief Minister said that the government has framed laws regarding special children and is determined to bring those into practice at every level to facilitate special children.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said we also need proper awareness regarding the needs and requirements of autistic children and other children with special needs.

The Chief Minister said we have established a Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities whereas; 66 centers for special persons are working in various districts of the province.

Police nab nine criminals of two gangs in Rahim Yar Khan

RAHIM YAR KHAN: Police on Saturday arrested nine members of two criminal gangs in Liaquatpur city of Rahim Yar Khan.

The Pacca Laran police station in Liaquatpur carried out operation against the criminal elements in the area and recovered stolen goods worth Rs6.59 million and three motorcycles from the suspects.

Police have initiated legal action against the suspects and further investigation is under way. Agencies

Protest

KARACHI: People protest against gas load-shedding and huge increase in bills outside the Press Club by making symbolic borchhi food and cooking roties, in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

KWS, Youth Office hold seminar on education

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Kari Kot Welfare Society (KWS) in District Lower South Waziristan in collaboration with Youth Office South Waziristan arranged a seminar on education and prevention of cheating at Government High School Kari kot yesterday.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Lower South Waziristan Kashmir Khan (F&P) was the chief guest of the seminar. People from different walks of life participated in the seminar in large numbers. In which a large number of people including local leaders of political parties, Ullamas, political and social personalities participated.

On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner Lower South Waziristan Kashmir Khan said from the seminar that let's work together to bring a pleasant environment in the field of education, Joint efforts for the improvement of the education system can prove beneficial, for which the district administra-



tion stands side by side with you, and will continue to stand.

In the end, the seminar was concluded on the point that it can be progressed only by preventing cheating and achieving quality education, and for this everyone will play their full role, many people addressed the seminar and highlighted the importance of education and the bright future of children that our goal is education and training, to prevent duplication and to work together to achieve quality education,

Junaid Wazir said while giving introductory words about the seminar that prevention of cheating and quality education is the only solution to regional problems, for which teachers and parents of children can play an important role.

District Youth Officer Sardar Ali Wazir expressed his views and said that we have to protect our youth, people have to move towards a positive thinking, our main goal is to give a new commitment and desire to the youth,

God willing, our struggle will continue.

Humayoon Khan, the principal of the private school, said that the role of private schools in the area is not hidden from anyone, private schools have brought a positive and exemplary change in the field of education, at present, students who have graduated from private schools in domestic and foreign countries are carrying out their responsibilities with full diligence in various fields.

Taj Wazir, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and a well-known religious scholar, Maulana Naik Muhammad, said that knowledge and education are inseparable, from which both the world and the hereafter are enlightened, steps must be taken to prevent copying.

ANP leader Ayaz Wazir and PPP district president Aman Ullah Wazir said that due to copying, our children are not paying attention to studies, this evil has to be uprooted, that steps have to be taken to ensure quality education and prevent cheating.

Pervez Elahi booked on terror charges hours after late-night raid

Police complaint claims raiding team 'attacked with petrol, stones and batons'

LAHORE: Punjab police on Saturday booked the former chief minister of Punjab and a key ally of Imran Khan, Chaudhry Parvez Elahi, on terror charges following a late-night raid at his residence.

The case has been registered against 50 individuals including the former chief minister in Lahore's Ghalib Market police station. The FIR invokes Section 7 of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 and has 13 other charges included pertaining to attempted murder, rioting and assault on government officials.

According to the FIR, filed on an anti-corruption officer's complaint, the raiding team was attacked with petrol bombs, stones and batons. The complaint added that Elahi assisted in escaping arrest during the raid.

The registration of the terrorism case against Elahi comes just hours after a

team of the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE), Punjab, and the Lahore police conducted a raid to arrest the PTI ally.

Read LHC allows suspended PML-N lawmakers to attend PA session The raiding teams remained on the premises of the former CM's residence for more than three hours during which they took around nine people into custody, but were unable to find Elahi.

The ACE team, led by Additional Director Waqas Hassan, along with heavy contingents of the Anti-Riot Force (ARF), raided the residence of the former Punjab chief minister in a case reportedly registered at the ACE Gujranwala.

The raid at Elahi's residence came hours after the ACE arrested a close friend of Parvez Elahi's son, Moonis. Also, the provincial anti-graft body



booked the former chairperson of Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) over corruption charges.

Police had sealed off Zahoor Elahi Road at both ends before launching the operation. At the outset, the raiding team had approached the legal team of Elahi, which informed them that Elahi had secured protective bail

from the court.

When the negotiations between the legal team and ACE team failed, the ARF made an attempt to enter the premises. However, it was met with severe resistance from the workers inside the house.

The police made further attempts to break the gate, as they climbed over the wall but because of the stone pelting, their attempts failed again. Reportedly water mixed with petrol and kerosene oil was also thrown at the police from inside the house.

After multiple attempts failed, the police finally deployed an armoured personnel carrier (APC), which tore down the main gate and opened a passage for the police to enter the premises. The police then arrested over seven PTI workers.

The policemen then broke down the

windowpanes as well the doors to enter the house. In the drawing room inside, the police met with the female cousins of Elahi, who told them that he was not at home.

After searching Elahi's house, the police also moved to check the residence of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, which is located in the same sprawling complex that has the same entry point. Shujaat's son, Salik Hussain, told the police that Elahi's was not in their house.

The PTI chairman Imran Khan "strongly condemned the illegal raid on Pervez Elahi's home with no respect to the women & family mbrs [members] present [in the house]. We are seeing the dismantling of democracy in Pak before our eyes".

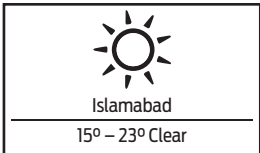
Imran wrote in a late-night tweet: "There is no respect for Constitution,

or fundamental rights of the ppl [people] - only law of jungle & fascism. All part of London Plan to demolish & crush PTI," he added.

Imran said that a "cabal of crooks and their handlers" attacked his house earlier and now the house of Elahi, adding that this "barbarism" was never seen even during martial law period of the military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

"Enough is enough. On Saturday I will give roadmap to our nation on how to stand up against this destruction of our Constitution & democracy," the PTI chairman wrote on the microblogging website.

Later, the police retreated at about 2 am without arresting Elahi. According to media reports nine people, including two women, had been taken into custody during the raid. Agencies



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:51 am
Zohr 12:05 pm
Asr 4:52 pm
Maghrib 6:49 pm
Isha 8:20 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHO 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi 0331-5022125

Ahsan stresses for electoral code of conduct during political dialogues

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said on Saturday that one of the objectives of the negotiations between government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) must be the formulation of a code of conduct for the upcoming polls to evade election rigging.

Talking to a private news channel, Ahsan Iqbal said that earlier, Imran Khan in his interviews held responsible the former army chief for the dissolution of the assemblies and now he is making a fuss about the non-provision of funds from the Federal government which is baseless.

"Imran Khan dissolved the assemblies not under any democratic impulse but to only sabotage the politics" Ahsan claimed that the PTI chief allegedly wants to somehow get the next elections managed by his handlers (before their retirement) Imran is aware that he did not win the previous election on his own and that he will not do it again. APP

Talha emphasizes workable policies for country's betterment

The Minister says policies of fraud, deception and lies could not lead to any progress in the country

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Saturday emphasized on devising practical and workable policies for the betterment of country.

Addressing the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Federal Executive Committee's meeting here in the National Press Club, he said policies of fraud, deception and lies could not lead to any progress in the country.

Expressing his amazement, he said Pakistan despite having all blessings of Allah Almighty had fallen into poverty. "Today, any institution that is in the hands of the government is in a very bad condition," he opined.

Lauding the sacrifices of media persons in the line of their duty, he said corruption could not be eradicated, but

there should be at least fear of media in the heart of every public and private employee.

Regarding the Hajj operation 2023, Minister Talha said he could not guarantee an ideal Hajj this year but he would leave no stone unturned to reduce the difficulties of the intending pilgrims.

He made it clear that when he assumed the charge as minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, he observed that the Hajj arrangements were not good shape.

He said, "I'm not satisfied with the Hajj arrangements so far but I'm sure we will manage to resolve the problems of the intending pilgrims."

He said any Moaveene-e-Hajj who would not perform the duty as per his job description during the Hajj operation, his travelling allowance and dear-



Earlier, chairing an important meeting

about Hajj arrangements in the ministry, he canceled the three-day leave of staffers.

Talha emphasizes practical, workable policies for country's betterment

Minister Talha urged the intending pilgrims to learn and understand the rituals and administrative matters before proceeding for Saudi Arabia.

He asked the male Hajj pilgrims not to compromise on the Hajj training of women accompanying them.

He further said the intending pilgrims must get to know how to use smart phone, mobile data, location service and Saudi mobile application etcetera.

