

BI-LINGUAL MONTHLY PUBLISHING FROM LONDON UK



June 2023

THE GLOBAL VOICE



Page # 13



A Magazine for Scholarly, Literary, Political, Economic and Religious Activi-
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EDITOR IN CHIEF
Mohiuddin Abbasi

EDITOR
Munazza Khan

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Amina Nuzhat
Attiya Wasee

BUREAU CHIEF CANADA
M. Sultan Qureshi
Ph. No. +1(416)433-0112

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Price: US \$ 4, per copy

Annual Subscription: US \$ 48

E-Mail: m.abbasi.uk@gmail.com

Send your writeups at
m.abbasi.uk@gmail.com

Write to :

Monthly The Global Voice
Phone: +44 794 007 7825

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Editorial



Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil

The blemished and non-democratic PDM regime can be solely held responsible for the contemporary political, economic and social catastrophe in Pakistan. The misdoings and unprecedented steps taken by PDM regime under the banner of rule of law still continues to damage the socio-political constitutional will and practices of recognized democratic values in a society. This is entirely illogical to arrest any Ex-PM portraying him an extremist or terrorist and to seize him for around 150 filed cases of corruption and anarchy. Moreover, to snub the Imran's movement after May 9's riots law enforcement agencies arrested around 4000 PTI members without proper investigation and most of its top leadership in a couple of days.

Allegedly, PDM regime with the backing of establishment have gone off limits to fulfill its dream to wipe out PTI and its ideology from national political sphere. Even Govt. is also trying to ban PTI in order to sabotage its political entity. Or else, any civilian Govt. cannot go to this extent of their own. Operation against PTI and particularly Imran Khan reflects such motives of this peculiar collative regime. Even now in the name of 'Army Act' the army has come on the front foot to save its tumbling agenda, regime as well as reputation.

If Army is serving under a civilian regime and code of law, there should have been zero tolerance for any imprudent law like 'Army Act'. Trial of civilians protesting for their fundamental rights in military courts is irra-

tional and un-democratic. The human right activists and organizations are criticizing the practice of army act against civilian Pakistanis. The current circumstances make it evident that this threat of the enactment of the Army Act is only to rebuke PTI and its political workers. But its forthcoming consequences can be dangerous for the socio-political fabric of the Country as well as political scope of the PDM as it can also cause the proliferation of the anti-PDM sentiments and abhorrence against Army.

Overseas Pakistanis are pushing respective Governments to take notice of this human rights violation in Pakistan. UN, European countries, UK, Canada and USA took notice of the dismaying situations. The imprisonment and fake cases on the political workers and leaderships are intolerable in the civilized world. Unfortunately, the whole drama is staged to duck the elections in Punjab and KPK because as per circumstances PDM regime is not in a position to face the public.

Regrettably, the worst condition of Pakistani economy, inflation, the devaluation of rupee and dollar soaring against rupee, PDM regime's nastiness against a political party and its workers, clear human rights violation and keeping the constitution and judiciary at its worst only magnify the failure of PDM regime. The undemocratic and fascist steps are absolutely unacceptable for Pakistanis and for the civilized world. Pakistanis are facing the worst form of democracy and lawlessness by the law makers in the name of law.

The background of the slide features a large, vibrant Ukrainian tricolor flag (blue over yellow) waving dynamically against a clear, deep blue sky. The flag's movement creates a sense of energy and patriotism. Overlaid on the left side of the flag is the title text in white, which reads: "Ukraine gets targeted by Russia because of Syria". The word "Ukraine" is partially cut off on the far left edge of the frame.

By: Zaher Sahloul

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Aleppo, Ghouta and Homs. I am reminded of the endless calls over the past 12 years for humanitarian protection of Syrian civilians from the raining hell of Bashar al-Assad's barrel bombs and Russian heat-seeking missiles, all of which landed on deaf ears. More than 63,000 Russian military personnel have "received combat experience" in Syria since September 2015. Russia's defence minister boasted that they tested "more than 320 types of different weapons" in their military operations in Syria that killed 87,500, according to Russian sources. Even hospitals were not spared. The Russian war in Syria targeted doctors, hospitals, and clinics, depriving communities of healthcare. The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported 859 attacks on healthcare centres since the beginning of the Ukrainian war, resulting in 101 deaths and 136 injuries. Between April 29 and mid-September 2019, as Russian and Syrian government forces assaulted the last rebel pocket in Northwest Syria, 54 hospitals and clinics in opposition territory were attacked. According to Syrian human rights groups, Russia committed more than 335 massacres and at least 1,083 attacks on vital civilian facilities, including 201 attacks on schools and 190 attacks on medical facilities. These killed at least 20,944 Syrian civilians from air raids using illegal weapons like cluster incendiary and "thermobaric" vacuum bombs. On a medical mission to northern Syria after a series of Russian strikes on hospitals and cities in January 2020, I met Dr Loubna Saad, a local paediatrician displaced with her family from Maarat al-Numan. Saad described the horrifying conditions of evacuating her city, where most people live in temporary shelters and lack necessities. Diesel fuel for heating is scarce and expensive; families are burning plastic bags and household goods to warm their families. "Children are traumatised," she told me. "I have treated children with severe malnutrition and women who can't nurse

their children due to psychological trauma and lack of good nutrition." Similar stories and events unfolded in Ukraine last winter. With Russia's tacit support, the al-Assad regime used prohibited chemical weapons, including nerve gas and choking agents, more than 300 times against its population. Russia prevented the United Nations Security Council from investigating these war crimes and assigning responsibility, and al-Assad has continued to evade the International Criminal Court. The Ukrainian Ministry of Health has asked my organisation MedGlobal to help with chemical weapons preparedness. There were reports that Russia may use such prohibited weapons against Ukrainian cities, mirroring what happened in Syria. The Biden administration also warned that Russia may deploy chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine – and now, Russia has announced it will deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. As in Syria and almost all hospitals worldwide, Ukrainian hospitals are poorly equipped to respond to chemical warfare agents. They lack antidotes, detection devices, proper personal protection devices, decontamination units, and medical protocols for treatment. When Russia first intervened militarily in Syria, then-President Barack Obama assumed that Putin would be dragged into a Syrian quagmire. He let al-Assad off the hook in 2013 after he crossed America's declared red line and used nerve gas, paving the way for the Syrian president to continue using chemical weapons for the next five years. Putin interpreted Obama's hesitation as a green light to invade Ukraine, first in 2014 and then in 2022. US administrations under Donald Trump and Joe Biden have essentially continued with the Obama approach, allowing Russia to destroy Syrian cities, driving millions of civilians to become refugees or internally displaced and strengthening al-Assad's dictatorship. The Syrian regime should be held accountable for its crimes against its

civilians. The Biden administration must lead efforts to refer Syrian leaders to the International Criminal Court. Unless they face justice, it will be impossible for 6.5 million refugees to return safely to their cities and neighbourhoods. The Biden administration should also use its diplomatic levers to stop the trend of countries normalising relations with the al-Assad regime, without any concessions. And finally, the US should declare what is happening in Ukraine as a genocide. There is abundant evidence that Russia is trying to erase Ukrainian identity and culture, deporting thousands of Ukrainian children and placing them in re-education camps. Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people understand the connection between what happened in Syria and what is happening to their homeland, as do many US leaders, including several members of Congress. But the big question remains: Will Washington act on that understanding?

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/5/19/putin-targets-ukrainian-civilians-because-he-could-in-syria>

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Kate Middleton, Prince William's another video goes viral



Another video of royal couple Prince William and Kate Middleton has gone viral on social media. A fan uploaded video of Kate and Prince William from their first official visit to Australia and New Zealand in 2014 on TikTok. In the footage, the royal couple can be seen unveiling a memorial plaque. As they each pulled a cord to part a velvet curtain, William and Kate suffered an awkward exchange as repeated attempts failed to reveal the plaque to the waiting crowd. The Prince and Princess of Wales both laughed as a member of the delegation accompanying their visit came to their rescue. The video was uploaded with caption "William and Kate have a nightmare unveiling a plaque!" The video has been viewed over 1.8 million times besides thousands of likes and comments.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/490349-kate-middleton-prince-william-another-video-goes-viral>

G7 summit: Are Biden and Kishida climate walkers or just talkers?



By: Masayoshi Iyoda & Jeff Ordower

This weekend's G7 Leaders Summit in Hiroshima will be one of multifaceted significance. Amid the global energy crisis, Russia's continuing war on Ukraine and the closing window of opportunity to act on climate change, the heads of governments of Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States will gather at the site where the world's first atomic bomb was weaponised. It is undoubtedly a dramatic background against which world leaders will deliberate on issues that affect the collective future of our people and our planet. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan and President Joe Biden of the US have positioned themselves as leaders on issues pertaining to both climate and security — the latter being a key element of Kishida's decision to host the talks in Hiroshima. But both have taken backwards steps on their climate commitments.

Perhaps the greatest exercise of smoke and mirrors has been Japan's promotion of dangerous fossil gas as a component of the global energy transition. The Japanese government has for some time been promoting LNG upstream development. Consider the Sakhalin-2 project — an oil and gas development in Sakhalin Island in Russia, in which two Japanese firms together own 22.5 percent stakes, making Tokyo complicit in helping the Kremlin finance the war in Ukraine. The country is also responsible for funding the disastrous Matabari coal plant in Bangladesh — one of the world's most climate-impacted countries. The plant costs eight to 10 times what similar projects cost. Japan is also pushing for a revamp of an LNG import facility on Bangladesh's coast, which could lead to even more

fossil fuel extraction. Domestically, Kishida continues to express support for non-renewable means of transitioning Japan's energy mix, including the promotion of ammonia and hydrogen co-firing. But it is increasingly clear that this is aimed at justifying the continued use of coal and gas-powered plants beyond 2030 and extending the use of dangerous, old nuclear power plants in Japan beyond 40 years — a threshold set after the disaster in Fukushima. And if it is gas in Bangladesh, Japanese finance is behind overseas coal projects in countries like the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. What about the US?

While riding the win of passing the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$369bn in funding to tackle climate change, Biden has in the past two months approved two mega fossil fuel initiatives in Alaska — one of the US's biggest oil-drilling projects in recent decades, and plans to export LNG, including through a 1,300km (800-mile) pipeline. Ironically, Japan is expected to be a top buyer of the gas from the LNG project. Biden claims to be a climate president, but by continuing to approve mega fossil fuel projects, he is breaking his climate promises and betraying already overburdened communities on the front line of climate change. And it is not just the US and Japan. The entire G7 has backed a so-called "just" energy transition deal with Indonesia that allows the Southeast Asian nation to use fossil gas as a transition fuel. Fossil gas is the industry's last desperate attempt to retain its monopoly on energy security and block the needed justly sourced, justly implemented clean energy transition. LNG is a fossil fuel: when burned, it releases

toxic greenhouse gasses — predominantly, heat-trapping methane — into the atmosphere. As with any other fossil fuel, fossil gas is located in certain geographic locations, meaning the profits of its extraction are privatised among fossil fuel corporations and governments in those areas, while the negative impacts of its extraction are socialised among communities across the world. The prospects for meaningful commitments on climate at the G7 summit over the next three days were dampened by the outcome of the meeting of the grouping's environment ministers in April in Sapporo, Japan. In contradiction to the scientific consensus that coal-fired power plants must be phased out by 2030 to secure a liveable world, the US, Japan and the European Union blocked a move to set a deadline for G7 members. What seven of the world's largest advanced economies do — and do not do — on the energy transition in the next three days will affect the entire planet. These countries are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the global emissions that have led to the current climate crisis. Along with international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, they could make significant moves towards ending the fossil fuel era — for their own economies and by providing technical and financial support for developing countries to transition. Developing nations will be looking to the G7 communique for cues. If the world's richest nations are not willing to take bold actions towards a fossil fuel-free global economy, why should countries that have yet to undergo the same level of economic development bear the brunt of the disruption brought by a shift away from fossil fuels? The choice before G7 leaders is simple: Will they lock us into endless climate chaos, or actually walk the talk to bring about a just, secure, and liveable future for us all?

