



Brexit chaos deepens as UK's Johnson faces hostile parliament

The Indian children who need to take a train to get water



MIRPUR: Pakistani residents look at a collapsed house in an earthquake-hit area on the outskirts of Mirpur in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir yesterday. — AFP

Pakistan quake death toll hits 38

Rescuers scramble to reach survivors

JATLAN: Rescuers battled along badly damaged roads and combed through toppled buildings yesterday to reach victims of an earthquake that killed at least 38 people and injured hundreds more in northeast Pakistan. Authorities were still assessing the quake's impact in villages around the city of Mirpur in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, but in some the immediate damage was evident.

After a night of heavy rain compounded the misery of survivors, hundreds gathered to attend the funerals of residents killed near Mirpur, about 130 kilometers southeast of the capital, Islamabad. "It was like doomsday for us. We lost a number of our near and dear ones," Muhammad Azam said at a funeral for a neighbor. "Our loved ones will never come back." The 5.2 magnitude quake was not as strong as several that have struck Pakistan over the years, but the epicenter was very shallow - which generally causes more damage.

Near Mirpur, a well-developed city known for its palatial residences, many roads were destroyed, while bridges, mobile phone towers and electricity poles were also badly damaged. The village of Jatlan on the outskirts of Mirpur appeared to be one of the worst affected. There, residents sifted through debris and assessed the damage,

with large cracks defacing walls in the houses that still stood, and brick fences reduced to rubble. "I lost everything," said Abdullah Khan, whose three-bedroom home was flattened.

The Pakistan military continued to lead search and rescue operations, and the death toll continued to rise as authorities reached more remote villages to assess the damage. Muhammad Tayyab Chaudhry, the top local official, said at least 37 people had been killed - 33 in Mirpur and four in the neighbouring district of Bimber. Earlier, Lieutenant General Mohammad Afzal of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) said one person had also been killed in the nearby Punjabi city of Jhelum. "Some 350 people were wounded, 80 of them critically," he told a press conference.

'Under control'

Teams of doctors had arrived in the area, while the NDMA had also sent hundreds of tents, bottles of water and food rations. Afzal said hundreds of houses had been damaged - 136 of them "completely" - while 14 kilometers (nine miles) of road were "badly affected". Engineers were rushing to make repairs. He said the ambassadors of three countries had offered assistance,

but that Pakistani authorities had the matter under control. Information minister Firdous Ashiq Awan gave a higher injury toll of 500, and told reporters that survivors would be offered compensation.

Overnight showers turned already-damaged roads into muddy thoroughfares where livestock roamed freely. In Mirpur, however, life was quickly returning to normal and most of the well-built structures in the city showed little sign of damage. Mirpur owes its prosperity to thousands of former residents who migrated to Britain in the 1960s, but retained their links to the area - repatriating money to buy land and build plush homes. Many of its 450,000 residents are dual British-Pakistan nationals.

After the quake, local hospitals in the city swelled, however, with many patients suffering from multiple fractures. "I was going to see a friend when the entire area shook with a bang and a huge wall crumbled over me," Ali Badshah, a student said from a hospital in Mirpur where he was being treated for a broken leg. The quake sent people in Lahore and Islamabad running into the streets, while tremors were also felt as far away as New Delhi.

Pakistan straddles part of the boundary



MIRPUR: A news cameraman films a damaged road following an earthquake on the outskirts of Mirpur. — AFP

where the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates meet, making the country susceptible to earthquakes. Pakistani geologists faulted the "poor construction of shanty houses in Jatlan" for some of the damage, as well as its location near a fault line and the shallowness of the quake. "The build-

ing code is not followed in most areas," said Pakistan's chief meteorologist, Muhammad Riaz. The country was hit by a 7.6-magnitude quake in 2005 that killed more than 73,000 people and left about 3.5 million homeless, mainly in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. — AFP

Greta Thunberg: 'Miracle' climate savior or puppet?

STOCKHOLM: She's the icon of a young generation rising up against climate change. But Greta Thunberg also stirs up derision and scorn among those who see her as a mere puppet of eco-evangelism. At 16, the Swede has become the voice for millions of worried youths who sort their garbage, clean beaches, turn their noses up at meat and airplanes, and vote for green parties.

Just over a year ago, at the start of the school year, the then-ninth grade student left her books at home and began sitting outside the Swedish parliament to raise awareness about the climate emergency. Her "school strike" made the rounds of social media before gaining momentum in the international press - and the "Fridays for Future" movement was born. The Greta phenomenon went viral. Her Twitter and Instagram accounts now have more than six million followers.