Minister Talha also alerted the people to be aware of fraudsters making cheap Hajj announcement on social media and urged them to book their Hajj package from those HGOs that were approved by the ministry. APP

Promoting Healthy Activity

ISLAMABAD: Member of Civil Society are participating in cycle rally entitled "Run Ride" at Jinnah Avenue in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

OGDCL, NAVTTC partner to empower youth

Through skills development program

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), under its corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, has partnered with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) to provide quality skills development programs for 400 young students living in the company's operational districts.

The program, which is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, aims to uplift the standard of living of the students by providing them with opportunities to gain employment through three months of free-of-cost skills development courses in ten trades.

Under the agreement signed between the two parties, the



students will receive quality education at NAVTTC's Centre of Excellence in Islamabad. The scholarship program includes boarding, tuition fee, travel expense, and a stipend. Once enrolled, the students will have access to NAVTTC's state-of-the-art equipment to gain hands-on experience in their

chosen trades.

The program is a part of OGDCL's CSR program, which aims to transform the lives of communities living in and around its operational fields. The company has allocated a budget of Rs. 50 million to sponsor the 400 students who will participate in the program.

"We are delighted to partner with NAVTTC to provide quality skills development programs to the youth in our operational districts. Our aim is to empower these young people by equipping them with the necessary skills to secure employment and improve their standard of living. We believe that this program will have a positive impact on the communities in which we operate," said Ahmed Hayat Lak, Managing Director/CEO of OGDCL.

NAVTTC's Centre of Excellence in Islamabad will start accepting applications for the program from April 30, 2023. The students who complete the three-month course will be able to secure employment at various platforms, contributing to their personal growth and the overall development of their communities.

Chairman JKSM lauds COAS Munir's stand on Kashmir issue

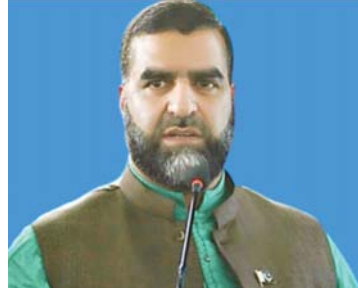
Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Chairman JKSM Altaf Ahmed Bhat appreciates Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir's stand on Kashmir Issue.

Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM), Altaf Ahmed Bhat, has expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the unwavering stance taken by Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir on the longstanding Kashmir issue.

Bhat commends General Munir for his strong commitment to the cause of Kashmir and his resolute support for the rights and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Addressing the passing out parade of cadets of 147th PMA Long Course at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul, General Asim Munir emphasized the urgency of resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and the



relevant United Nations resolutions. His unwavering dedication to the cause of Kashmir and recognition of the Kashmiri people's struggle for self-determination is highly praised by the Kashmiris. Bhat added.

Chairman JKSM further added that, the Kashmir issue remains one of the oldest and most significant unresolved conflicts in the world, with severe humanitarian implications for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The plight of the Kashmiri people, who have been subjected

to decades of violence, human rights abuses, and denial of their fundamental rights, demands immediate attention from the international community. The steadfast support of General Asim Munir and the Pakistan Army in raising awareness about the Kashmir cause is both commendable and vital for resolving this long-standing dispute.

Chairman Altaf Ahmed Bhat while acknowledging the consistent and principled stance of General Munir, said that, Govt of Pakistan, Pak Army has has time and again reiterated Pakistan's commitment to stand firmly with the Kashmiri people until their legitimate right to self-determination is realized. General Munir's resolute advocacy for the Kashmiri cause has served as a source of inspiration and hope for the Kashmiri people, who have endured immense suffering and oppression.

Bhat further added that Kashmiri people have faced countless challenges in their struggle for freedom, peace,

and justice. The bravery and resilience displayed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir in the face of adversity are exemplary. They have continuously expressed their desire for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and the realization of their right to self-determination.

Chairman Altaf Ahmed Bhat lauds the fact that General Asim Munir recognizes the importance of addressing these legitimate aspirations, acknowledging that a just and peaceful resolution is crucial for stability and harmony in the region.

The unwavering support of the Pakistan Army, under the leadership of General Asim Munir, is pivotal in amplifying the voices of the oppressed Kashmiri people and drawing attention to their suffering at international forums. General Munir's emphasis on the need for a political solution to the Kashmir issue, based on dialogue and diplomacy, reflects the responsible and mature approach required to address this long-standing dispute.

Pakistan to face above-normal rainfall: Sherry Rehman

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Saturday said Pakistan has been placed among the 20 countries where above-normal rainfall was predicted this year.

According to the report of the Global Information and Early Warning System of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Pakistan was included in the list of 20 countries at risk of heavy rains, the federal minister took to Twitter to share the important update on future weather predictions indicating heavy rainfall.

Senator Rehman said the return of the El Nino (scientific term of weather system) ocean trend forecast for June this year was similar to the country's local forecasts.

She added that the return of the El Nino oceanic phenomenon could trigger severe environmental events worldwide, including higher-than-normal rainfall, floods, droughts and threats of malnutrition.

"Pakistan is among the 20 countries where above-normal rainfall is predicted. These 20 countries include America, Turkey, Iran and others. The third return of the El Niño ocean trend in the last 2 years is a cause for concern," Sherry Rehman said.

"We are already in the recovery phase after last year's rains and flood disasters. We have to be prepared to deal with extreme environmental events. Due to the ongoing rains across the country till May 5, the Meteorological Department and NDMA expressed concern that there may be damage to standing crops, recently harvested crops and new sowing," Sherry Rehman added.

The Minister underscored that the government had issued instructions to the concerned institutions to the public and farmers to take precautionary measures and remain alert.



Japan announces 'Spring Conferment of Decoration' for Imtiaz Ahmad

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has announced the 2023 "Spring Conferment of Decorations" for Imtiaz Ahmad former Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan in recognition of his contribution to strengthen bilateral relations and promote friendship between Japan and Pakistan.

According to a statement of the Japan Embassy in Pakistan, the former envoy will be decorated with "the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star."

Imtiaz Ahmad had served as a diplomat in Japan four times, for more than 16 years and had held almost every post from young diplomat to the Ambassador in Japan.

He has also acquired a broad knowledge of Japanese language, culture and history, which led to his significant contribution to the enhancement of our relations in many fields.

In addition to his regular diplomatic activities, he has made a great contribution to the Japanese people.

While paying tribute to Mr. Imriaz, the embassy said, during his tenure as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Pakistan in Tokyo, the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011. After the earthquake, he reached out to the Pakistani community in Tokyo and visited the affected areas with them every weekend to serve Pakistani food and distribute relief supplies.

Many Japanese people were moved by the dedication from him and Pakistani people, and his presence with the disaster victims was highly praised by the Pakistani and Japanese media. APP

Sitara-i-Pakistan conferred upon MP Khalid Mehmood, Raja Najabat



Spokesman Report

LONDON: In London, Pakistani High Commissioner to the UK, Moazzam Ahmad Khan, presented Sitara-e-Pakistan to the Member of British Parliament, Khalid Mahmood, and Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Self-Determination Movement International, Raja Najabat Hussain, on behalf of President of Pakistan during a function held at the Pakistani High Commission.

Khalid Mahmood and Raja Najabat were conferred Sitara-e-Pakistan on their efforts for highlighting the Kashmir dispute in the UK.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**
 (mszk786@gmail.com)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.
 Email: spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
 Whatsapp: 0346-5008408

IMF assurances and mounting problems

This time, the problem of loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) started when the international community was appealed for help for Pakistan, then the international organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), gave an indication of giving a loan of US 7 billion dollars. So some conditions were laid down by the organization in this regard. Which increased with time? Even today there is a delay in obtaining loans after a period has passed. Because the situation at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is getting more complicated like our internal politics and instability. For which the government circles are also worried and in the same effort, how to agree to the international organization and make it possible to obtain loans. By the way, Pakistan has been taking loans from the international organization before. So far we have received loans more or less 23 times since 1958. But this time it has taken a difficult form. As these loans are used for relief of hardships as soon as possible the amounts of these loans should be repaid within or before the stipulated time as per the terms and conditions of the International organization.

The IMF wants Pakistan to get the assurance of up to USD 7 billion to fund this fiscal year's balance of payments gap. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said. Actually, the main reason for this is that we did not use the previous loans to put the country's economy in the right direction. And also we did not worry about the repayment of the loans. That is why at the present time the conditions are being kept stricter. On the other hand, these conditions are being accepted by the government. And due to these conditions, the inflation

in the country is touching a record level, which is a record after many decades. In fact, the international organizations that have the support of the world powers have always had this position that the small and poor countries are trapped in the clutches of loans on loans. They continue to give loans on loans, due to which the economic condition of these countries is not called correct. The greed of current loan has caused skyrocketing inflation in Pakistan. One thing is certain that their debts have put the poor people of the country in the problem of inflation and this growth of inflation will never return to its place. Prices of petrol, gas, electricity and other commodities have increased and continue to increase. It is not only difficult but impossible for these prices to come to their level.