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/5/19/g7-summit-who-are-the-climate-walkers-and-the-climate-talkers>

First Saudi astronauts blast off to space station

WASHINGTON: A SpaceX capsule carrying two Saudi astronauts docked with the International Space Station on Monday, as part of a private mission chartered by Axiom Space. Rayyanah Barnawi, a scientist who became the first Saudi woman to go into space, and Ali Al-Qarni, a trained fighter pilot, are the first two people from their country to go to the orbital outpost. "It was a lovely ride," said mission commander Peggy Whitson, a former Nasa astronaut who made the voyage three times in the past, adding: "It was the softest docking I've ever felt." The fourth crew member is American businessman John Shoffner. About two hours after docking, the capsule opened to allow the four to enter the ISS, where they joined the seven astronauts already on board (three Russians, three Americans, and an Emirati). The SpaceX rocket took off from Florida on Sunday, and the trip to the ISS, which flies around 250 miles (400 kilometres) above the Earth, lasted about 16 hours. This mission, named Ax-2, is the second fully private mission to visit the Space Station, following a first in April 2022. The members of Ax-2 will stay for about ten days and carry out about 20 experiments. The mission is not Saudi Arabia's first foray into space. In 1985, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, an air force pilot, took part in a US-organised space voyage. "I reflect on my experience in space many years ago, and I am happy that Saudi Arabia has returned to space once again," he said at a watch party for the Ax-2 launch in Riyadh. "God willing, this is just the beginning."

China-Central Asia Summit: long game paying off

By Javier M. Piedra

Over the next two days (May 18-19), Presidents Xi Jinping of China, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan, Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyzstan, Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov of Turkmenistan and Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan will meet in person for the first time. They are attending the first China-Central Asia Summit in Xian, Shaanxi province, China. The summit follows on the heels of the fourth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the first China-Central Asia Meeting of the Ministers of Economy and Trade held last month. To be sure, it represents the beginning of an even deeper collaboration among the countries rather than, as some might assume, just one more diplomatic engagement with little significance. The six leaders are expected to sign several "big-ticket" political agreements in anticipation of future cooperation across the entire geopolitical and economic landscape of the region. What's more, the summit reaffirms that regional multilateralism is full-bodied and that Middle Eurasia has created a working collective diplomatic platform with downstream delivery networks. Over the past years, the six countries have materialized their respective interests for closer integration, meeting separately and together on multiple occasions on a wide spectrum of socio-developmental and sticky geo-economic issues, including resolution of boundary disputes. Optimism is in the air throughout the region despite tensions in the neighborhood. To underscore the seriousness of developments, prior to the summit, President Rahmon has visited Kazakhstan and Pres



ident Mirziyoyev has traveled to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and elsewhere. Presidents Japarov and Tokayev are in constant contact. Presidents Rahmon and Japarov are working through bilateral issues. Even the elusive president of Turkmenistan has spread his wings and engaged counterparts across the region; Berdimuhamedov has traveled to China three times in the last 12 months. And President Xi seems to be ubiquitous, recently traveling to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to discuss business rather than squeeze in a few photoshoots on his way somewhere else.

Bilateral and multilateral engagement

At the summit, the various leaders are expected to sign some 20 bilateral and multilateral agreements that will range from trade and investment to cultural exchanges and connectivity, that is, highways, railroads, ports, and digital and transit infrastructure. Regional economic integration will be at the top of the summit's agenda, with billions of dollars on the table. Without doubt, President Xi will touch on geopolitical crises and woes such as the Russo-Ukrainian war and Afghanistan,

while gamesmanship and inter-regional tensions will be handled behind closed doors. The leaders will not allow troublemakers and killjoys to throw monkey-wrenches into the summit's agenda. At a May 16 press conference, as if unable to hide China's role in the development of the region, Wang Wenbin, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, stated with apparent exuberance: "Over the past decade, we [China and Central Asian countries] have jointly implemented a number of major projects which have benefited the region and its people in various ways. "The China-Kazakhstan Horgos International Border Cooperation Center and the China-Kazakhstan Logistics Base in Lianyungang have been completed, providing a gateway to the Pacific for Central Asian countries. The Chinese-built tunnel of the Angren-Pap railway line, the longest tunnel in Central Asia [19.2 kilometers], saved local residents the trouble of climbing through the mountains or taking a detour via neighboring countries. "The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) highway has become an important international transportation route that runs smoothly through the region's mountainous terrain. "Four-fifths of the China-Europe Railway Express trains run through Central Asia. They are a steel caravan for the Eurasian continent. Last year, the total trade volume between China and Central Asian countries hit a record high of \$70 billion. "These tangible outcomes lay a solid foundation for the two sides' continued commitment to mutual respect, good neighborliness and friendship, mutual support in times of difficulties and win-win cooperation. "We believe that the summit in Xian, where the ancient Silk Road began, is set to reinvigorate the millennia-old trade route and herald a promising outlook for China-Central Asia cooperation. The summit will contribute to an even closer China-Central Asia community with a shared future."

While numbers and time frames are hard to verify, Taiwan News reported that "China's direct investment in Central Asia exceeded US\$15 billion by the end of March of this year.. More is in the pipeline. As I wrote in Asia Times in 2022, "Just as the June 2021 US-led 'Build Back Better World' (B3W) infrastructure initiative turned out to be a flop, so, in all likelihood, will the recently announced (June 2022) US\$600 billion joint EU/UK/US plan – 'Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment' (PGII) – meet the same fate. The failure of the domestic version of B3W in the United States is well known in Asia."

Regional integration

The summit may make some surprise announcements such as the further extension of a visa-free regimes between China and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (similar arrangements are in the works with the other countries); the signing of a memorandum of understanding to jointly develop an "Air Silk Road"; and the expansion across the region of trade and investment in yuan, especially given the recent jump in trade, between China and the entire region, as David Goldman has reported in Asia Times. In September 2022, Kazakhstan and China signed a memorandum to allow for the settlement of certain transactions in yuan. The decision to settle in yuan is in line with the Joint Statement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's summit in Uzbekistan last September, wherein countries agreed on a roadmap to widen the use of local currencies in trade. Besides advancing regional integration, after all is said and done, the China-Central Asia Summit may encourage Brussels and Washington to consider a foreign policy anchored more in realism and common sense than in moralizing and unhealthy gamesmanship. Let's wait and see.

US says Russia cannot win in Ukraine, Moscow sees long war ahead

Russia will not achieve a military victory in Ukraine and Kyiv's forces are unlikely to push back all Russian troops from their territory any time soon, the United States's high-ranking military official has said. "This war, militarily, is not going to be won by Russia. It's just not," General Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Thursday. Russia's original strategic objectives, including toppling the government in Kyiv, "are not achievable militarily", Milley told journalists after the conclusion of a virtual meeting of dozens of countries that are members of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which is also known as the Ramstein group. There are also hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers in Ukraine, which would make Kyiv's objective of recapturing all territory lost to Moscow's forces unlikely "in the near term", Milley said. "That means fighting is going to continue, it's going to be bloody, it's going to be hard. And at some point, both sides will either negotiate a settlement or they'll come to a military conclusion," he said. Milley's assessment adds to a number of forecasts that the war in Ukraine appears set to drag on, with neither side positioned to win a clear-cut victory and no negotiations currently taking place. Russia's former President Dmitry Medvedev, a key ally of President Vladimir Putin, also said Moscow's war in Ukraine could continue for decades. According to comments published by Russia's RIA news agency on Thursday, Medvedev described an ongoing conflict involving years of fighting with Ukraine, interspersed with multiple years of truces before fighting



renewed. "This conflict will last a very long time, most likely decades," the RIA news agency cited Medvedev as saying during a visit to Vietnam. "As long as there is such a power in place [in Kyiv], there will be, say, three years of truce, two years of conflict, and everything will be repeated," said Medvedev, now the deputy chairman of Putin's powerful Security Council. Known for regularly making hardline comments on Ukraine and those considered Moscow's enemies, Medvedev said earlier this year that a Russian defeat could trigger a nuclear war. Tensions between Moscow and Washington continues to grow as the US spearheads the push for international support and military aid for Ukraine, including coordinating arms supplies from dozens of countries. In an apparent policy U-turn, the US last week announced it would support giving Ukraine advanced US-made F-16 warplanes. In total, Ukraine's supporters have provided nearly \$65bn in security assistance to the country, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said at the press conference on Thursday.

No 'magic weapons'

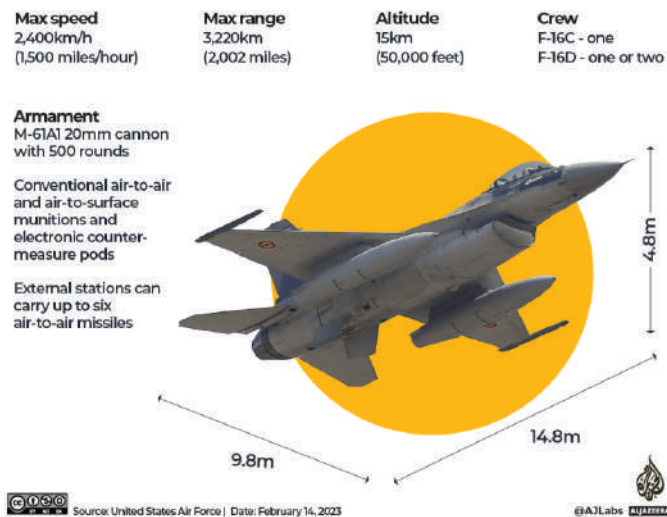
On Thursday, Kyiv's supporters "discussed plans for training Ukrainian pilots on fourth-generation fighter aircraft, including the F-16," Austin said, speaking alongside Milley, noting that "planning and executing this training will be a significant undertaking". Austin said the Dutch and Danish defence ministers are working with the US on jet fighter training for Ukraine and that Norway, Belgium, Portugal and Poland have already offered to contribute to the initiative. In addition, he said the allies would set up a fund so other nations could contribute to the overall effort.

Commenting on the F-16 fighters, Milley cautioned that they were not going to be "the magic weapon".

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

F-16 fighter jet

Ukraine is pushing for Western fourth-generation supersonic fighter jets, including the US F-16, to help it fight Russia. The US says it is discussing the request carefully.



"There are no magic weapons" – not the F-16s or other weapons, he said, noting that 10 F-16s could cost \$2bn, including maintenance.

"The Russians have a thousand fourth and fifth-generation fighters, so if you're going to contest Russia in the air, you're going to need

a substantial amount of fourth and fifth-generation fighters," he said. F-16s have a future role as part of Ukraine's air capabilities but it is "going to take a considerable length of time to build up an air force that's the size and scope and scale that would be necessary".

Air defence systems are still the weapons that Ukraine needs most in the broader effort to control the airspace, he said.

The US is poised to announce up to \$300m more in military aid for Ukraine comprised mainly of ammunition, two officials told the Reuters news agency. The package is expected to contain more Guided Multiple Launch Rockets (GMLRS) for HIMARS launchers as well as other ammunition. The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington DC-based think tank, said that "a long war" is not a Russian goal but a means of adapting to the situation in Ukraine after its plan for a swift victory failed. Russia's ability to sustain an extended military campaign in Ukraine is not assured, while a "long war" would allow Russia the time and space needed to rebuild its military forces, the institute said. "Ukrainian counteroffensives will deny the Kremlin a breather to replenish its resources, will further deplete Russia's offensive potential, and eventually enable Ukrainian forces to expel Russia from Ukraine," the ISW said.

"The Kremlin's 'long war' narrative reflects Putin's intent to rebuild Russia's large-scale warfighting capability. But it is also an information operation aimed to peel the West away from Ukraine. This information operation builds on previous Russian efforts, such as ceasefire narratives and nuclear blackmail," the ISW added.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/26/us-says-russia-cannot-win-in-ukraine-moscow-sees-long-war-ahead>

China and Saudi Arabia boycott G20 meeting held by India in Kashmir

By: Patrick Wintour

India's presidency of the G20 group of leading nations has become mired in controversy after China and Saudi Arabia boycotted a meeting staged in Kashmir, the first such gathering since India unilaterally brought Kashmir under direct control in August 2019. The meeting, a tourism working group attended by about 60 delegates from most G20 countries taking place from Monday to Wednesday, required a large show of security at Srinagar international airport.