As the unofficial spokesperson for her generation, Greta Thunberg wants to sound the alarm about global warming among the world's politicians, as witnessed in her rousing "How Dare You?" speech at the UN climate summit on Monday. "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," she thundered, visibly angry and close to tears. The teen has spurred millions of youths to protest, drawn by her fragile intrepidity, her steely determination in sharp contrast to her young voice.

All of which drive her detractors crazy. For the most scornful, such as Australian columnist Andrew Bolt, Greta's a doomsayer, "the deeply disturbed messiah of the global

warming movement", with the neuroses of an autistic teenager (she has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome). It's all because "she's powerful," says Canadian biologist Severn Cullis-Suzuki who once found herself in Greta's position. At the age of 12, she addressed the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. "She's calling for a revolution so of course she's getting pushback. They try to silence her" by discrediting her, Cullis-Suzuki told AFP.

'Miracle' or 'cyborg'?

Extraordinary, almost mystical references abound when it comes to Greta, born in 2003 in the least "religious or spiritual" country on the planet. Famed French environmentalist and wildlife photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand has called her "a miracle". Barack Obama said she was "changing the world." French philosopher Michel Onfray described her as a "cyborg" while US conservative commentator Michael Knowles said she was a "mentally ill" teen responsible for "climate hysteria".

In April, Greta met Pope Francis in Rome as part of the second anniversary of "Laudato Si", the Catholic Church's encyclical on ecology and climate change, whose subtitle "On Care for Our Common Home" echoes Greta's own words of "Our house is on fire". Critics say that kind of language muddles the climate fight's scientific message, hurts technological innovation and masks other environmental challenges.

"The climate issue has eclipsed all other environmental issues like cruelty to animals, the meat industry and pesticides. And those who question (Greta's) positioning are quickly accused of being climate sceptics," political scientist Katarina Barrling said. Greta has also been accused of sowing anxiety rather than delivering a rational argument. "I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day," she told the World Economic Forum in Davos in January. Lately, she seems to have changed her tune. "I want you to listen to the scientists," she urged the US Congress last week. — AFP

The whistleblower, impeachment and Trump phone call

WASHINGTON: Growing numbers of Democrats are calling for the impeachment of US President Donald Trump over allegations that he sought political dirt on his potential 2020 presidential rival, Joe Biden. This is what we know about the affair launched by a complaint from a mysterious whistleblower in the US intelligence community.

The phone call

The political scandal stems from a July 25 telephone call between Trump and Ukraine's newly elected President Volodymyr Zelensky, a former comedian who ran for office as an anti-corruption crusader and reformer. Trump has acknowledged urging Zelensky during the call to investigate the business dealings in Ukraine of Hunter Biden, the son of Joe Biden, who is leading Trump in 2020 election polls. The Wall Street Journal said Trump urged Zelensky "about eight times" during the call to work with Rudy Giuliani, his personal attorney, on a probe into Hunter Biden.

Democrats in the House of Representatives accused Trump and Giuliani of trying to coerce Ukraine, in exchange for military assistance, into conducting a "politically motivated" investigation into Hunter Biden, a move they said would represent a "staggering abuse of power." Three

Democratic-controlled House committees demanded that the White House turn over a transcript of the call and Trump has indicated that he would be happy if it were made public.

US military aid for Ukraine

According to The Washington Post, about a week before the phone call with Zelensky, Trump told his acting White House chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, to hold up a package of nearly \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine, which is battling pro-Russian separatists. Trump has denied dangling the military aid in exchange for a probe into the son of his main political rival and the Journal said he did not specifically mention the assistance during the conversation. "I didn't do that at all," Trump told reporters. "I did not make a statement that you have to do this or I'm not going to give you 'A.'" "With that being said," the president continued, "you want to see a country that's going to be not corrupt."

Hunter Biden

Hunter Biden served from April 2014 to April 2019 on the board of Burisma Holdings, a Ukrainian gas firm accused of corrupt practices, but he has not been personally accused of any wrongdoing. As Barack Obama's vice president, Joe Biden and other Western leaders pressured Ukraine to get rid of the country's top prosecutor, Viktor Shokin, because he was seen as not tough enough on corruption. Trump has claimed that Biden, in seeking the removal of Shokin, was seeking to protect his son but that allegation has largely been debunked and there has been no evidence of illegal conduct in Ukraine by the Bidens. — AFP