Today, this IMF loan is seen as a boon. The closer we get to it, the more distant it seems. One thing is true that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), loan has gone away, but on the contrary, inflation has become very close due to the greed of the IMF dept. Is one that will never go away? The rise in prices set by the IMF has led to a record high in inflation in Pakistan. According to data released by the Department of Statistics on March 1, consumer prices rose from a year ago. 31.55% increase in comparison. The price of petrol in Pakistan has reached 282 rupees. Because in the effort to get the IMF loan, they have to accept all their conditions. Due to which the price of petrol has increased. Is a record till date? Likewise in gas and electricity prices Along with the increase, the

problems like taxes and mini-budget have put the country and the nation in trouble. There are also provisions to permanently impose certain taxes on electricity bills. If we look at the reality, the IMF has become a source of inflation for us. If it is demanded, sometimes other conditions are put forward. It is very difficult for a country like us to accept. The International Monetary Fund is interested in making the repayment of loans possible. The IMF wants more funding up to US 7 billion dollars assurances from foreign countries. And to make this possible it is putting conditions as well as free forecasts is doing that the rate of inflation will decrease in the coming years. How is this possible while there is an indication

of an increase in inflation in countries around the world in the coming years, how will the situation in Pakistan, which is already suffering from problems, be okay?

According to BBC analytical reports on IMF loans to Pakistan, after the negotiations with the IMF in Islamabad, as a preliminary measure, Pakistan took steps to increase the rate of sales tax from 17 to 18 percent and on luxury goods to 25 percent. Petroleum levy on diesel was also increased. The rate of surcharge on electricity bills was also increased under the IMF condition. According to the economic experts in Pakistan, the conditions from the IMF are very strict, but without accepting these conditions, it is not possible to restore the loan program for Pakistan. According to them, there is no other option except the IMF in the situation that Pakistan is facing, because

it will be possible for Pakistan to receive frozen external financing at the international level only after an agreement with the IMF. In the field of external financing, the IMF sought an assurance from Pakistan that it would eliminate the current account deficit of seven billion dollars by getting funds from other countries. The government is expecting an external deficit of five billion dollars in the current financial year.

However, it is said that some responsibility also falls on the International Monetary Fund, which makes such demands that affect the common man but do not affect the elite and privileged classes. On the contrary, the IMF loans have negative effects on the economy of the countries. The standard of living of the common man is affected. At present, the country is facing numerous problems. The rupee has been depreciating to the tune of 280 against the Pakistani rupee. The standard of living of the common man is falling. Therefore, there is a need for such measures which will solve the problems. It should be controlled. Attention should be paid to the economic condition of the country. And instead of manipulation of papers, the country's economy should be put on its feet without false claims. Instead of artificially benefiting the people, there is a need to implement relief projects on a permanent basis. Therefore, there is a possible way to get rid of the country's debts. To correct the economic and economic condition of the country. Efforts should be made to get rid of the clutches of loans. The discussions of the day are not called solving. The situation that exists today is due to IMF loans. This shows that instead of helping us, the IMF is putting us in trouble.



Analysis

Javed Ullah Raja

How to make AI work for all

In recent months, the development of artificial intelligence has accelerated considerably, with generative AI systems such as ChatGPT and Midjourney rapidly transforming a wide range of professional activities and creative processes. The window of opportunity for guiding the development of this powerful technology in ways that minimize the risks and maximize the benefits is closing fast.

AI-based capabilities exist along a continuum, with generative AI systems such as GPT-4 (the latest version of ChatGPT) falling within the most advanced category. Given that such systems hold the greatest promise and can lead to the most treacherous pitfalls, they merit particularly close scrutiny by public and private stakeholders.

Virtually all technological advances have had both positive and negative effects on society. On one hand, they have bolstered economic productivity and income growth, expanded access to information and communication technologies, extended human lifespans, and improved overall well-being. On the other hand, they have led to worker displacement, wage stagnation, greater inequality, and increasing concentration of resources among individuals and corporations.

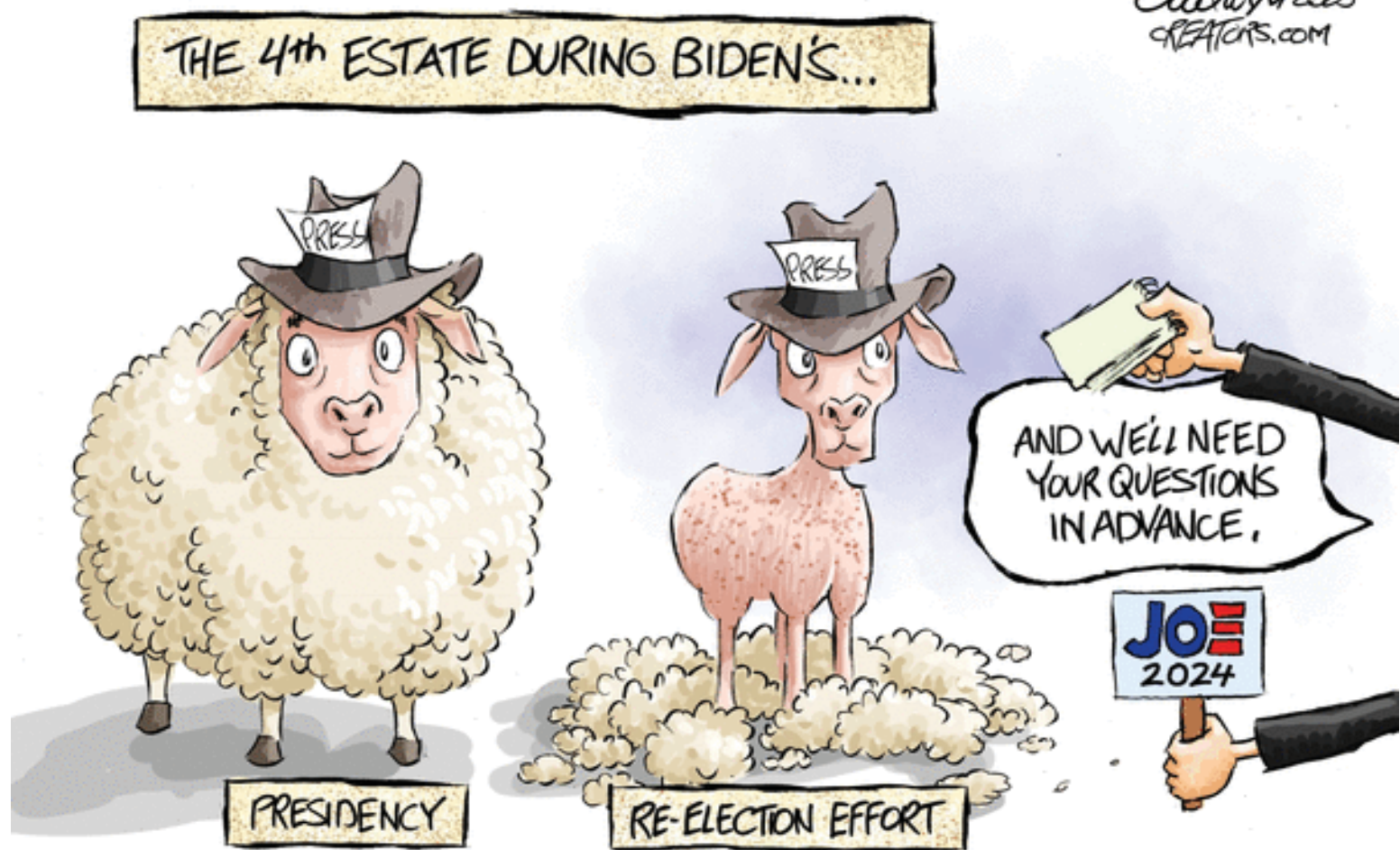
AI is no different. Generative AI systems open up abundant opportunities in areas such as product design, content creation, drug discovery and health care, personalized education, and energy optimization. At the same time, they may prove highly disruptive, and even harmful, to our economies and societies.

The risks already posed by advanced AI, and those that are reasonably foreseeable, are considerable. Beyond widespread reorientation of labor markets, large-language-model systems can increase the spread of disinformation and perpetuate harmful biases. Generative AI also threatens to exacerbate economic inequality. Such systems may even pose existential risks to humankind.

Proposals for AI and digital-services governance are already emerging, including in the United States and the European Union. Organizations like the World Economic Forum are also making contributions. In 2021, the Forum launched the Global Coalition for Digital Safety, which aims to unite stakeholders in tackling harmful content online and facilitate the exchange of best practices for regulating online safety. The Forum subsequently created the Digital Trust Initiative, to ensure that advanced technologies like AI are developed with the public's best interests in mind.