In 2019 the Indian government stripped the disputed Muslim-majority region of semi-autonomy and split it into two federal territories in an attempt to integrate it fully into India. Indian authorities hoped the meeting would show that the controversial changes have brought "peace and prosperity" to the region and that it is a safe place for tourists. India's elite National Security Guard, including its counter-drone unit and marine commandos, were helping police and paramilitary forces to secure the event venues.

China has said it will not attend, citing its firm opposition "to holding any kind of G20 meetings in disputed territory". In April, Pakistan, which also lays claim to Kashmir but is not a G20 member, described the meeting as irresponsible. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Indonesia were also expected to stay away. The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti claimed India had turned the region into the equivalent of the Guantánamo Bay prison simply to hold a meeting on tourism. She also accused the



Bharatiya Janata party, the party of the prime minister, Narendra Modi, of hijacking the G20 for its promotional purposes. Last week Fernand de Varennes, the UN's special rapporteur on minority issues, issued a statement saying the G20 was "unwittingly providing a veneer of support to a facade of normalcy" when human rights violations, political persecution and illegal arrests were escalating in Kashmir.

He said the meeting risked normalising what some have described as a military occupation. The statement was criticised as baseless by India's permanent mission at the UN in Geneva. It was India's prerogative to hold G20 meetings in any part of the country, the mission said. India divided the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 to create two federally administered territories – Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. Ladakh is a disputed frontier region along the line of actual control between India and China, and both countries claim parts of it.

The chief coordinator for India's G20 presidency, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, said on

Sunday: “We have the highest representation from foreign delegations for the tourism working group meeting in Srinagar, than we have had in the previous working group meetings.

“Our experience is that in any working group meeting, to get such a large turnout of delegates not only from G20 countries but also from international organisations that are part of the G20 is an incredible process. If you have to do a working group on tourism in India, we have to do it in Srinagar. There is no option.” Britain’s high commissioner to India, Alex Ellis, said UK representatives would be attending the meeting. At a meeting between Modi and Rishi Sunak, the UK prime minister, at the G7 in Hiroshima, the two sides discussed progress on reaching a free trade deal. India remains angry at what it regards as a lax UK police reaction to an attack on the Indian high commission in London on 19 March by pro-Khalistan extremists. Security has been stepped up outside the commission.

The presidency of the G20 is rotated between members each year and the Indian presidency was always likely to prove controversial as India has close trading links with Russia and the Modi administration is keen to protect Russia from criticism by western members of the G20 over Ukraine. Kyiv has asked to attend a summit in September but the Indian government is arguing Ukraine is not relevant to the state of the world economy – the central purpose of the G20 – or to its chosen key agenda items of inclusive growth, debt restructuring and climate finance.

Vladimir Putin did not attend the G20 summit staged by Indonesia last year but instead sent his veteran foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/22/china-saudi-arab>

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IBAN: GB89LoyD30962612534160

Hoping for an encouraging response for our readers for this noble cause.

May Allah be with you - Amen

Ottoman Empire And Its Viziers

By Zoya Ansari

Ottoman Empire was a sprawling geographical entity spanning both Asia and Europe known to be a powerful force in international arena. The sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire was confined to the family of its founder Ottoman who always became Sultan and there was no deviation from this basic principle throughout the six centuries of Ottoman rule. With the passage of time the Sultan left the centre stage and his nominees ran the empire. In this context, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire was considered the second most powerful state position in the sprawling realm but his position was certainly not a bed of roses and he was widely rated to be a whisker away from potential ruin and often faced a grisly death due to the whimsical and arbitrary mood swings of his political master. After the position being assigned to him he had to remain at a careful guard lest the Sultan took an adverse impression of any activity associated with at him. Being grand vizier was not very secure in the Ottoman Empire, as it depended on the favour of the sultan. The dangerous position of the incumbent of this office could be gauged by the fact that forty-four grand viziers were executed at the order of the sultan. After becoming grand vizier the incumbent had to tread dangerous and unpredictable path completely at the mercy of the Sultan known for his whimsical decision making life hanging in the balance. Throughout the incumbency of the Ottoman Empire 284 held this position fewer than half were Turkish as the breakup shows: 121 Turks, 22 Albanians, 10 Georgians, 10 Bosnians, six Abazians, five Circassians, three

Greek, two Italians, two Herzegovinians, one Arabic, one Russian and one Bulgarian. The Ottomans, as they grew larger and expanded further in Anatolia, drew on the Seljuks of Konya and earlier Muslim states going back as far as the Abbasid caliphate for examples of how to establish their state administration. At the head of the state was the caliph or sultan and just beneath him was his deputy known as grand vizier. Under the Ottoman Turks this person was called the vezir-i alem or the sadr-i azam and it was described that the two titles were in use at the same time and both indicate something similar to the highest dignitary. In the modern parlance historians often try to equate this office with that of the prime minister but the translation of choice remains grand vizier. This official might at times be merely the executive arm of the ruler or he might have held the right to act in place of the ruler. This depended upon how active the monarch was. The first Ottoman grand vizier is considered to have been Candarli Halil Pasha under Sultan Mehmed Fatih although members of this family had served the Ottoman rulers for four generations. Halil Pashaa was the grand vizier throughout the conquest of Constantinople but was dismissed and executed the same year probably because Mehmed Fatih suspected him of treachery involving the Byzantines, ending a brilliant career in ignominy. When the sultan next appointed a grand vizier, he chose someone who was from among the “kapı kulu,” or slave officials, rather than a free Muslim. This situation continued until Suleiman the Magnificent who wished to retire towards the end

of his reign delegated more and more authority to the grand vizier. Suleiman's immediate successors were also more concerned with their personal interests than with governing the state and allowed the grand vizier more leeway in making his own decisions. As was the requirements of the time the duties and responsibilities of grand vizier were extensive and interestingly though he was the Sultan's absolute representative, he had no direct authority over two important institutions of state, namely, the Imperial Household and the Learned Profession but otherwise he was all-powerful, controlling all appointments both in the army and the administration. He was further required not only to manage the affairs of the army but also, if necessary, to command it in war, and to supervise the preservation of law and order in the capital. Moreover, he represented the Sultan as chief dispenser of justice. The investiture of this office was that the person who was chosen to be the grand vizier was entrusted with the sultan's seal. Dismissal would be announced by asking for the return of the seal. There was more than one type of seals given to the vizier as Sultan Ahmed III's seal was made of gold but the seal given to Vizier Nevsehirli Damad Ibrahim Pasha as an emerald signet ring. Whatever the type of seal it was invariably was used not only for signing documents but also had to be used to seal a number of depositories and records. It was the sign of authority vested with the vizier and was considered an honour. As the absolute representative of the sultan, the grand vizier was also committed to maintaining various ceremonial practices. Anyone entering the presence of the sultan was obliged to kiss the hem of his robe or his sleeve. The same applied to anyone who approached the grand vizier. This apparently applied to certain members of the imperial household who were assigned to wait upon the pleasure of the grand vizier, even though

he had no specific control over them. Until 1654, the grand vizier maintained his position out of his own private house although that might be better described as a mansion or even a palace. It was highly unlikely that the sultan would appoint a man of scant means to the position. After all, the ruler would expect the grand vizier to be able to support his position and carry on a number of rather expensive traditions that had arisen over the years. Of course he would be expected to present valuable gifts to the sultan on special occasions. However, in 1654 Sultan Mehmed IV presented his grand vizier Dervish Mehmed Pasha with an official residence that became known as the Sublime Porte or Bab-i-Aali. It was large so that it could include that various bureaucrats and their staffs needed to run the empire. During his tenure in office the grand vizier lived a life of grandeur and it is mentioned that Grand Vizier Azem Ibrahim Pasha, in particular, was remarkable in all his grandness, accompanied by other dignitaries, no fewer than three rows deep. Wherever he looked, people bowed before him and showed deference to him as the second in command of the empire. He responded in a mild and dignified manner, with a slight inclination of the head. However, the end of grand viziers career and life could be swift and brutal as could be borne out by the example of Damad Ali Pasha who was disastrously defeated at the Battle of Petrovaradin in 1716, Sultan Ahmed III immediately sent orders for him to be executed even though the man was married to his daughter. Ali Pasha escaped execution because he was fortunate enough to have been killed during the battle and he was even proclaimed a martyr. On the other hand Damad Ibrahim Pasha was given up to mob justice by the sultan in order to save his own life in 1730.

IMF expects UK economy to avoid recession

By: Jemma Dempsey

The UK economy is expected to avoid a recession this year, the International Monetary Fund has said, after it sharply upgraded its growth forecast. It now expects the UK to grow by 0.4% in 2023, whereas last month it forecast the economy would contract by 0.3%. Growth would be helped by "resilient demand" and falling energy prices. But the IMF said inflation "remains stubbornly high" and that higher interest rates will need to remain in place if it is to be brought down. Speaking in London, the IMF's managing director Kristalina Georgieva said the upgraded growth figure had been sparked by falling energy prices, easing concerns over Brexit and improved financial stability. She added that the government had taken "decisive and responsible steps in recent months".

But Ms Georgieva also said now was not the time to look at cutting taxes, warning that at the moment "neither is it affordable, nor is it desirable". The IMF report noted that the risks for the UK economy were "considerable", with the biggest danger coming from "greater-than-anticipated persistence in price- and wage-setting", which would keep inflation higher for longer. It also said the UK must address the record numbers of people not working, many of whom have long-term illnesses. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said the report "credits our action to restore stability and tame inflation".

"If we stick to the plan, the IMF confirm our long-term growth prospects are stronger than in Germany, France and Italy." Pat McFadden, Labour's shadow chief secretary to the



Treasury, said the report revealed "the fragility of the UK economy, highlighting the slowdown in economic activity since last year and stubbornly high prices".

Rates warning

The IMF said faster-than-usual pay growth and global supply chains returning to normal after the pandemic had also contributed to its growth upgrade. However, it noted that the outlook for growth "remains subdued". The IMF forecasts the economy will grow by 1% in 2024, rising to 2% in 2025 and 2026.

It also predicts that inflation will not return to the Bank of England's target of 2% until mid-2025, which is later than it had forecast previously. "Further monetary tightening will likely be needed," the agency said, and interest rates "may have to remain high for longer to bring down inflation more assuredly".

Earlier, Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey, told MPs on the Treasury Select Committee inflation had "turned the corner". However, he admitted that inflation is currently

0.8% higher than the Bank of England had expected in February, blaming the high price of food and goods like clothing and footwear as underlying reasons. The Bank has put up interest rates 12 times in a row in an attempt to bring down inflation, but this has pushed up costs for many mortgage holders. On interest rates, Mr Bailey said: "I can't tell you whether we're at the peak. I think we're nearer to the peak than we were." With this IMF health check on the UK's economic recovery, the chancellor gets some ammo in his battles with the opposition, inside and outside his party. The UK this year is no longer bottom of the G7 or G20 league tables. The IMF also goes out of its way to praise UK progress, the Budget, and the response to banking pressures and the prime minister's Northern Ireland Brexit deal.

The result is a punchy upgrade within just a few weeks from decline of 0.3% to growth of 0.4%. To be clear, this is closer to zero than normal growth, and definitely not sunlit uplands. But it does also significantly exceed the worst recessionary forecasts from around the time of the mini-budget, and the series of global crises. The IMF also helped the chancellor in his battles with the right of the party over both Brexit and tax cuts. The Windsor Framework has boosted investment confidence, it said, and the time and place for changes to tax and spend policy had not come. But the IMF also deployed a new key phrase, warning against "premature celebration" on inflation. Its managing director Kristalina Georgieva told me: "What is most concerning is food prices. Even with energy prices, trimming down, staying as high as it is, it does mean that interest rates will have to remain higher for longer."