Now, the Forum is calling for urgent public-private cooperation to address the challenges that have accompanied the emergence of generative AI and to build consensus on the next steps for developing and deploying the technology. To facilitate progress, the Forum, in partnership with AI Commons – a non-profit organization supported by AI practitioners, academia, and NGOs focused on the common good – will hold a global summit on generative AI in San Francisco on April 26-28. Stakeholders will discuss the technology's impact on business, society, and the planet, and work together to devise ways to mitigate negative externalities and deliver safer, more sustainable, and more equitable outcomes.

Generative AI will change the world, whether we like it or not. At this pivotal moment in the technology's development, a cooperative approach is essential to enable us to do everything in our power to ensure that the process is aligned with our shared interests and values.



How the Ukraine war is impacting Russian security

Dr. Diana Galeeva

Russia this week discovered a "Ukrainian" drone close to Moscow and local authorities promptly canceled their May 9 Victory Day parade for security reasons. To what extent, so far, has the Ukraine war challenged Russia's own security? And what is the particular symbolism of the security threat prior to Victory Day?

On Monday, a drone filled with explosives was found in a forest in the Bogorodsky district of the Moscow region. According to preliminary data, as reported by the Kommersant newspaper, it was a Ukrainian-made UJ-22 Airborne drone that was carrying 30 briquettes of C-4 explosive weighing 570 g each, for a total of 17 kg of explosives. The head of the Bogorodsky city district, Igor Sukhin, reportedly said: "This is not the first drone that has appeared in the Moscow region."

A day later, three crashed drones equipped with cameras were found in different areas in the Moscow region. TASS Russian News Agency reported. According to a security forces source, all the drones were unmarked.

These are not the only examples of drones being retrieved inside Russia. On Feb. 28, the city of St. Petersburg imposed a 200 km no-fly zone around its airports amid reports of an unidentified flying object. In the south of Russia, there was an explosion at an oil yard in Krasnodar, while drones also reached the Bryansk and Belgorod regions, which share a border with Ukraine. Furthermore, another drone was identified in Kolomna, just 100 km away from Moscow. So, this week's discovery was not the first time a Ukrainian drone had evaded Russian security, but it may have been the first to suggest a concerted effort to launch

an attack, rather than just being for surveillance.

This month has already proved challenging for Russian security. On April 2, an explosion in St. Petersburg, Russia's so-called cultural capital, killed the famous pro-war military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky. Dozens of others were wounded in the blast. Public opinion immediately pointed to Ukraine as the culprit and compared the bombing to last August's killing of Darya Dugina, a nationalist TV commentator and the daughter of Aleksandr Dugin, a political philosopher who had long called for Russia to annex Ukraine. Darya was killed by the explosion of her Toyota Land Cruiser while she was driving near Moscow after a conservative festival. Meanwhile, Russian forces accidentally dropped a bomb on their own city of Belgorod this month. About 3,000 people had to be evacuated while the explosive was disposed of.

A day after President Vladimir Putin's 70th birthday in October 2022, the Kerch bridge, which connects Crimea and Russia, was blown up. Ukraine did not directly claim responsibility for the attack, but President Volodymyr Zelensky's party linked it to Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea. The bridge was a symbolic target, as the Russian media in 2018 called it "the construction of the century," and it made a visible claim to Crimea being part of Russian territory. Satellite images showed that the explosion caused parts of the two-lane westbound carriageway to fall into the sea. The damaged section of the bridge was 274 meters long.

All these examples demonstrate how explosions have a symbolic as well as a material meaning. For this reason, the cancellation of certain Victory Day parades appears logical and understandable. The day itself has symbolic meaning, as the Ukrainian authorities have been depicted as "Nazis" and the parade marks the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Prior to the drones being found this week,

Russia had already canceled celebrations in the Kursk and Belgorod oblasts, which border Ukraine. Victory Day celebrations have also been canceled in Crimea.

Perhaps the best Victory Day for both parties would be the beginnings of a mediated deal, but the prospects of this, which initially seemed so promising, have again been ruined. After the unexpected Iran-Saudi Arabia deal, arranged by China, there were some promising signs regarding the possibility of mediation in the Ukraine war.

However, recent European fury about comments made by the Chinese ambassador to France seems to have smashed any possibility of Europe considering China to be a neutral party in the conflict. The furor occurred after ambassador Lu Shaye questioned the sovereignty of former Soviet countries in a media interview. While Ukraine called Lu's statement "absurd," France, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia all expressed their dismay.

Furthermore, the recent proposal by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to form a union of neutral nations to come together and mediate between Russia and Ukraine was criticized by Kyiv for offering equal weight to "the victim and the aggressor."

With such developments, the further escalation of the Ukraine war is only more likely. As it is, global military spending reached more than \$2.24 trillion last year, up 3.7 percent on 2021, suggesting the widespread heightening of security concerns. As one leading think tank, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, put it, we are facing an "increasingly insecure world." Clearly this includes and adds to Russia's security challenges and concerns. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Dr. Diana Galeeva is a former academic visitor to St. Antony's College, Oxford University (2019-2022).

Saudi Arabia, Turkiye could play key role in ending Sudan conflict

Sinem Cengiz

While the region's countries have put aside their militarized foreign policies thanks to the normalization climate that is sweeping the Middle East, the clashes in Sudan have reinforced the militarization of politics there, bringing large-scale instability on to the doorstep of key actors.

Sudan, once the largest country in Africa, is again in the spotlight, with the escalating power struggle threatening both the country itself and the region's stability and security. Several countries are on alert and have started to evacuate their citizens due to the fighting seen this month between the Sudanese army under Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, who is known as Hemedti.

Saudi Arabia is among the most important actors playing a role in the rescue operation, as several countries, including Turkiye, seek the cooperation of the Kingdom in the evacuation of their citizens from Sudan.

As it sought to expand its influence in Sudan, Ankara employed several foreign policy tools, such as public diplomacy through schools and construction projects. Ankara also pursued a cautious balancing policy in its relations with Al-Burhan and Dagalo in order to maintain its interests in the country.

Turkiye's growing interest in Sudan was made clear when Erdogan became the first Turkish president to visit the country in 2017. In this regard, Ankara may look for an active role in the resolution of the crisis so that it can capitalize when the situation normalizes. However, with only days remaining until Turkiye's critical elec-

tions on May 14, it is difficult to predict its potential role in the resolution of the ongoing crisis.

In the same vein, Saudi Arabia wants to maintain its influence in Sudan. Given their substantial economic support to the interim regime, the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are now pressuring both sides to adopt a diplomatic solution that could protect their long-term strategic interests in the country.

Importantly, Sudan itself has also proven able to shape policy in neighboring countries. A full-fledged civil war in Sudan would represent a significant threat to Egypt, as it would foment instability on its southern border. Cairo wants Sudan to be stable for both economic and security reasons. A weakened Sudanese security institution in terms of controlling its borders would also limit Egypt's ability to count on Sudan's support in the region.

Now that the policies and interests of both Ankara and Riyadh, as well as Egypt and the other Gulf countries, have been tied to the fate of Sudan, Sudanese domestic politics may come to impact these countries and even further undermine regional stability.

Turkiye and Saudi Arabia have a good record of bringing together the warring sides in conflicts throughout the region. For the ongoing Sudan crisis, external mediation — such as those proposed by regional leaders — could help to avoid any further escalations. In this regard, Sudan's allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and Turkiye, should exert their influence and use their networks to bring both sides to the negotiating table. This is required to ensure the crisis does not lead to a chronic conflict. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Sinem Cengiz is a Turkish political analyst who specializes in Turkiye's relations with the Middle East.

Fire at Crimea fuel depot extinguished after drone attack

Ukrainian military intelligence official says over 10 tanks of oil products with capacity of 40,000 tons destroyed

SEVASTAPOL, CRIMEA: A fire at a fuel storage facility in the Crimean port city of Sevastopol, caused by a drone strike, has been fully extinguished, the Moscow-installed governor there said on Saturday.

Experts had examined the site and "it became clear that only one drone was able to reach the oil reservoir," Mikhail Razvozhayev said on the Telegram messaging app. Another drone was downed, its wreckage found on the shore near the terminal, he added. Earlier he said no one was injured.

A Ukrainian military intelligence official said more than 10 tanks of oil products with a capacity of around 40,000 tons intended for use by Russia's Black Sea Fleet were destroyed, RBC Ukraine reported.

The official, Andriy Yusov, did not claim Ukraine was responsible for



SEVASTOPOL: In this handout photo made from video released by the Governor of Sevastopol Mikhail Razvozhayev telegram channel on Saturday, April 29, 2023, smoke and flame rise from a burning fuel tank in Sevastopol, Crimea. AP

the explosion in comments reported by RBC, instead describing the blast

as "God's punishment" for a Russian strike on a Ukrainian city on Friday.