The discussion around interest rates has somewhat shifted from 'how high?' to 'for how long?'" That was a clear hint that expecta-

tations that interest rates could be expected to fall within a year may be off the mark. Sticky inflation, and especially food price inflation, is the enduring concern. The IMF works to stabilise the global economy and one of its key roles is to act as an early economic warning system. Last year, the fund openly criticised the short-lived plans by the UK government, then led by Liz Truss, for tax cuts. It said the measures, which were unveiled in September's mini-budget but quickly scrapped, were likely to fuel the cost of living crisis. One of the criticisms of the mini-budget was that there was no analysis from the government's independent forecasting body, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). In its latest forecast, the IMF recommended that all major fiscal policy changes should be accompanied by OBR forecasts.

Borrowing jumps

Earlier on Tuesday, official figures showed UK government borrowing hit a higher-than-expected £25.6bn in April, the second-highest borrowing figure for the month since records began in 1993. The borrowing figure - which represents the difference between spending and tax income - was £11.9bn more than for the same month last year, with inflation pushing up interest payments on debt partly to blame. The Office for National Statistics said interest payments on central government debt hit £9.8bn in April. That was £3.1bn more than a year earlier, and was the highest April figure since monthly records began in 1997. Inflation figures due on Wednesday are expected to show the rate falling below 10% for the first time since last August.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-65669399>

The 82-year-old female architect working to flood-proof Pakistan

At 82, architect Yasmeen Lari is forging a path in fortifying Pakistan's rural communities living on the front lines of climate change. Lari, Pakistan's first female architect, ditched a lifetime of multimillion-dollar projects in the megacity of Karachi to develop pioneering flood-proof bamboo houses. The few pilot settlements already constructed are credited with saving families from the worst of the catastrophic monsoon flooding that put a third of the country underwater last year.

"We continued to live in them," said Khomo Kohli, a 45-year-old resident of Pono Colony village, located a few hundred kilometres outside of Karachi. "The rest of the residents had to move onto the road where they lived for two months until the water receded." Now, Lari is campaigning to scale up the project to one million houses made from affordable local materials, bringing new jobs to the most vulnerable areas. "I call it a kind of co-building and co-creation because the people have an equal part in embellishing it and making it comfortable for themselves," she said. The architect, who trained in the United Kingdom, is behind some of Karachi's most notable buildings, including brutalist constructions such as the Pakistan State Oil headquarters, as well as a string of luxury homes. As she was considering retirement, a series of natural disasters – including a massive 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods – stiffened her resolve to continue working with her Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, which manages her rural projects. "I had to find the solution, or find a way by which I could build up the capacities of people so that they could fend for them



selves, rather than waiting for outside help," she told AFP news agency. "My motto is zero carbon, zero waste, zero donor, which I think leads to zero poverty," she said. Climate change is making monsoon rains heavier and more unpredictable, scientists say, raising the urgency to flood-proof the country – particularly as the poorest live in the most vulnerable areas. Pakistan, with the world's fifth-largest population, is responsible for less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions but is one of the nations most vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather. Pono Colony, with about 100 houses, was developed just months before catastrophic monsoon rains arrived last summer and displaced eight million people.





The village's elevated homes are protected from rushing water, while their bamboo skeletons – pierced deep into the ground – can withstand pressure without being uprooted.

Known locally as “chanwara”, the mud huts are an improved take on the traditional single-room houses dotted along the landscape of southern Sindh province and Rajasthan state in India.

They require only locally available materials: lime, clay, bamboo and thatching. With straightforward training to locals, they can be assembled at a cost of about \$170 – around an eighth of the cost of a cement and brick house.

In rural Sindh, tens of thousands of people are still displaced and stagnant water stands in large parts of farmland almost a year after the country's worst-ever floods. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank in a joint study estimated Pakistan sustained \$32bn in damage and economic losses and would require \$16bn for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Lari recalls working on social housing in Lahore in the 1970s when local women pored over her plans and probed her on where their chickens would live.

“Those chickens have really remained with me, the women's needs are really the uppermost when I am designing,” she said.

This time around, the redesign of traditional stoves has become a significant feature – now lifted off the floor.

“Earlier, the stove would have been on the ground level and so it was immensely unhygienic. The small children would burn themselves on the flames, stray dogs would lick pots and germs would spread,” said Champa Kanji, who has been trained by Lari's team to build stoves for homes across Sindh.

“Seeing women becoming independent and empowered gives me immense pleasure,” Lari said.

Lari's work has been recognised by the Royal Institute of British Architects, which awarded her the 2023 Royal Gold Medal for her dedication to using architecture to change people's lives. “An inspirational figure, she moved from a large practice centred on the needs of international clients to focussing solely on humanitarian causes,” RIBA president Simon Allford said.

“This is wonderful feeling,” Lari said. “But of course, it also makes my tasks harder. I have got to make sure that I now deliver.”

<https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/5/24/the-82-year-old-female-architect-working-to-flood-proof-pakistan>

Pakistan's moment of peril



By: Maleeha Lodhi

NEVER before in its turbulent history has Pakistan witnessed what came to pass in recent weeks. Violence and wanton destruction of government buildings and military property by PTI followers after their leader's (temporary) arrest. An angry protest demonstration by ruling coalition parties outside the Supreme Court, which called on the chief justice (CJ) to resign for 'favouring Imran Khan'; some leaders even threatening "dire consequences" from any court action against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The overarching political reality today is resistance by political parties to play by the rules. For months the government-opposition confrontation has been so fierce and unrestrained that no longer are any rules respected by the warring sides. Meanwhile, the military, furious at allegations by opposition leader Imran Khan and vandalism of army installations, lashed out at "politically motivated" attacks and pledged to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice under army laws.

For his part, Khan alleged a 'planned conspiracy' to defame his party and create the justification to ban PTI. When a crackdown was launched against his party cadres and several members began to quit PTI, his tone softened but he still claimed he was being targeted to prevent his return to power. In another twist in the crisis, the Lahore High Court struck down decisions of the Election Commission and National Assembly Speaker on the resignations of 72 PTI lawmakers, who Khan then asked to return to parliament to protest there. The raging political crisis has dragged all

state institutions into the eye of a perfect storm. Polarisation has reached an unprecedented level, with any middle ground in politics eliminated as a consequence. Even a semblance of national unity lies shattered. With neither side willing to back down, the political system is broken and democracy imperilled by the no-holds-barred power tussle. Endless political turmoil has pushed the country to the edge of the abyss. The authority of state institutions is being eroded in a no-holds-barred political battle. All state institutions have come under assault.

The ruling coalition defied the Supreme Court order on holding Punjab elections and made the chief justice the target of virulent attack to force him to step down. To pre-empt any contempt action by the court it is also planning a 'reference' for 'misconduct' against the CJ, as indicated by a resolution adopted by the National Assembly last week. The government has also declared it won't accept any verdict by the apex court, accusing it of being partisan. In its confrontation with the SC, it has wrapped itself in the principle of parliamentary supremacy, throwing the very notion of separation of powers out of the window. It also adopted legislation to curb the CJ's powers. For its part, the PTI leadership has questioned the military's role with Khan hurling one allegation after another at the army leadership, including the accusation that it seeks to disqualify and eliminate him from politics. Such attacks prompted a predictably strong response from the military's public relations wing. The ongoing political crisis

has also entailed unseemly clashes between institutions — the executive and parliament with the higher judiciary, the government with the presidency and the Election Commission with the Supreme Court. In each instance one institution has accused the other of overstepping its constitutional authority. When the pillars of state clash or come under attack by political leaders, then whatever the aim, the consequence is to bring their credibility into question and reputation into disrepute. This can involve lasting institutional damage which, as history has shown, takes a long time to undo. By undermining public trust in institutions, political actors ignore its deleterious consequences. The authority of these institutions rests principally on their legitimacy. When this is undermined, whether intended or unintended, the state's authority is eroded. And when brinkmanship rather than restraint is on display the entire edifice of governance is exposed to the risk of paralysis and breakdown. This has important implications for economic governance, which is the core task of the state. The economy cannot be effectively managed in an environment where there is erosion of institutional authority and nonstop political turmoil. The implementation of economic decisions, especially the tough decisions needed today, rests on public compliance and acceptance of the legitimacy of government actions in this regard. But in an atmosphere where all state authority is being challenged, economic decisions too come into public question. This can lead to weak compliance or non-compliance with policy decisions, which in turn can jeopardise economic recovery. At a time when the worst economic crisis in Pakistan's history needs to be seriously confronted the country can least afford the erosion of state authority.

ing it from taking timely and prudent decisions to avert an economic breakdown. Heightened political instability is exacting a heavy toll on the economy. The country remains on the verge of default while a cost-of-living crisis is creating conditions for possible public unrest down the road.

In this complex situation, questions are being raised by some quarters whether general elections, due in October, can be held in such a toxic and fraught atmosphere. There is certainly a need to bring down the political temperature and establish a modicum of calm for the peaceful conduct of elections. But any move to postpone elections beyond the constitutionally stipulated timeframe will be a recipe for disaster and cause more, not less, political turmoil. In fact, announcing a date for elections is still the only way the country can extricate itself from the escalating political crisis, which is endangering both the economy and national unity. Ideally, a political ceasefire and minimum consensus is needed between rival parties and leaders on an agreed path to elections and rules for its conduct. But the failure of talks between the government and opposition have put paid to such an outcome. The widening crackdown against the opposition has now made any resumption of dialogue impossible.

Even so, the only way out of the present political quagmire is for the government to put the country's interests before its own and fix a date for elections, to enable people to decide who should govern them. In the absence of this, the country's very future will be at stake.

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

Already the political battle has proved to be a fatal distraction for the government, prevent-

Pakistan's political crisis goes viral

By: Arif Rafiq

The removal of Imran Khan as prime minister of Pakistan in April last year in a vote of no confidence by Parliament triggered a political realignment among Pakistanis that is having ripple effects around the world. Networks tied to the two poles in this conflict – Khan and the country's army leadership – have brought their battle to the halls of the US Congress and London's Mayfair district, as well as TikTok, Twitter and YouTube. The center of gravity is Khan, a celebrity cricketer-turned-philanthropist and populist politician. Since losing the support of Pakistan's powerful generals – a process that began in late 2021 in part due to a conflict over army personnel changes – Khan has leveraged his strong organic media reach and popularity in the diaspora, introducing new volatility to Pakistani politics. Now, the Pakistan Army is on the defensive in ways it hasn't been in more than a decade. Khan is testing whether the army can maintain its dominance over the political and information domains in a controlled, semi-democratic system. In just the past week, large parts of Pakistan have fallen under a mix of emergency rule and martial law. The last time the Pakistan Army faced a serious media challenge was in 2007. Then, the heavy-handed treatment of the country's deposed chief justice triggered a protest movement against military ruler Pervez Musharraf. The Lawyers' Movement, as it was known, maintained a symbiotic relationship with Pakistan's cable news channels, which emerged during Musharraf's era. The movement was also supported by opposition parties. News channels aired live coverage of the movement's protests deep into the night.

The Musharraf government took some channels off the air, but this triggered a backlash. While the military has since resorted to this tactic again – as well as with violence – it has also cultivated its own network of allied channels and media personalities. Over the years, Pakistan's Inter-Services Press Relations (ISPR), the public relations wing of the military, has become the country's biggest media group, controlling journalists, making movies, and operating on social-media networks. Some of this was deployed to counter what the army said was "fifth-generation warfare" from India, a world-leading disseminator of fake news. But the primary theater of battle in the Pakistan Army's information wars was, and remains, at home. By 2018, much of the army's online support came from volunteers who were also supporters of Imran Khan. When the army's split with Khan last year became clear after the no-confidence vote, these digital janissaries followed the ousted prime minister. But because many of these supporters come from army families, the resulting clash is very much one within the broader military clan. Fight to claw back control The army has since struggled to regain dominance of the information domain from Khan. Early in this crisis, it used coercive tactics against prominent journalists. Some were arrested. Others were forced to flee the country. One was even killed in mysterious circumstances in Kenya. Those forced off air have since moved online. Disaffected retired army officers have also become social-media stars, gaining hundreds of thousands of subscribers on YouTube. They're among the army's most potent critics, often

claiming to have inside information. The challenge is so serious that the army has, in a veiled reference to these men, referred to them as “externally sponsored” forces waging “propaganda warfare” against the military. The army has also struggled to control Khan’s digital native millennial and Gen Z supporters. It’s one thing to manage a few dozen news channels. But today, Pakistan’s tens of millions of mobile=phone users are content creators or news channels on their own. The army has responded with analog tactics – such as a press conference featuring the country’s military spy chief – only to find the fear-some official mocked in memes that go viral in an instant. Now, the Pakistan Army is on a counteroffensive against the popular Khan and his digital army. Leveraging supporters’ violence after Khan was arrested on May 9 on corruption charges, the army has turned to brute force, including unlawful abductions. When released, Khan’s defenders issue public apologies clearly made under duress. The government of Pakistan has tried to spin its own narrative – posting ads on TikTok, for instance, calling on Pakistanis to “condemn the acts perpetrated disgraceful incidents.”

It has also brought back old hands from the days of countering fifth-generation warfare, some of whom appear to be drafting pro-government counternarratives suspiciously crafted in immaculate English. Intimidation may silence young Pakistanis, but it will only deepen the rift between the army and the broader society. A failing economy and growing authoritarianism will accelerate the flight of Pakistani professionals. The Pakistani diaspora – once a reliable advocate of cooperation between their native and adopted countries – will begin to resemble Iranians in the US and Canada who lobby against the Islamic Republic. In the end, the Pakistan Army, as it has done so often, will likely turn friends into foes, and win the battle but lose the war.

People convinced time travel is real as 'Nike shoes' spotted in 400-year-old painting



A portrait in the National Gallery has left art fans puzzled after a mum and daughter duo spotted what appears to be proof of time travel on the canvas. Portrait of a Boy, painted by Dutch Master Ferdinand Bol in the 17th century, shows an eight-year-old boy standing in the foreground holding a goblet, which he rests on a table adorned with a red cloth. The boy can be seen sporting a black jacket and cape, a white shirt with ruffled sleeves, auburn socks and black boots. However, upon closer inspection, the boots appear to have what looks like a white Nike tick on one side – despite being painted more than 300 years before the brand was founded in 1964. Eagle-eyed Fiona Foscett, 57, spotted the fresh garbs during a visit to the London gallery with her daughter Holly, 23. Fiona, from the Isle of Wight, told The Sun: "I said to my daughter, 'Hold on, is he wearing a pair of Nike trainers?' 'Looking at the age, he must have got his hands on the first pair of Nike trainers ever made. Or is he actually a time traveller?'"

<https://rb.gy/c3nnz>

Europe's Turkish diaspora split as large numbers vote in election runoff



By: Kate Connolly in Berlin and Jon Henley in Paris

Casting her ballot at the Turkish consulate in Berlin for Sunday's second round runoff in Turkey's presidential elections, Cansu Yeni said she and her country faced a make-or-break moment. The 32-year-old was one of many young people who moved to the German capital from Istanbul five years ago in reaction to democratic backsliding under Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. "The country became a dictatorship," she said. "Me and my friends suffered a lot. Choosing who to vote for is an easy decision." Yeni is one of 3.4 million Turkish voters in Europe registered to cast their ballots abroad. In the first round the diaspora's choice was split quite clearly between larger and more-established communities, who backed the incumbent, and smaller, newer communities, who chose the opposition unity candidate, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The continent's two largest diasporas – Germany, with 1.5 million voters, and France, with 400,000 – and other decades-old communities such as those in the Netherlands and Belgium voted massively for Erdoğan. Almost 66% of Turkish voters in Germany backed the conservative incumbent. In France, the Netherlands and Belgium, also home to decades-old communities, the corresponding figures were 64%, 68% and 72% "You live abroad, you're not much affected by what's going on at home, yet you feel closer to it than to your adopted country – the temptation is to vote for someone who flatters your religious and national identity," said Claire Koç, a Franco-Turkish writer. On a recent day in the tree-lined grounds of the consulate in western



Berlin, those who were eligible to vote at one of the 17 polling stations across Germany, were being ushered into booths. A man with a megaphone directed the crowds. Instead of ticking a box, voters stamped ballot papers. For Rosa Burç, political sociologist and researcher at the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), this adds even more potency to the act of voting. "For many people that physical act of stamping has become a way for them to express a lot of their years of pent up anger and frustration," she said. Throughout the morning, a stream of shuttle buses and minivans pulled up in front of the consulate discharging voters from Berlin and other parts of Germany. In the courtyard the atmosphere was mostly upbeat, with people greeting and hugging each other, though sporadic scuffles broke out. Yeni, who works as an architect, said she had voted for Kılıçdaroğlu. "He says he will bring back democracy to the country and I believe him. He ran a very peaceful election campaign and this is what we need. Basically if he wins, many people will feel they can

return home, including me, because it's hard being an immigrant," she said. Gülden, 31, a retail worker who declined to give her surname, said she had come to "support our president". For her and her parents, who came to Germany as Gastarbeiter (guest workers) in the late 70s, Erdoğan is the only option. "He did a lot for our country so there are many, many reasons to vote for him," she said. Asked about his response to the recent earthquake, for which the government has faced huge criticism and been accused of incompetence, or his human rights record, she said: "He did a lot to help people after the earthquake. I see this for myself on A Haber [a private, pro-government Turkish TV news channel]. And he admitted he had made some mistakes and I respect him for that." As for his human rights, she added: "I don't know much about that as I'm living here but I haven't heard that there are any problems." Hüseyin, 68, a Turkish Kurd clutching amber prayer beads, who received political asylum in Germany five years ago, said he would meet friends at a roundabout cafe in Berlin's Kreuzberg district to watch the results on Sunday evening. "There are two people in this race," he said. "A democrat and a fascist. We want to get rid of the fascist so that we can go back home." Nearly 49% of people eligible in Germany turned out in the first round. The second round, voting for which closed on Tuesday, is thought to have attracted more voters. "Voters in Germany as elsewhere, consider this election as a significant juncture for Turkey, which has meant mobilisation has increased over the past week or so, with people feeling they have to make a very clear statement," said Burç. Holding his scottish terrier Charlie, 36-year-old Yasin Acarbaş, a Berlin resident who left Turkey a decade ago after the Gezi Park protests, said: "I don't feel I should have the right to vote when I'm not living in a country. But I feel it's necessary to use my vote for the last time in order to try to

get rid of Erdoğan." Elif, 36, a student, standing in front of a large Turkish flag stretched across the consulate railings taking selfies with three friends, said she had turned up to vote "so that Turkey wins". Born in Berlin to guest worker parents from Antalya, she said she feared the changes a Kılıçdaroğlu government might bring. "I'm concerned the country will go back to how it was 20 years ago, when many houses had no running water and no toilets," she said. "So it would be better to keep things just as they are."

In smaller and more recent communities in Europe, the narrative is very different. In places like the Baltic states, where polling stations have been opened for Turkish voters for the first time this year, Kılıçdaroğlu is the favourite. He garnered 80% of the vote in Lithuania, for example, where first-generation Turkish immigrants are in general much younger, more likely to be university-educated, and broadly pro-European. In Estonia, 91% of votes went to the opposition candidate, while in Poland he won 85%. In the UK, whose 130,000 immigrants from Turkey are mostly Turkish Cypriots, members of the Alevi religious minority or Kurds, Erdoğan won only 18% of the vote. Sweden, home to another Kurdish community that has led to tensions with Turkey, voted 53% for Kılıçdaroğlu and 44% for Erdoğan. After the closure of polling booths across Europe earlier this week, in a carefully coordinated operation, a cargo plane landed in each location to pick up the diaspora votes before flying them back to Ankara to be stored in the Turkish chamber of commerce until polls in Turkey close on Sunday evening.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/26/europe-s-turkish-diaspora-split-as-large-numbers-vote-in-election-runoff>

Forced Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights

By **Munazza Abbasi M.A LL.B (Hons)**



A Call for Justice! Legal response to the problem of involuntary unions

Justice Minister Bridget Prentice at the Ethnic Minority foundation seminar said forced marriage is “an appalling and indefensible practice,” which calls for the protection of the vulnerable.

Plans introduced to criminalise forced marriages

It is the cultural nature of the practice which has prevented authorities from intervening in the past, thus rendering prosecution for perpetrators a difficult task, it was considered to be a “taboo topic... where it is politically incorrect or culturally inappropriate to venture” (Per Sir Peter Singer, When is an arranged marriage a forced marriage?). It was seen as a danger zone for anyone who was not a part of the community in question to endeavour into. However, with forced marriage becoming a widely recognised problem, and along with honour crimes in general increasingly becoming a ‘media magnet’ the issue was brought to the foreground. This in turn led to wider Government initiatives to combat the problem.

While the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 was being agreed by parliament, the Government agreed to run a consultation on whether to create a specific offence of forcing someone to marry. This consultation was consequential of a case that came to the police in December 2005. The case involved two men being arrested by the police threatening to kill and kidnap a member of their family, who was forcibly put on the plane and taken abroad for a forced marriage. The victim had been threatened with violence

and had no resort to turn for help. The police, with help from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Forced Marriage Units, resolved the matter and the victim’s safety was upheld. However, in most cases, the issue is not resolved as easily. Subsequently, plans were undertaken to identify a solution by which victims’s rights could be secured against a forced marriage. One of the major plans included a consultation report launched by the Government on whether or not a specific offence should be created to regulate the practice. The report examined the implications of creating a specific criminal offence of forcing someone into marriage.

The practicalities of a possible criminal offence

There are a number of options that the Government would consider if a new specific offence was created. The practicalities of these are discussed.

1. Grouping and renaming existing criminal activities: Creating a specific offence of forcing someone into marriage could only be used if the perpetrator had committed one of the criminal activities found in the existing criminal law, together with the intention of carrying out the act of forcing someone into marriage without their free and full consent. For example, a parent who used physical duress on their child to force them to consent to the marriage could be prosecuted. However, a parent who emotionally blackmails their child that they would never speak to them again if they did not marry the spouse of their choice could not be prosecuted. Although this option would make it easier for authorities to

prosecute under existing criminal offences, it does not acknowledge that forcing someone into marriage through duress is wrong.

2. Creating a new offence of threatening to commit existing offences with the intention of forcing someone into marriage:

This option would include prosecuting, for example, a brother who threatens to beat or murder his sister if she did not go ahead with the marriage. The perpetrator would be prosecuted for threatening to assault, inflict harm or murder. However, the disadvantage in this is the same as the set back in the above option. There would be no acknowledgement of threatening to force someone into marriage.

3. A criminal offence encompassing all the unacceptable behaviour (whether criminal or not) intended in forcing someone into marriage: This option recognises the above disadvantages, as it would cover any forms of threats and criminal actions incorporated in the act of forcing someone into marriage. Therefore, whether it is a threat by a parent to beat their child if they failed to consent to the marriage, if they did in fact use physical force, or emotional blackmail was used to extract consent from the victim, they would be prosecuted for any or all of the acts. This would send a clear message that it is unacceptable to coerce someone into a union that is not out of their free will, whether that coercion is violent or non-violent. However, it would be difficult to assign the level to which the law can extend in defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (particularly with emotional pressure), and as there is no single individual solely responsible for the acts, it is difficult to determine exactly who can be prosecuted, as there are often a number of people that have contributed to the situation, to varying degrees.

4. Creating a new offence of persecuting those facilitating or bearing witness to a marriage which is known or suspected to be forced:

This option could prove to be very inequitable towards an officiating registrar, Priest or Imam who conducts the marriage of someone, whom they know did not agree to the marriage. In most cases, these witnesses, religious leaders and registrars are not the primary perpetrators. Therefore, punishing them would be punishing the wrong person, as many of these authorities would generally condemn the practice. In addition, victims would prefer to have the issue involved in the behaviour towards them before their marriage addressed, rather than the marriage itself addressed. None of the above options suggest a proposition that would be sufficient to implement. Although there was no clear decision made by the respondents to this Government consultation document on whether it would be a good initiative to create a specific offence, the majority felt that the disadvantages of creating a new legislation would outweigh the advantages, thus driving the problem further reluctant to come forward. Various arguments were put forward by respondents.