A spokesperson for Ukraine's armed forces said earlier he did not have any information to suggest Ukraine was responsible for the fire.

Sergei Aksyonov, the Russian-appointed head of Crimea, said on Telegram that air defense and electronic warfare forces on Saturday shot down two drones over the Crimean Peninsula.

"There are no casualties or destruction," he said.

Sevastopol, on the Crimean peninsula that Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has come under repeated air attacks since Russia invaded the country as a whole in February 2022.

Russian officials have blamed the attacks on Ukraine. Reuters

Putin authorizes oil supplies to friendly countries

VLADIVOSTOK: Russian President Vladimir Putin has authorized oil and oil product supplies to friendly countries under contracts signed before Feb. 1, according to a decree published on Friday.

The decree, which takes effect from Friday, amended a previous one Putin signed at the end of last year that banned Russian oil and oil product supplies to foreign entities if their contracts directly or indirectly involved a price cap imposed by Western countries.

In December 2022, the European Union placed a price cap of 60 U.S. dollars per barrel on Russian seaborne crude oil, which was joined by the Group of Seven and Australia. Xinhua

Brazil creates over 520,000 new jobs in Q1

BRASILIA: Brazil created 526,173 new formal jobs in the first quarter, based on a balance of 6,040,592 hires and 5,514,419 dismissals, the Ministry of Labor and Employment reported.

The data, from the General Register of Employed and Unemployed, showed that 195,171 new jobs were created in March, as a result of 2,168,418 hires and 1,973,247 dismissals, nearly double the 100,000 new jobs estimated by the financial market.

"This year's March figure was a bit of a surprise," Minister of Labor and Employment, Luiz Marinho, said during a press conference.

"There are cargo transportation and infrastructure works that are influencing the March number, which I didn't expect," Marinho said.

The data also showed that in March there was an increase in employment in four of the five sectors of the economy. While sectors of industry, construction, commerce and services created 20,984, 33,641, 18,555 and 122,323 new jobs respectively, agriculture had a negative balance of 332 jobs.

The data indicated that at the end of March, Brazil had a cumulative 42.97 million formal jobs. Xinhua

African leaders commit to improved governance, inclusive growth



NAIROBI: Africa's political, business, and civil society leaders have reaffirmed their support for a new governance agenda that prioritizes civil liberties, equitable growth, peace, and stability.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2023 Ibrahim Governance Week in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi on Friday evening, the leaders stressed that fidelity to the rule of law, constitutionalism, and political pluralism will be key to the realization of Africa's transformation agenda.

Kenyan President William Ruto said good governance should be at the heart of Africa's quest for renewal amid multiple challenges like poverty, climate crisis, civil strife, and economic slowdown.

"Our commitment as leaders to a new governance agenda for the continent should not falter given the urgency to tackle socioeconomic and ecological challenges facing the citizens," Ruto said.

Convened by Mo Ibrahim Foundation, a not-for-profit pan-African lobby founded by Sudanese-British entrepreneur and philanthropist, the 2023 Ibrahim Governance Week is expected to endorse a raft of interventions to promote the rule of law, transparency, and accountability in the continent.

Among high-level participants attending the three-day forum includes retired presidents, heads of multilateral agencies and continental blocs, donors, investors, governance champions, and scholars.

Former President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou was honored as the 2021 Ibrahim Laureate, having demonstrated outstanding leadership skills which transformed the livelihoods of his compatriots.

Amina J. Mohammed, deputy secretary-general of the United Nations, said improved governance, peace, and security in Africa will be key to reshaping the multilateral system amid rising geopolitical tensions.

According to Mohammed, Africa's rising narrative will only be sustained once political leaders adhere to democratic tenets unique to the continent's circumstances while placing citizens at the center of development plans.

In addition, Mohammed called for an Africa-led solution to myriad challenges facing the continent, including sporadic conflicts, terrorism, forced migration, climate change, youth unemployment, and food insecurity.

Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat said building resilient institutions and greater openness will be crucial to realizing a new agenda for peace and enduring stability in the continent.

A people-centric governance agenda for Africa is imperative to help the continent recover from shocks linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, soaring global inflation, civil strife, and climate-induced food crisis, said Faki. Xinhua

Afghanistan thanks Saudi Arabia for help in Sudan evacuation

KABUL: Afghanistan is grateful for Saudi Arabia's help in evacuating its nationals from Sudan, the chief spokesman of the Taliban administration told Arab News on Friday after the first batch of Afghan evacuees reached Jeddah.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, at least 120 Afghan citizens were trapped in Sudan when fighting broke out between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces on April 15.

More than 500 people have been killed since and at least 4,200 injured as clashes continued despite a ceasefire that started on Monday and has been extended until the end of Sunday.

Foreign nationals have been evacuated by land to neighboring Egypt and by sea to Saudi Arabia, as major airports have become battlegrounds.

Afghan evacuees, who arrived from Port Sudan to Jeddah on Thursday, were among the nearly 2,800 people brought to safety by Saudi forces, which are spearheading rescue efforts.

The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that it was "deeply grateful" to Saudi Arabia for its assistance, while Zabihullah Mujahid,



chief spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban administration, said it was not the first time Afghans received critical aid from the Kingdom.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate has struggled a lot to evacuate a number of Afghans trapped in Sudan. With the coordination of Saudi Arabia, efforts are underway for the safe evacuation of the remaining Afghans too," Mujahid told Arab News.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always supported Afghans and Afghanistan. We want to thank it."

Local media estimated there were about 70 people in the first group of Afghan evacuees.

Afghan authorities were not immediately available for comment on how many more were going to be brought back from Sudan. The Foreign Ministry said its efforts were ongoing. Arab News

5 shot dead in US Texas, gunman at loose



HOUSTON: Five people, including an eight-year-old, were killed in a shooting at a home in southeast Texas late Friday night, authorities confirmed on Saturday.

A suspect armed with an AR-15 style rifle is still on the run, local media reported.

Police officers responded to the shooting at about 11:30 p.m. local time (0330 GMT Saturday) after receiving a call about harassment at the home in Cleveland, about 55 miles (89 km) north of Houston, according to the San Jacinto County Sheriff's Office.

All of the victims, ranging from 8 to about 40 years old, were from Honduras, said Sheriff Greg Capers of the San Jacinto County. At least 10 people were at the property when police arrived.

Investigators said they believe the suspect was intoxicated and began shooting an AR-15 in his front yard. That's when neighbors asked him to be quiet because they had a baby who was trying to sleep, according to Capers.

"My understanding is that the victims, they came over to the fence and said 'Hey could (you not do your) shooting out in the yard? We have a young baby that's trying to go to sleep,' and he had been drinking, and he says 'I'll do what I want to do in my front yard,'" Capers told ABC News' Houston station KTRK.

The suspect then began shooting inside the home, he said.

"When we got here, the two females in the bedroom were laying on top of two of three younger children" that survived, said Capers, "Everybody that was shot was shot from the neck up almost execution style, basically in the head."

Capers said the police have identified the shooter, a male from Mexico, and found two other weapons in his house following the shooting.

Veronica Pineda, a nearby resident, told KTRK that she has grown accustomed to neighbors shooting firearms in the area. Agencies

Day of War Veterans

BUCHAREST: Soldiers march during a ceremony marking the Day of War Veterans in Bucharest, Romania.



Photo: Xinhua

Comoran migrants pursue Mayotte at any cost

DOMONI: In Anjouan, part of the Comoros archipelago in the southern Indian Ocean, the distant French island of Mayotte casts a dangerous charm.

Boasting schools, hospitals, roads and a social safety net, Mayotte is an eldorado that every year thousands of impoverished Comorans risk their lives trying to reach.

Domoni, the second largest town in Anjouan, is a common departure point for migrants desperate for a better life.

Many of its 17,000 residents live off small-scale fishing — but some also earn cash on the side through the lucrative business of human smuggling.

Sitting under the shade of almond trees, men banter while playing bao, a traditional board game.

Near the beach, the air reeks of resin, used to build and maintain timber boats called kwassa

kwassa. Almost half of Comoros's 900,000 inhabitants live below the poverty line, with average monthly incomes barely exceeding the equivalent of \$110. Many have no access to healthcare.

Those trying to get to Mayotte — 70 km away at the closest point — have to brave uncertain waters, packed in rickety, crowded boats.

How many have perished over the years is unknown, and for those who succeed in landing on Mayotte, the welcome is increasingly hostile.

France has stepped up its fight against illegal immigration, which is blamed in Mayotte for proliferating slums and worsening security.

A controversial operation, called "Wuambushu" (take back, in a local language) is underway to kick out undocumented migrants, most of whom are

Comorans. The operation faces resistance from the Comoros authorities who are refusing to accept deportees from Mayotte, saying it cannot cope with the influx.