Arguments For and Against Criminalisation

Respondents who favoured the initiative felt that the introduction of a new offence could challenge people's views about forced marriage. This could in turn lead to fewer cases of forced marriage. A new offence could have a strong deterrent effect with people being more reluctant towards forcing someone into marriage for of being prosecuted. Subsequently, relationships within the family could improve, as it could empower young people with more tools to negotiate with their parents. In some cases, it might help parents facing pressure from relatives. It would not merely help parents to build an understanding, but also there may be some police officers, teachers and others who don't know that forced marriage is wrong and that they have the power to tackle it. A new offence could

simplify and clarify matters for public sector employees and give them the confidence to tackle it. From the point of view of these public sector employees, a new offence could generally make it easier to take action against perpetrators. Regardless of the above advantages, there are more serious disadvantages which include a risk that the fear of their families being prosecuted may stop victims from asking for help. Many victims who ask for help at present first confirm that their families will not get into trouble. This disadvantage would outweigh the benefit that families could be brought closer to each other in understanding and affection. In effect there is a risk that parents may take children abroad, and marry them off or hold them there, at an earlier age to avoid increased risks of prosecution in Britain. This in turn could lead to an increase in the overwhelming figure of child marriages, and child abuse. Also, the families concerned may not feel that such an offence affects them because most of them may believe that their children do consent to the marriage, even though they have pressured them. Some suggest that there are already sufficient criminal offences and protective measures that can be used, instead of implementing a new offence, which could in advance disproportionately impact on Black and Minority Ethnic communities and might be misinterpreted as an attack on those communities. There is a belief that there are other better non-legislative means of working within communities to change views and tackle the abuse. Due to the difficulty in collecting evidence and the reluctance of many victims to testify against family members it may be difficult to bring a successful prosecution. This could devalue a new offence. Increased risks of prosecution or threat of prosecution would make it harder for victims to reconcile with their families, and the increased involvement in criminal prosecutions could be harrowing for victims.

2000-year-old 'computer' leaves scientists puzzled

The discovery of the extraordinarily intricate wreck of a 2,000-year-old "computer" has left scientists puzzled. Discovered from inside a Greek shipwreck in 1901, the Antikythera mechanism, an astrological calendar, has been termed "the first computer" and has amazed researchers ever since. The timepiece, a hand-powered time-keeping instrument, used a wing-up system to track the celestial times of the sun, moon, and planets. It served as a calendar as well, recording lunar phases and eclipse dates, Indy100 reported. Although it appeared to be quite straightforward, the mechanism was actually technologically more advanced than any tool created over the following 1,000 years. Experts at University College London conducted research into the device using 3D computer modelling to help them unravel its workings and show a "genius innovation." Adam Wojcik, a materials scientist at UCL, said at the time: "We believe that our reconstruction fits all the evidence that scientists have gleaned from the extant remains to date." According to their theory, as the ancient Greeks thought the sun and planets rotated around Earth rather than the sun, the gadget is believed to track the motion of the sun, moon, and planets on concentric rings. "Solving this complex 3D puzzle reveals a creation of genius—combining cycles from Babylonian astronomy, mathematics from Plato's Academy, and ancient Greek astronomical theories," the researchers said in Scientific Reports.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1075067-2000-year-old-computer-leaves-scientists-puzzled>

UN Rapporteurs Highlight Hate Crimes Against Ahmadis

By: Xari Jalil

On 31 March 2023, four UN special rapporteurs sent a letter to the Pakistani government expressing concern on rising cases of atrocities, violence and discrimination against the Ahmadi religious minority community in Pakistan. The rapporteurs who wrote the letter included Fernand de Varennes, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and Nazila Ghanea Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. In the letter they highlighted their concerns over hate speech and incitement to violence against the Ahmadis, including attacks against places of worship, etc.

Acts of Violence

Based on received information, the letter said that hate speech, and intolerance against the Ahmadis had risen between 2022 and early 2023. In 2022, a leader of the Tehreek-e Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), Muhammad Naeem Chattha Qadri, incited physical violence against Ahmadi pregnant women to “make sure that no new Ahmadis are born.” During his speech in a location in Mandi Bahaudin, near Lahore, he also said that blasphemers should be decapitated. He was seconded by Syed Muhammad Sibtain Shah Naqvi, founder and principal of Markaz Imam Bukhari Sargodha, who said that if an Ahmadi’s house was on fire, “one should pour oil on it, rather than water.” From December 2022, attacks and hate crimes against Ahmadis grew sharply. On 24 December 2022, a ‘Khatme-Nabuwat’ WhatsApp group was created, com-

prising hundreds of members. Similar calls for violence circulated via this WhatsApp Group, including a video calling upon Muslims to “cut the tongue”, “strike down the hand” of Quran desecraters, and to not rest until the last “Qadiani” [pejorative of Ahmadi] unalive. A series of attacks against Ahmadi places of worship were reported, from December 2022 to date. During the night between December 7 and 8, Gujranwala police itself destroyed the minarets of an Ahmadiyya place of worship in Baghanpura, Gujranwala. Once again, on 10 January 2023, police knocked down the minarets of a century-old Ahmadiyya place of worship in Moti Bazaar, Wazirabad. These incidents took place after violent statements were made by anti Ahmadi activists. On 18 January 2023, in yet another incident, perpetrators vandalized two minarets of Ahmadiyya worship place on Martin Road in Karachi. They climbed the minarets using a ladder and smashed to bits the upper part of a minaret by a sledgehammer. On 22 January, perpetrators desecrated Ahmadiyya graves at 89 GB Ratan in Faisalabad. On 2 February, a group of anti-Ahmadiyya people destroyed the minarets of the Ahmadiyya Hall built in 1950 in Saddar, Karachi. Around five to 10 miscreants climbed the wall and razed the minarets using a hammer, while shouting anti-Ahmadiyya slogans. The following day, on 3 February, an Ahmadi place of worship was set on fire, in the Noor Nagar district of Umerkot. Perpetrators also damaged the minarets of the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Goth Chaudhary Javed Ahmed at Goth Ghazi Khan Mirani, in district Mirpurkhas.

Declaration as non-Muslims

On March 7, the District Bar Council of Gujranwala, Punjab issued a notice that lawyers who wish to be admitted to the Bar Council must provide an affidavit condemning Mirza Ghulam Ahmed Qadiani, founder of the Ahmadiyya community, as a liar and that his followers were not Muslims despite their self-identification as Muslims. The text read: "I am Muslim and have unconditional belief in Khatm e Nabuwat and finality of Prophethood of Holy Prophet (P B U H). I do not accept anyone who claims to be a Prophet after the Holy Prophet (P B U H) by amending the known definition of the word, Prophet. I do not accept such claimant of Prophecy as Prophet or Religious Preacher. I do not consider such person Muslim. I consider Mirza Ghulam Ahmed Qadiani, liar (God forbid) and his Lahori and Qadiani followers, non-Muslims." The Special Rapporteurs have severely condemned this act, and have expressed concern over the obligation to provide an affidavit declaring oneself Muslim and not accepting other beliefs in order to be qualified to join the bar. They stated that this was a violation of the freedom of religion and the belief of those Ahmadis who sought this membership. Moreover, it showed there was a lack of independence of lawyers when it came to practicing their profession without any interference from the state.

Jillani Judgement of 2014

The letter reminded the Pakistan government of the Supreme Court's suo moto decision of 2014 where it had given eight directives concerning the protection of religious minorities in Pakistan. To this day the directives have not been fully implemented. Expressing their alarm about the multiple incidents of vandalization of Ahmadi religious buildings, the special rapporteurs highlighted that the Supreme Court of Pakistan had issued a decision (PLD 2014 SC 699) guaranteeing the protection of all places of worship. In the decision it had requested the Government of

Pakistan to establish a special task force for the protection of places of worship by minorities. We express our serious concern on the lack of effective protection by authorities of such places of worship as well as the situation of risk and lack of protection of individuals belonging to the Ahmadi religious minority in Pakistan. In this context, the rapporteurs have asked the government of Pakistan to provide information on steps taken to prevent incidents of vandalization of minority places of worship buildings, as well as actions taken to maintain a safe environment for the Ahmadi community. They have also asked for what efforts are being taken to implement the Supreme Court of Pakistan's judgement which has instructed the police to protect places of worship and to form a special task force for the protection of minority places of worship. Sixty days have been given for the Pakistan government's reply before the case is made public at the UN. The letter has highlighted several international conventions of which Pakistan is a signatory and is obligated to act under them. These include International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which was ratified on 23 June 2010; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Pakistan on 17 April 2008; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), acceded by Pakistan on 12 November 1990; the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992); the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted by consensus by the UNGA on 25 November 1981; and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by UNESCO's General Conference on 2 November 2001. They also mentioned previous outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review where Pakistan's lack of protection of its religious minorities was discussed and recommendations were given as well.

Jewish leaders blend old tradition, new resources for mental health

By: Amber Strong



32 Rabbi Susan Shankman has been teaching at the Washington Hebrew Congregation for more than 20 years. Like many spiritual leaders, she's had to navigate changing times, including an embrace of mental wellness. "There was more of a stigma, certainly, than there is today. And I say that as a parent of teens and young adults who have had their own experiences with mental health," Shankman told Scripps News. For her, that means boldly taking on topics that weren't discussed a generation ago, like how to handle fasting when members have eating disorders. "The idea of Pikuach Nefesh — which is saving a soul, keeping a life healthy — supersedes the fast itself," she explained. She's also had to preside over funerals for congregants who've died by suicide. "When there's a funeral with difficult issues surrounding it that have to do with mental health ... not shying away from talking about it," Shankman said, explaining that she never does so without the blessings of the deceased's family. According to data from the Blue Dove Foundation, a group dedicated

to Jewish community mental health and illness, Jewish Americans suffer from mental illness at about the same rates as the general population. Past research showed higher rates of depression in Jewish men, but that has been challenged over the years. However, there is ongoing research about intergenerational trauma and the impact events like the Holocaust and war have had on survivors' offspring. Rabbi Efrem Goldberg recognized the need to wade into the intersection of spirituality and mental health too, a topic he confronts alongside co-host Moshe Yachnes and mental health professionals via his podcast, "Out of the Shadows." He also takes the message to the pulpit of his congregation in Boca Raton, Florida. "We have a fairly large congregation — 1,000 active families. And you simply see, of all ages, people who are really confronting, struggling, engaging and dealing with these issues that are proliferating, growing and spreading," Goldberg said. "I can't tell you how often after a sermon or an article I write, or this podcast that we produce,

where if, minimally, we validate what people are going through, they say, 'I'm not the only one. I relate to that. Thank you for giving it a name. Thank you for sensitizing people,'" he continued. He says the old text and traditions are full of answers to modern problems. "The role of meditation, the role of breathing, the role of slowing down, the role of refocusing, the role of having mantras that we repeat. These are ancient ideas that go back to the very beginning of Judaism itself — the comfort in our own skin to disconnect from technology and to be able to be in conversation with ourselves and a relationship with ourselves and to regulate ourselves," said Goldberg. Shankman agrees, pointing to the connection between practices involving gratitude and lower rates of depression. "There's a tradition that says that we could say upwards of 100 blessings a day," she said. "And how many of us actually say 100 blessings? How many of us actually pause to say one? And just working at gratitude." Both leaders combine those ancient lessons with outside resources that can help congregants now and in the long run. "If you break your leg and you don't go to the doctor, if you have an infection and you don't go to the doctor, it doesn't matter who you are, you're not going to heal. And there is healing and there's a positive, bright future," encouraged Goldberg. "The more we provide a safe space where people are comfortable coming and asking for the help they need and being able to connect people with the right resources," Shankman said. The National Alliance on Mental Illness has resources on the benefits of spirituality and mental health, along with avenues to find help if you need it. You can visit the website at nami.org and, of course, you can also get free and confidential help by contacting the suicide and crisis lifeline.

<https://scrippsnews.com/stories/jewish-leaders-blend-old-tradition-new-resources-for-mental-health/>

Crypto here to stay, must be regulated: HK treasury



HONG KONG: Hong Kong has decided to let retail investors trade cryptocurrency under its new regulatory regime because “virtual assets are going to stay”, the city’s minister overseeing financial services said on Tuesday. Cryptocurrencies have been banned in mainland China since 2021, but the former British colony, which has a separate financial system and regulators, has announced plans to become a major digital asset hub. From June 1, authorities will begin accepting applications for licences from cryptocurrency exchanges that will allow them to sell major tokens including bitcoin and ether to individual traders. “Despite the potential risks involved, (virtual assets) also carries with it fundamental value,” Christopher Hui, Hong Kong’s secretary for financial services and the treasury, told AFP in an interview. “So for these positive elements to be harnessed, these activities have to be allowed in a regulated way.” Regulators around the world are examining cryptocurrencies with renewed urgency following the collapse of the trading platform FTX last year and other high-profile failures in the sector. Asked whether Beijing backed Hong Kong’s plans to open up crypto trading, Hui said the finance hub charts its path by following the emerging global consensus.

World's biggest warship visits Oslo, angering Russia



The world's biggest warship, the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, arrived in Oslo on Wednesday for a stopover criticised by neighbouring Russia as an "illogical and harmful" show of force. The 337-metre (1,106-foot) nuclear-powered ship sailed into the Oslo Fjord under escort, where it will stay for several days before heading to the Arctic for military exercises, according to Norwegian media. "Norway is a strategic partner in the continued efforts to maintain a secure and stable Arctic and North Atlantic region that benefits global order," Erik J. Eslich, commander of US Carrier Strike Group 12, said in a statement. The Norwegian military said in a statement "the aircraft carrier's visit and presence provides... a unique opportunity to develop our cooperation and work closely together with our most important ally, the United States". Norwegian Defence Minister Bjorn Arild Gram said "this is the concrete expression of our close relationship with the United States and demonstrates the will for collective defence and deterrence". The highly publicised visit, which comes amid

heightened tensions between the West and Russia over the war in Ukraine, was denounced by the Russian embassy. "There are no issues in the North that require a military solution, nor issues that require outside intervention," Russian embassy spokesman Timur Chekanov told AFP by email. "Considering that Oslo admits that Russia poses no direct military threat to Norway, such shows of force seem illogical and harmful," he added. NATO member Norway shares a land border with Russia as well as a maritime border in the Barents Sea. The USS Gerald R. Ford, which can transport up to 90 aircraft and helicopters, is expected to remain moored in the Norwegian capital for several days. A vast airspace and sea ban has been implemented around the vessel. According to online daily Barents Observer, the ship is expected to head for the Arctic in several days ahead of the May 29 start of the Arctic Challenge Exercise, gathering 150 aircraft from 14 Western countries.

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/worlds-big->

Merton School Governor British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad attends His Majesty The King's Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace

Having received an invitation from His Majesty King Charles III, Merton School Governor British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad along with his wife attended the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on the 3rd of May 2023 to celebrate His Majesty's Coronation. Mansoor expressed his feelings: It was such a memorable day and a wonderful surprise to receive the invitation from the Lord Chamberlain commanded by His Majesty King Charles III. We were greatly honoured to attend the Royal Garden Party to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty at Buckingham Palace. His Majesty passed through the guests and greeted everyone with great joy. We were all very pleased to see His Majesty in such good spirits. We had a lovely walk around the Buckingham Palace Gardens, and were fortunate enough to meet some wonderful people. Mansoor Ahmad was presented with the prestigious British Empire Medal (BEM) at an Honours Presentation in 2022 held on behalf of His Majesty King Charles III at the New Armouries, The Tower of London in November 2022 for his services to the community of the London Borough of Merton during the pandemic Covid-19. He was honoured with having his name published in the late Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Honours List 2022. In addition, Mansoor has been honoured with a number of awards, achievements, and recognitions for his outstanding contributions, selfless efforts, and support to the British Community. Among these are the British Citizens Award, British Community Honours Award, Merton Mayors Covid-19 Award,



House of Lords Award, Community Award, School Governor Award, and more. Mansoor has voluntarily been involved with many school committees, various charity groups, and the London Mayor's Charity team, contributing to charitable activities for over a period of 16 years. Mansoor has been serving as Manager of Accounts & Finance with Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah, one of the largest charities in the UK. He is a life devotee of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK.

Mansoor served as Finance Manager with Chittagong Stock Exchange Bangladesh for over 11 years. He also served as a visiting lecturer with University of Science & Technology (USTC), Preston University, Premier University, Southern University Bangladesh, Edward University & University of Honolulu (Chittagong Campus, Bangladesh) and taught at BBA, MBA and ACCA Levels.

Ukraine war: ICC 'undeterred' by arrest warrant for chief prosecutor

By: Sam Hancock

The International Criminal Court says it is "undeterred" by Russia putting its chief prosecutor on a wanted list. It comes two months after the ICC's Karim Khan issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin. In a statement on Saturday, the court said the move was an attempt to undermine its "lawful mandate to ensure accountability for the gravest crimes". Russia, which is not an ICC member, previously described the warrant against Mr Putin as being "void". Mr Khan, a British lawyer, issued the arrest warrant for President Putin in March. It alleged he is responsible for war crimes, and has focused its claims on the unlawful deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia. A warrant was also issued for Russia's child rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova on similar charges. More than 16,000 children are thought to have been forcibly transferred to Russia from Ukraine since the war began, according to officials in Kyiv. The ICC said at the time there were reasonable grounds to believe both Mr Putin and Ms Lvova-Belova bore individual criminal responsibility. The Kremlin's investigative committee in turn announced this week that it would begin an investigation into Mr Khan for the "criminal prosecution of a person known to be innocent". In a statement on Saturday, the Hague-based ICC said it was "aware and profoundly concerned about unwarranted and unjustified coercive measures reportedly taken against ICC officials". Branding the measures "unacceptable", the court said it would not be prevented from continuing to "deliver on its independent mandate".



Mr Khan is yet to comment on the action against him. Meanwhile, the special representative of the United Nations secretary-general for children and armed conflict, Virginia Gamba, came under separate scrutiny after she reportedly met with Ms Lvova-Belova in Moscow. The Russian was quoted by Reuters news agency as saying the conversation was "constructive and sincere". Rights groups and senior officials took issue, though, with some suggesting the meeting was inappropriate. "Ukrainian victims deserve to see Lvova-Belova behind bars in The Hague, not meeting with high-level UN officials," Balkees Jarrah, associate director in the International Justice Programme at Human Rights Watch, said. Last September, Ms Lvova-Belova complained that some children removed from the city of Mariupol "spoke badly about the [Russian President], said awful things and sang the Ukrainian anthem."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65661251>



Bird flu: Brazil declares animal health emergency after several cases found

By: James FitzGerald



Brazil has declared a six-month animal health emergency after several cases of avian flu were found in wild birds. Seven cases have been reported in Espirito Santo state, with another discovered in Rio de Janeiro state. The emergency declaration makes it easier for the government to now bring in measures to stop the highly infectious H5N1 virus from spreading. Brazil is the world's largest exporter of chicken meat, with annual sales of nearly \$10bn (£8bn). Authorities say the cases were found far away from Brazil's main areas of production in the south of the country. However, outbreaks in commercial flocks elsewhere have sometimes been observed to follow the discovery of avian flu cases in wild birds. The finding of a case on a farm often triggers a cull of a large number of birds - and can sometimes prompt trade restrictions from other countries. The health emergency has been declared across the whole country for

the next 180 days as a precaution. The world has been going through its worst ever outbreak of bird flu since October 2021, causing the deaths of more wild birds than ever before. Some mammals are also catching the disease. Scientists remain unsure why this outbreak is proving so much worse than others, but the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) has reported "devastating impacts on animal health and welfare". The World Health Organization (WHO) says the further spread of the H5N1 virus will have to be monitored closely to see whether it is mutating into a form which can spread amongst humans. Cases that do occur are the result of people coming into close contact with infected birds.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-65679328>

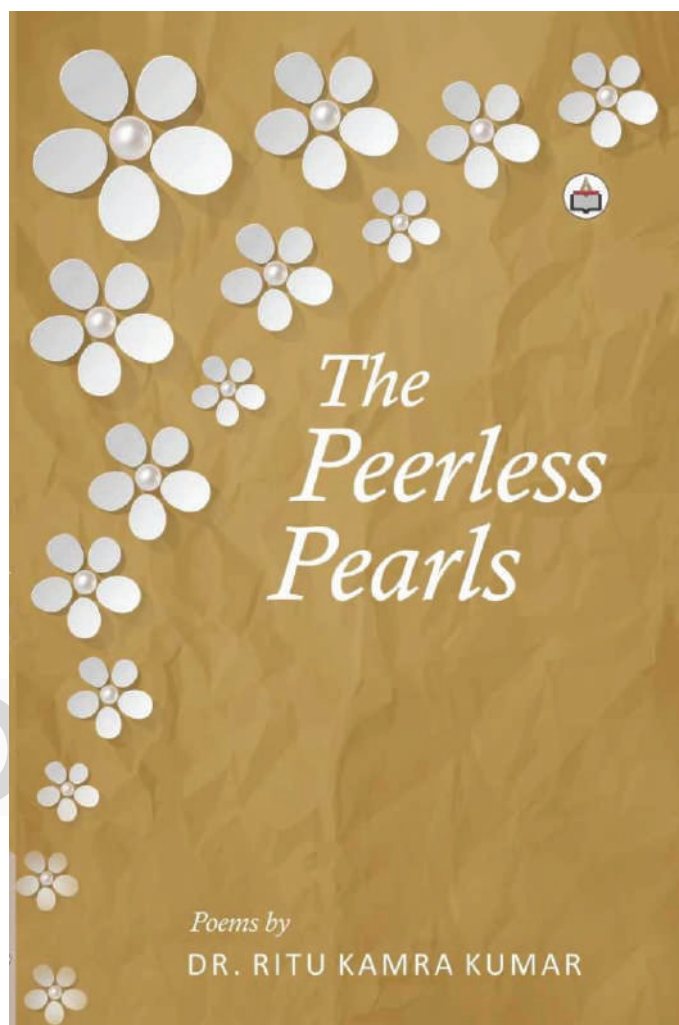
Book Review:

THE PEERLESS PEARLS A Collection of poems

By Dr Ritu Kamra Kumar - Associate Professor

Mukund Lal National College, Yamunanagar, Haryana. By: Bilal Ahmad Shamim - India

A few months ago, I ordered a book entitled 'The Peerless Pearls'. It is a collection of poems composed by Dr Ritu Kamra Kumar, a well-known figure among the literary circles in India and abroad as well. Her articles covering a wide range of day to day topics continue to adorn the leading dailies and magazines. She has also four books to her credit till date and we expect many more from her. Besides being an excellent prose writer, she has proved her prowess in the realm of poetry too. One would really be in a dilemma to say with conviction whether she is a better prose writer or a better poet because her command over both the genres of literature is simply amazing. The present book 'The Peerless Pearls' is probably the first collection of her poems. She has dedicated this book to her son and daughter-in-law. The book has been divided into six segments or sections namely- Rejuvenating Relationships, Nature's Notes, Pragmatic Perspectives, Womans World, Resplendent Reflections, and Love Longings. There are 92 poems in all. Dr Kumar's prose writings revolve around simple incidents of day to day life. But with her literary finesse, she converts them into literary masterpieces which not only enthrall, captivate and entertain the readers but also compels them to discern the profound meaning, philosophical thought and a sign of human touch hidden in her writings. Her poems also reflect her nostalgic thoughts, her deep love for nature and its creatures, her vision about life and relations, her views about Feminism- which is her chief area of interest-, her philosophical reflections and her expressions about love.



accomplished writer and having a vast experience in teaching English, Dr Kumar is, no doubt, well versed in all the nuances of poetry and its techniques. Her poetry contains all the essentials of poetry such as structure, form, imagery, imagination, symbolism, rhyme, figurative language, sound devices, theme and tone. Apart from structural beauty, her poems reflect aesthetic beauty, captivating imagery, profound imagination, philosophical wisdom and powerful message as well. In this short review, all the poems cannot be encompassed. I shall, therefore,

restrict myself to only a few of them which I liked most. The very first poem 'Because of You' epitomises the beauty, kindness and compassion of a mother. In this 15 stanza poem, she has excellently described how a mother nourishes, comforts and shapes the life of her child. Mark the beauty of the following lines:

How she encircled

Me in her arms,

Jocund joy, soothing lullaby

Made me cosy and warm.