Sitting on a beach littered with rubbish, a 27-year-old man who asked to be called Abdou Ahmadi, admitted that he was a "fisherman-smuggler," who made a living both from his nets and from taking people to Mayotte.

"I transport up to eight people in a month, but only sick people," he said.

He said he charged the equivalent of 100 euros (\$110) for a one-way trip.

"When I don't have a patient, I'm busy with my fishing. But fishing (alone) is not enough to live off," he admitted.

Ahmadi scorned the idea of leaving Domoni and living as "an undocumented migrant."

"I prefer to stay here," he said.



"The situation in Mayotte is terrible, crime is very high. I'm not tempted."

A former smuggler who gave his name as Soula said he gave up

the business after being handed a three-year jail term, and now worked as a taxi driver.

"I knew the sea like the back of my hand. But fishing was not

very profitable. So I became a smuggler," he said. Some of the people he helped cross came from Madagascar.

"I have never lost anyone at

sea. But I was arrested," he said, sitting on the red hull of a boat.

Rafouzoiti Dhoimir, 52, said she had tried three times to enter Mayotte but each time had been sent back.

Her three children live there, and she has not seen them in 15 years.

"I pray to God that (Wuambushu) is stopped," she said, thinking about her children living in shacks.

Wearing a navy and orange dress, she sat on an armchair in her small house opposite the beach, nervously wringing her fingers.

"I don't sleep anymore, I'm scared," she said.

She was too afraid to try another crossing.

"There have been so many deaths," she said. Her wish was that "one day they won't expel anyone, and we stop going there." AFP

UK economy shows no growth in February

LONDON: Britain's economy failed to grow as expected in February, but a bounce in January was stronger than first thought, official data showed on Saturday.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the economic output was flat in month-on-month terms in February.

A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to a growth of 0.1%. The ONS revised January's economic growth up to 0.4% from a previous estimate of 0.3%.

Output from the vast services sector contracted by 0.1% in February, hurt by strikes, but was offset by a surge in construction output, the ONS said. Agencies

China's internet firms log robust profit growth in Q1

BEIJING: China's large internet companies and related services companies saw their profits expand robustly in the first quarter of the year, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) showed.

Profits of these companies surged 55.2 percent year on year to 28.28 billion yuan (about 4.08 billion U.S. dollars) during the period, MIIT data showed.

The combined business revenue of these companies stood at 302 billion yuan, up 1.6 percent year on year.

Large internet companies and related services companies are those with an annual business revenue of at least 20 million yuan. Xinhua

SCCI delegation meets Minister Industries SM Tanveer

SIALKOT: A delegation of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), led by Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) Khawaja Masud Akhtar, visited the Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) Headquarters in Lahore and met Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skills Development SM Tanveer.

The delegation discussed constitution of the board of Management (BoM) of PSIC Small Industries Estate-I Sialkot with the minister, who approved the Names of BoM, nominated by the SCCI. A notification was also issued in this regard.

The BoM would take care of the issues being faced by the industrial units, set up at the Small Industries Estate-I Sialkot, said a spokesperson. Agencies

Chinese micro-credit firms' outstanding loans stand at 872.2 bln yuan

BEIJING: Outstanding loans extended by China's micro-credit companies stood at 872.2 billion yuan (about 126.7 billion U.S. dollars) by the end of March, official data showed. The volume shrank by 38.5 billion yuan in the first quarter of this year, according to data from the People's Bank of China.

By the end of March, the number of micro-credit companies in China came in at 5,801, the data showed.

Micro-lenders largely target small companies and low-income groups in need of capital. In recent years, China has tightened regulations for the sector to rein in financial risks.

Chinese importers eyeing recovery of Pakistani sesame seed production

Currently, Iran and China are the big buyers of Pakistan sesame

Spokesman Report

BEIJING: "Since being allowed to be exported to China, Pakistani sesame has seen its export surging from over 100,000 tons in 2020 to 150,000 tons in 2021. While the devastating floods in 2022 substantially reduced its exports, it is expected to have a bumper harvest as there had been an increase in seeding by 25% since sellers got better price last year", Ms. Li Yuanyuan, Director of Greater China region of JKT Foods, an agricultural produce trade company said.

In an interview with China Economic Net (CEN) following the China International Sesame Conference held last week in China's coastal city Qingdao, she said, "Before Pakistani sesame is allowed to enter China, most of our products were sold to the Middle East. China offers a vast

market to Pakistani sesame".

Under good weather conditions, the stable quality, void of pesticide residue and fair colour of Pakistani sesame give it a competitive edge in the international market, she said.

"Besides, shipping to China is very quick. The fastest direct ship can reach the Chinese port in 12-14 days", Ms. Li said.

Pakistani sesame hits the Chinese market in around October each year, so there will be enough time for sale before the Chinese Lunar New Year, which usually marks a peak in consumption. "That being said, the time when sesame comes in the Pakistani market coincides with the rainy season. If it rains, the quality of sesame will be compromised, and Chinese buyers can only choose sesame from other countries as a substitute", Ms Li added.

Pakistan exports 80% of the total production



of sesame seeds crop. Currently, Iran and China are the big buyers of Pakistan sesame but other countries are gaining market share due to an increase in hulled exports.

China's imports of sesame account for almost 1/3 of the world's production. Since 2020, its import exceeded 1 million tons for three consecutive years, providing a huge market for Pakistani producers.

Pakistan's sesame production is also catching up. In recent years, the use of hybrid varieties has greatly increased sesame harvests mere 36,000 tons in 2019 to over 150,000 tons in 2022 despite the devastating floods. The increase is mainly from the id variety due to high demand and better quality when compared to the Farmi variety, the size of which has been reduced by 50%, due to less demand, quality issues and high FFA value.

"But overall crop this year is difficult to predict as of now the weather plays a big role", Ms Li said.

She told that at present, most of the Pakistani sesame exported to China is raw sesame. In the next few years, as Pakistan's sesame processing technology advances, highly processed sesame, such as colour-selected sesame and peeled sesame seed is expected to gain more popularity in the Chinese market.

SECP announces fourth cohort under its Regulatory Sandbox

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) will be accepting applications for testing in the Regulatory Sandbox from May 02, 2023. The applications submission window shall remain open till May 31, 2023. Complete applications can be emailed to: sandbox@secp.gov.pk

The Regulatory Sandbox - now successfully entering its fourth Cohort - provides a tailored regulatory environment that allows entities to conduct limited scale live tests of innovative products, services, processes, and business models in a controlled and supervised environment.

The upcoming fourth cohort is divided into two segments: (i) Islamic Finance; and (ii) Conventional Finance.

In Islamic Finance segment, ideas related to Shariah-compliant digital finance (e.g., crowdsourced finance, liquidity management solutions, micro- and nano-finance), shariah-compliant products (e.g., small ticket savings and sukuk fractionalization), new takaful models and



digital intermediation in regulated Islamic financial services shall be preferred.

In Conventional finance segment, preference will be given to ideas related to Robo-Advisory, AI Based Automated Fund Management, Asset Fractionalization and Single Window Lending Platform.

Approved applicants, after evaluation,

will be allowed to test and experiment their innovative ideas and solutions generally for a period of six months. Upon completion of experimentation period, the entities testing in the Sandbox will submit detailed completion report. SECP shall determine future course of action w.r.t. the tested solutions based on the test results.

High-prices

ISLAMABAD: A man is buying fruits from vendor at Fruit and Vegetables Market as due to extremely high prices, common people are helpless to buy fruit around Country.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Gold falls as US dollar strengthens



CHICAGO: Gold futures on the COMEX division of the New York Mercantile Exchange fell on Saturday as the U.S. Dollar strengthened.

The most active gold contract for June delivery fell 8.80 U.S. dollars, or 0.44 percent, to close at 2,007.00 Dollars per ounce.

In an audience discussion at the Richmond Association for business Economies on Monday, Richmond Fed President Tom Barkin said that he wants to see more evidence that U.S. inflation is settling back to the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target, and that he's reassured by stability in the banking sector. APP

ICCI, NPC to work together for uplift of local economy

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI would work with National Press Club (NPC) for the better development of the city and uplift of the local economy.

He said this while visiting NPC, Islamabad, to congratulate its newly-elected office bearers.

He lauded the role of NPC for the welfare of the journalistic community and stressed that the government should provide better facilities to the journalists to enable them to serve the nation more effectively.

He demanded that CDA and all housing societies in Islamabad should reserve a specific quota of plots at discounted rates for the business community, journalists, lawyers and labour class.

He said that NPC should cooperate in highlighting the key issues of the business community that would help in better growth of business activities.

He assured that ICCI would cooperate with NPC in resolving the issues of the journalistic fraternity.

Anwar Raza President, Azhar Jatoti Senior Vice President and Khalil Ahmed Raja Secretary, NPC thanked the ICCI delegation for visiting to congratulate them.

They said that the business community is playing an important role in the economic development of the country and NPC will extend its support in highlighting their key issues.