The above four lines summarise the 'mamta' of a mother.

Another poem 'Trees and Humans' draws an analogy between the life of humans and trees. It is an allegorical poem. The last stanza of the poem says it all :

Trees are us,

Their leaves rise and fall

Our lives are same after all

Eventually we fall in serenity.

Some other poems - Starry Nights , and Moon Light, create amazing imagery.

Under the segment 'Pragmatic Perspectives ', the poem 'Time Destroys All Earthly Greatness' is very remarkable. Its theme is perhaps inspired by the the poem Ozymandias written P.B. Shelley. It demonstrates that all earthly glory, pride and hubris are ephemeral. Times spares none. Note the theme of them poem in the following beautiful lines:

All the kings and mighty go riding by changing leaves and boughs

All the lives on earth full of trees are bound to sleep in a humble heap.

A couple of other poems that I liked in this segment are Life Goes on, and Swings of Life. The segment of Woman's World contains a very thought-provoking poem 'Woman and the Life she Leads'. Dr Kumar champions the cause of women. In her writings, she has always stood for the liberty, rights and emancipation of women through education. This poem describes the different phases in

the life of a woman- when she is unwed, when she without a child, when chooses to be a single mother. The poetess gives a powerful message and advice to the world in the following lines:

Let her be imperfectly perfect,

With her flaws and foibles

Let her be her destiny's architect

Let her live life she chooses to be

Because you don't know what it takes a woman to be.

Under 'Resplendent Reflections', I found the poem Push Cart Vendors very appealing. (Maybe it is inspired by Coromandel Fishers by Sarojini Naidu.) This poem presents a real and true picture of Indian streets. Enjoy the following lines:

Variety of items do they bring to sell

Some announce their arrival with a bell

Other day I listened to the call of a bangle seller

Jingle of bangles was like sonorous bells

Excitement of womenfolk giggles supremely stellar.

The poems , Hope, and Power of Pen are brimming with powerful imagery. 'Fear' is also a very thought provoking poem.

Now we come to the last segment of this book and that is Love Longings. It contains beautiful poems describing pure and unadulterated love. The poetess longs to transport her love beyond this terrestrial life to the celestial one. As in the poem 'Because I Love You', she says:

Because I love you

Your embraces are not enough

To be entwined in you

My soul and spirit

Yearns for communion beyond this earthly love.

I am sure , the readers will find this poetic collection very enriching and catering to their sublime literary taste. The book is modestly priced at Rs 295/- It has been published by Authors Press, New Delhi. The title page of

WHO advises not to use non-sugar sweeteners for weight control in newly released guideline



The World Health Organization (WHO) has released a new guideline on non-sugar sweeteners (NSS), which recommends against the use of NSS to control body weight or reduce the risk of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). The recommendation is based on the findings of a systematic review of the available evidence which suggests that use of NSS does not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children. Results of the review also suggest that there may be potential undesirable effects from long-term use of NSS, such as an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mortality in adults. "Replacing free sugars with NSS does not help with weight control in the long term. People need to consider other ways to reduce free sugars intake, such as consuming food with naturally occurring sugars, like fruit, or unsweetened food and beverages," says Francesco Branca, WHO Director for Nutrition and Food Safety. "NSS are not essential dietary factors and have no nutritional value. People should reduce the sweetness of the diet altogether, starting early in life, to improve their health." The recommendation applies to all people except individuals with pre-existing diabetes and includes all synthetic and naturally occurring or modified non-nutritive sweeteners that are not classified as sugars found in manufactured foods and beverages, or sold on their own to be added to foods and beverages by consumers. Common NSS include acesulfame K, aspartame, advantame, cyclamates, neotame, saccharin, sucralose, stevia and stevia derivatives. The recommendation does



not apply to personal care and hygiene products containing NSS, such as toothpaste, skin cream, and medications, or to low-calorie sugars and sugar alcohols (polyols), which are sugars or sugar derivatives containing calories and are therefore not considered NSS. Because the link observed in the evidence between NSS and disease outcomes might be confounded by baseline characteristics of study participants and complicated patterns of NSS use, the recommendation has been assessed as conditional, following WHO processes for developing guidelines. This signals that policy decisions based on this recommendation may require substantive discussion in specific country contexts, linked for example to the extent of consumption in different age groups. The WHO guideline on NSS is part of a suite of existing and forthcoming guidelines on healthy diets that aim to establish lifelong healthy eating habits, improve dietary quality and decrease the risk of NCDs worldwide.

<https://www.who.int/news/item/15-05-2023-who-advises-not-to-use-non-sugar-sweeteners-for-weight-control-in-newly-released-guideline>

Head (IQ), Heart (EQ), and Hands (Practical Intelligence) Augmented by AI: The Trio of Human Intelligence



By: Mazhar Mansoor, PhD - USA

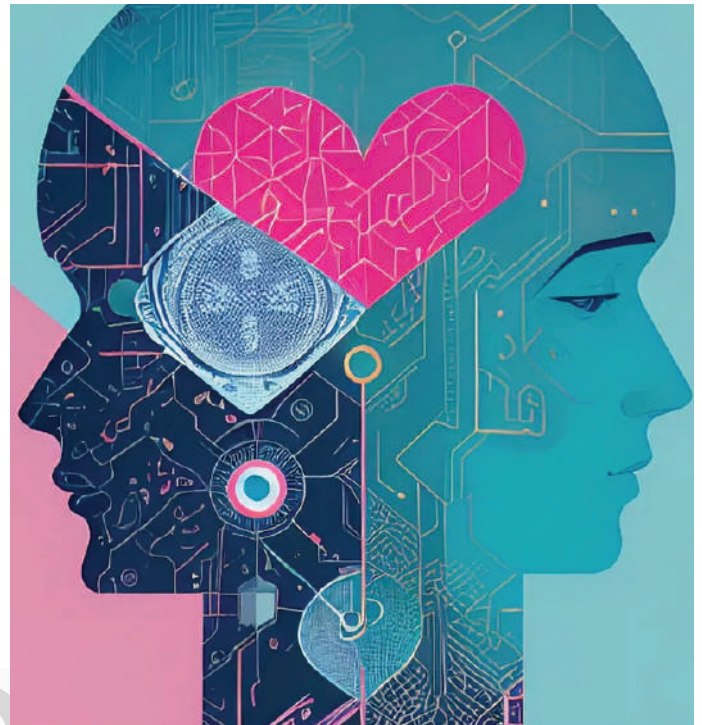
Human intelligence comprises not only our cognitive abilities (head), emotional intelligence (heart), but also our practical intelligence (hands), which refers to our ability to apply our knowledge and skills to real-world situations. With the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), we are now in a position to augment our head, heart, and hands with the power of technology.

Head (IQ) Augmented by AI: The Rise of Cognitive Superpowers

The combination of human intelligence and artificial intelligence can lead to a new level of cognitive superpowers. AI can augment our IQ by providing us with access to vast amounts of information and insights that we may not have been able to access before. It can help us analyze data and make more accurate predictions. It can also help us solve complex problems and make better decisions. For example, in the field of finance, AI can help traders make better decisions by analyzing market data and identifying trends. In healthcare, AI can help doctors diagnose diseases by analyzing medical records and identifying patterns that may not have been apparent to the human eye.

Heart (EQ) Augmented by AI: The Era of Empathic Intelligence

In addition to augmenting our IQ, AI can also augment our EQ, or emotional intelligence. Empathic intelligence, the ability to understand and manage our emotions as well as the emotions of others, is crucial in today's inter



connected world. AI can help us develop our empathic intelligence by providing us with tools to analyze and understand human behavior. For example, in customer service, AI can help companies identify the emotions of their customers and respond appropriately. In education, AI can help teachers identify the emotional state of their students and provide targeted support.

Hands (Practical Intelligence) Augmented by AI: The Rise of Practical Superpowers

The combination of human practical intelligence and AI can lead to a new level of practical superpowers. AI can help us apply our knowledge and skills to real-world situations by providing us with access to vast amounts of data and insights. It can help us make better decisions and take more effective actions. For example, in manufacturing, AI can help

workers identify defects in products and provide suggestions for improvement. In construction, AI can help workers plan and execute projects more efficiently.

The Trio of Head, Heart, and Hands Augmented by AI: The Era of Augmented Intelligence

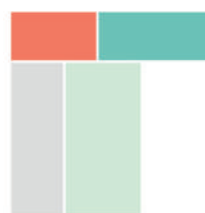
The combination of human intelligence, AI, and practical intelligence can lead to a new era of augmented intelligence, where our head, heart, and hands are augmented by technology. With AI, we can enhance our cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, and practical intelligence, leading to practical superpowers and empathic intelligence.

For example, in healthcare, AI can help doctors diagnose diseases, identify the emotions of their patients, and provide targeted support. In business, AI can help managers make better decisions, identify the emotions of their employees, and provide targeted support.

Conclusion: The Rise of Augmented Intelligence

In conclusion, the combination of human intelligence, AI, and practical intelligence can lead to a new era of augmented intelligence. With AI, we can augment our head, heart, and hands, leading to cognitive, emotional, and practical superpowers. The key is to use AI in a way that benefits society as a whole, while still maintaining the unique qualities that make us human. With the right balance between human and artificial intelligence, we can create a brighter future for us all.

<https://medium.com/@mazharmansoor/-head-iq-heart-eq-and-hands-practical-intelligence-augmented-by-ai-the-trio-of-human-8cd661af8111>



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EMAIL INFO@SARMADGLOBAL.COM

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Google Announces 44,500 Scholarships for Pakistanis, Here are the Details!

By: Aameena Amin

Google is expanding its efforts to empower Pakistanis with in-demand digital skills through the Google Career Certificates (GCC) program. As part of its commitment to Future Forward Pakistan, Google will provide 44,500 new GCC scholarships by the end of 2023. The initiative aims to support individuals, especially women and young graduates, in realizing their career aspirations. A new study conducted in collaboration with the Economist emphasizes the importance of digital skills for Pakistan's competitiveness in the global market.

New Courses and Scholarships:

1. Business Intelligence, Advanced Data Analytics, and Cybersecurity: Google has added three new courses to the GCC program in collaboration with IRM and TechValley. These courses will equip learners with employer-recognized certificates in high-demand fields.

2. Scholarships: The additional scholarships will offer more opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to access digital skills training. Google's commitment to distributing 44,500 Google Career Certificates by the end of 2023 aims to bridge the digital skills gap and create equal opportunities.

Study Findings:

1. Growing Importance of Digital Skills: The study reveals that employees consider digital skills crucial, with 57.3% identifying them as the most important to acquire. Digital skills not only enhance job prospects but also improve confidence and competence in areas such as communication, analysis, and critical thinking.

2. Relevance of Soft Skills: Soft skills, including communication and adaptability, are essential across various sectors and job roles. 47% of employees consider soft skills important for upskilling, with adaptability, flexibility, and communication being the top priorities.

3. Government's Role: The study suggests that the government can play a vital role in facilitating a conducive ecosystem for digital skills development. Collaborating with companies, organizations, and communities can ensure equal access to upskilling through incentives and supportive policies.

Impact and Testimonials:

1. Empowering Freelancers: GCC graduate Iqra Malik, a Data Analyst Freelancer, shares how the program transformed her life, providing valuable skills that enabled her to excel in freelance work, support her family financially, and take on diverse projects.

2. Career Progression: Saif Ullah, a Digital Marketing graduate, highlights the impact of completing the GCC program on his personal and professional life. The certification helped him secure a job as a performance marketer, explore freelancing opportunities, and create a roadmap for his future career path.

Expansion of Skills:

To create well-rounded professionals ready for the job market, Google's partners, IRM and TechValley, will launch a soft skills program for GCC graduates. The program covers critical topics such as Communication Skills, Personal Branding, Time Management, and Critical Thinking.

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