Both sides discussed problems being faced by the economy and agreed to make joint efforts for their redress.

They also agreed to maintain close liaison to promote the business and economic interests of Pakistan.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI



said that both bodies are working for a common cause to serve their members and stressed for closer cooperation between them to achieve their common goals more effectively.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG called for a think tank of business, journalistic & lawyers' communities and labor unions.

He said that the drive against corruption in Pakistan has badly damaged the image of the country, affected the economy, disappointed the youth and discouraged investment.

He stressed that such activities should be banned in the media.

Afzal Butt, President PFUJ said that NPC and ICCI would make joint efforts for resolving the issues of the city and economy.

He said that ICCI had organized a successful all-parties conference in collaboration with NPC and said that both bodies should work together in future to promote the country's national interests.

Muhammad Shabbir Malik, Raja Intiaz Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Saif ur Rehman Khan, Babar Chaudhry and others were in the ICCI delegation. A. Nazir Charan, Ghazanfar Abbas & Myra Imran Vice Presidents, Ms. Nayyar Ali Finance Secretary, Aslam Lurka, Waqar Abbas, Tallat Farooq and Ms. Shakila Jaleel Joint Secretary, NPC and others were also present at the occasion.

10th African Islamic Finance Summit is going to be held in The Gambia

Islamic Finance is not only a sustainable solution for socio-economic development but for Muslims a religious advantage as well: Muhammad Zubair

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: 10th African Islamic Finance Summit (AIFS) is going to be held in The Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Center, The Gambia on 3rd May, it will be followed by two-days post event workshop on 4th and 5th May 2023. The main objective of this event is to designate the significance of Islamic finance, its sustainability, impact on economy and opportunities for Africa. West Africa is the emerging market for Islamic Banking and Finance, mainly dominated by Muslim population and is a combination of Anglo and Francophone countries. Among Anglo-phonous countries Nigeria and Francophone Senegal are the hubs, those are playing a distinguished role. The sponsors for this event are

Agib Bank Ltd the pioneer and only Islamic Bank in the Gambia, and Forward Enterprises which is eager to fulfill social responsibilities. The supporting partners for this event are Heeno International, Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, National Association of Cooperative Credit Union Gambia, Egyptian Islamic Finance Association, National Insurance Authority Somaliland, Islamic Finance Research Institute Ghana and Nigerian Insurers Association. The Media Partners for this event are The Standard Newspaper, Micro Capital, IFING Media, Financial Nigeria and International Business Magazine.

The agenda of this event is about a brief introduction of Islamic finance from historical development, regulatory challenges, and opportunities. It will describe how



Islamic financial system plays a role for financial inclusion, Shariah compliance governance and framework, and for the implementation of the Shariah audit system to regulate Islamic Financial industry. The significance of Islamic Microfinance, Islamic Agriculture Finance, Fintech, Insurtech, and many advanced tools for Islamic financial industry will be part of it. It will highlight the investment opportunities and significance of Islamic Capital Market and will discuss its

need for African Financial Industry growth. AIFS will also recognize the role of African Financial Institutions for the development of Islamic financial system through Shariah compliant avenues. After the Summit there will be a two days post event workshop about Islamic Banking, Islamic Microfinance and Takaful as well.

Muhammad Zubair Mughal Chief Executive Officer AlHuda Centre of Islamic Banking and Economics-United Arab Emirates organizer of this event mentioned that Africa is the second largest destination for Islamic Finance Industry. He said as per the demographic dynamics West Africa is mainly populated by Muslims; Islamic Finance is not only the sustainable way for the development but a fulfilment of religious duty as well. With its dual benefits

Africa can build its economic structure through Islamic finance tools. So far AlHuda Centre of Islamic Banking and Economics has organized the African Islamic Finance Summit in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania and the Gambia. Now we are going to organize this mega conference 2nd edition in Gambia. This conference is the gathering of financial industries like Banking, Insurance, Islamic Microfinance, Funds Management, Agri/Rural Finance, Regulatory Authorities, Government bodies, Ministries, NGOs, Donor Agencies and Academia. In 2022 this event was held with support of Central Bank of the Gambia, Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of the Gambia and with collaboration of public and private sector institution.

Fakhar's century propels Pakistan to victory over New Zealand in 2nd ODI

Fakhar Zaman remains unbeaten at 180

RAWALPINDI: Pakistani opener Fakhar Zaman's unbeaten 180 propelled the home side to a seven-wicket victory against New Zealand at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

The left-handed opener was phenomenal with the bat as he lighted up Pindi Stadium to help Pakistan take a 2-0 lead in the ODI series.

Opener Imam-ul-Haq was sent to the pavilion after he was dismissed for a total of 66 runs. But, Fakhar remained top of the table with his magnificent performance.

Set to chase 337 runs, Fakhar got full support from skipper Babar Azam after Imam departed. They both scored a match-building partnership of 135 runs.



Babar went out on a soft dismissal off Ish Sodhi after scoring 65 runs. Fakhar kept going and in the end, partnered strongly with Mohammad Rizwan to complete the highest chase in ODIs in Pindi. The left-handed batter remained not out for 180 runs laced with 17 boundaries and

six maximums. Meanwhile, he also became the fastest Asian to score 3,000 runs.

It was Fakhar's third consecutive century in ODIs, which made him only the fourth Pakistan batter to do so after Zaheer Abbas, Saeed Anwar, and Babar.

Rizwan, on the other hand, brought up his 19th half-century and too in a winning cause for Pakistan. The wicket-keeper batter smoked 54 not out including six boundaries.

For New Zealand, Matt Henry, Henry Shipley and Sodhi shared a wicket apiece.

Earlier, Daryl Mitchell showed commitment to his team once again as he registered another ODI to help New Zealand post 336-5.

After being sent into bat

first, New Zealand lost their opener Will Young in the sixth over. Haris Rauf, who ended up taking four wickets in his 10 overs, started the proceedings by removing Young (19) in the sixth over.

Mitchell and Chad Bowes built the innings from there with Bowes scoring his maiden ODI half-century. The two batters were too good against Pakistani bowlers who went for 86 off 80 together to put New Zealand in a position to score something over 300.

It was again Rauf who provided a breakthrough to Pakistan as they left out their key bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi for this match. Rauf bowled a slower one to get rid of Bowes who scored run-a-ball 51.

Pakistan U19 to face Bangladesh U19 in 4-day match from Sunday

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Saad Baig-led Pakistan U19 will be eager to make a winning start in the series when they take on Bangladesh U19 in the four-day match starting on Sunday at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, Bangladesh.

Pakistan U19 team arrived in Dhaka on 26th April and have had two practice sessions at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium following an 11-day camp at the National cricket academy in Lahore.

The upcoming series between Pakistan U19 and Bangladesh U19 promises to be an exciting contest, as both teams will be looking to gain an edge over their oppo-



two sides at Multan Cricket Stadium from 4 to 7 November.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh U19 under Sharear Sakib will be looking to build on their good run from the previous series, where they dominated the one-day format. The hosts will be eyeing to take full advantage of home conditions and clinch the series at home.

Saad Baig in a statement said: "We had a two-day preparation session in Chattogram, which allowed us to acclimatise to the conditions and get accustomed to the challenges of playing in Bangladesh. Additionally, we had an 11-day camp in Lahore, where we worked on our skills and strategies for the series.

Besides a four-dayer, both sides will feature in five 50-over matches and a solitary T20 from 6 to 17 May.

The series also provides an opportunity for Pakistan U19 to improve their performance from their previous series against Bangladesh U19 in November last year in Multan. Saad Baig's side lost the three one-dayers 2-1

and leveled the two T20s 1-1. The only four-day match in the series was drawn.

The tourists will expect their captain Saad and right-handed middle-order batter Wahaj Riaz to carry their form in the upcoming series as the duo struck centuries in the second innings of the four-day match played between the

Qatar to host 2027 World Cup in men's basketball

GENEVA: The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) picked Qatar to host the 2027 edition of its marquee men's World Cup. It did not say whether there were any other bidders.

Doha will stage all games in the 32-team event, FIBA said, citing upgraded subway and public transport networks that were completed for the men's soccer World Cup played last November and December.

"With all of the teams playing in the same city, fans can plan everything far in advance and enjoy a unique experience since all venues are within 30 minutes of each other," the Switzerland-based governing body said. "Additionally, all venues to be used for FIBA's flagship men's event are already constructed, while widely used green technologies will help in delivering the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 as a carbon-neutral event."

The No. 89-ranked Qatar team will qualify automatically as host. Qatar last played in the event at the 2006 world championship, and lost all five of its games.

The women's World Cup in 2026 will be hosted by Germany in Berlin, FIBA also decided Friday. The 16-team tournament will be played in Berlin.

Qatar is the third straight Asian host of the men's tournament. China hosted in 2019 and the Philippines, Japan, and Indonesia host this year's edition from Aug. 25-Sept. 12. Spain is the defending champion.

Qatar's sports hosting peaked but did not stop with the FIFA World Cup. The basketball World Cup will be one of its major events before hosting the 2030 Asian Games, which will use some stadiums built for the soccer tournament.

A long-term goal for Qatar is to host the Olympics, although the next available Summer Games is the 2036 edition as hosts have already been picked for 2028 and 2032.

A Doha candidacy was being prepared for the 2032 Olympics when the International Olympic Committee pushed ahead quickly to pick Brisbane.

The 100-strong group of IOC members includes the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who joined the Olympic body in 2002 as one of its youngest ever members at age 22.

Doha tried to enter the hosting contests for the Olympics of 2016 and 2020 but the IOC denied it candidate status. The main barrier was the IOC insisting on the games being held in July-August when temperatures in Doha routinely top 40 Celsius. AP

Medvedev follows Alcaraz into third round of Madrid Open



MADRID: After top seed Carlos Alcaraz powered back from a set down to beat Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori to qualify for the last 32 on Friday afternoon, second seed Daniil Medvedev was able to ease his way into the Madrid Open with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Italy's Andrea Pavonetti in one hour and 22 minutes on Saturday morning.

14th seed Tommy Paul also made it into the third round after defeating Roman Safiullin 6-3, 7-6(3), while two of the lower-seeded players failed to make it through.

31st seed Jiri Lehecka was beaten convincingly 6-1, 6-1 in just 45 minutes by Alexander Shevchenko, while 32nd seed Ben Shelton lost a three-set marathon 4-6, 7-6(4), 7-5 against Jan-Lennard Struff.

In the women's tournament on Saturday morning, second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus needed almost two hours before she got past Colombia's Camila Osorio.

14th seed Ludmilla Samsonova defeated Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 6-0 in a surprisingly comfortable win in an hour and two minutes, while 24th seed Elise Mertens progressed with a 6-3, 6-4 triumph over Germany's Jule Niemeier.

Finally, 31st seed Irina-Camelia Begu beat Shelby Rogers of the USA 7-5, 6-2. Xinhua

China drawn into Group B of FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023

MANILA: China will play in Group B with Serbia, Puerto Rico and South Sudan as the draw of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023 was held here Saturday evening.

The World Cup will run from August 25 to September 10, 2023 with the games of Group B to be played in Manila, the Philippines.

PM Talent Hunt Women, Men Volleyball League begins

PESHAWAR: Women and Men Volleyball Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter-Region League under Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif Youth Talent Hunt got underway here at Agriculture University Peshawar on Saturday.

Director Distance education University of Peshawar Dr. Noor Zada and Director sports Hazara University Khalid Jalal Shah graced the occasion as guests and formally inaugurated the Volleyball Women and Men League wherein five teams each of the Women and Men from as many Regional including Swat, Mardan, Hazara, Bannu and Peshawar are taking part. Regional Sports Officer Bannu Shafiqatullah, Peshawar Team Manager Rahm Bibi, Mardan Team Manager Mohammad Asim and other personalities were present before the start of the matches, the players were introduced to the guests. Former Pakistan team skipper Abdur Rahim Khan and national women team skipper Urooj, the two selectors were also there to select two teams each of the Women and Men to represent the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the forthcoming coming national league.

On the first day, Hazara, Bannu, Swat, Peshawar and Mardan regions participated in women's competitions, while Mardan and Bannu's teams played in men's competitions.

While the duties of the scorer were performed by Yekhi Jan, umpiring Muazzullah and Anwarullah supervised the matches. APP

Formula One: Azerbaijan Grand Prix sprint grid

BAKU: Revised grid for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix sprint race on Saturday: Esteban Ocon was demoted to start from the pitlane after changes to his Alpine and Williams were unable to repair Logan Sargeant's car: Front row Charles Leclerc (MON/Ferrari) Sergio Perez (MEX/Red Bull) 2nd row Max Verstappen (NED/Red Bull) George Russell (GBR/Mercedes) 3rd row Carlos Sainz (ESP/Ferrari) Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Mercedes) 4th row Alex Albon (THA/Williams) Fernando Alonso (ESP/Aston Martin) 5th row Lance Stroll (CAN/Aston Martin) Lando Norris (GBR/McLaren) 6th row Oscar Piastri (AUS/McLaren) Nico Hulkenberg (GER/Haas) 7th row Kevin Magnussen (DEN/hndHaas) Zhou Guanyu (CHN/Alfa Romeo) 8th row Valtteri Bottas (FIN/Alfa Romeo) Yuki Tsunoda (JPN/Alpha Tauri) 9th row Pierre Gasly (FRA/Alpine) Nyck de Vries (NED/Alpha Tauri) Pitlane: Esteban Ocon (FRA/Alpine) Not starting: Logan Sargeant (USA/Williams) afpFERRARI N.V. APP

Racing Car crashes

STAVELOT: US driver P.J. Hyett of Project 1-AO is out of his Porsche 911 RSR-19 racing car after crashing during the qualifying race of LMGTE AM category for the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, the third round of the 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in Stavelot, Belgium.



Photo: Xinhua

Cristiano Ronaldo strikes again to keep Al-Nassr in the title race

RIYADH: For the first time since he arrived in Saudi Arabia in January, Cristiano Ronaldo and his Al-Nassr teammates faced a must-win situation on Friday. And when the pressure was on, he, and they, delivered a 4-0 victory over Al-Raed at Mrsool Park.

The result means the Yellow are once again within three points of Saudi Pro League-leaders Al-Ittihad, albeit having played one game more, and still in the running for a 10th league title.

It might not have been a vintage performance from Al-Nassr but, after a goalless draw at Al-Fayha and a 2-0 defeat against Al-Hilal in their previous two league games (as well as a shock King's Cup semi-final exit at the hands of Al-Wahda on Monday), it was nevertheless a welcome return

to winning ways.

A third-successive failure to win would have dealt a major, possibly fatal, blow to their championship hopes. On Thursday, Al-Ittihad had defeated third-placed Al-Shabab, thanks to a late, late penalty, to go six points clear. Everyone was very aware that if Al-Nassr failed to match that result the following day, the Roshn Saudi League trophy would take a big step closer to Jeddah.

In the end, however, it was a comfortable victory for the home side. And although Al-Ittihad is still three points ahead, and has six games left to play compared with Al-Nassr's five, there is plenty to play for.

Top scorer Anderson Talisca was forced to watch the game from the stands due to suspension. But if their were any nerves

because of this, Ronaldo helped to settle them after just four minutes with the kind of goal that fans of Real Madrid, Manchester United and Juventus know very well.

When Al-Raed failed to clear their lines, the ball fell to Sultan Al-Ghannam on the right side of the area and the full-back chipped a beautiful cross toward the far post, where five-time Ballon D'Or winner Ronaldo was waiting. He climbed high and sent the perfect header down, past the diving Silvju Lung and into the net for league goal number 12 since his debut in January.

The crowd went wild and almost did so again soon after, when Ayman Yahya's shot drifted just wide of the right-hand post.

If the home fans expected that this bright start would signal the

start of a crushing victory they were soon disappointed, however. Al-Raed, sitting relatively safely in the upper reaches of the bottom half of the league table, worked hard to limit the supply to the opposition's star-studded front line.

Just before the break, Ronaldo was set free in the area, only to be forced wide by Lung, and though he managed to pull the ball back, Ali Al-Hassan, who might have been in an offside position, blasted it over. This came just moments after teammate Luiz Gustavo's shot was saved by the Romanian goalkeeper.

The score remained 1-0 at the break but Al-Raed came very close to an equalizer seconds after the restart when Moroccan forward Karim El-Berkoui headed a ball delivered from a free-kick just inches over the



bar from close range.

In the 55th minute, Al-Nassr made their visitors pay for that miss. Ronaldo headed a Gustavo cross back across goal and Yahya fed the ball to Abdulrahman Ghareeb, who cut inside on the

edge of the six-yard box and fired the ball into the back of the net.

While Al-Raed had managed to trouble goalkeeper Nawaf Al-Aqidi on occasion, there was no coming back from that and the only real question was

whether Al-Nassr could add to their tally. Ronaldo came close with 15 minutes remaining but the 38-year-old's shot from close range was blocked.

The hosts finally made it 3-0 with just seconds remaining in regulation time, thanks to great work from two substitutes, as Jalaliddin Masharipov pulled the ball back for Mohammed Maran to score from close range.

There was still time after that for Abdulmajeed Al-Sulaihem to curl a beautiful shot from outside the area into the top corner, ending a perfect evening.

Now Al-Nassr will hope that sixth-place Al-Taawoun, a team who are enduring a poor run of form but have shown this season they are capable of beating the big boys, can do them a favor against Al-Ittihad on Wednesday. Arab News