

UN REPORT SAYS GLOBAL WARMING DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO BEING OUT OF CONTROL

NEWS DESK

STATING that humans were "unequivocally" to blame for bringing global warming dangerously close to being out of control, the United Nations panel on climate change told the world on Monday that greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere are high enough to guarantee climate disruption for decades if not centuries.

According to the report from the scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), deadly heat waves, gargantuan hurricanes and other weather extremes that are already happening will only become more severe.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres described the report as a "code red for humanity".

"The alarm bells are deafening," he said in a statement. "This report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels, before they destroy our

planet." read more

In three months' time, the U.N. COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, will try to wring much more ambitious climate action out of the nations of the world, and the money to go with it.

Drawing on more than 14,000 scientific studies, the IPCC report gives the most comprehensive and detailed picture yet of how climate change is altering the natural world — and what could still be ahead.

Unless immediate, rapid and large-scale action is taken to reduce emissions, the report says, the average global temperature is likely to reach or cross the 1.5-degree Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warming threshold within 20 years.

The pledges to cut emissions made so far are nowhere near enough to start reducing level of greenhouse gases — mostly carbon dioxide (CO2) from burning fossil fuels — accumulated in the atmosphere.



'WAKE-UP CALL': Governments and campaigners reacted to the findings with alarm.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he hoped the report would be "a wake-up call for the world to

take action now, before we meet in Glasgow".

The report says emissions "unequivocally caused by human activities" have already pushed the average global temperature up 1.1C from its pre-industrial average — and would have raised it 0.5C further without the tempering effect of pollution in the atmosphere.

That means that, even as societies move away from fossil fuels, temperatures will be pushed up again by the loss of the airborne pollutants that come with them and currently reflect away some of the sun's heat.

A rise of 1.5C is generally seen as the most that humanity could cope with without suffering widespread economic and social upheaval.

The 1.1C warming already recorded has been enough to unleash disastrous weather. This year, heat waves killed hundreds in the Pacific Northwest and smashed records around the world. Wildfires fuelled by heat and drought are sweeping away entire towns in the U.S. West, releasing record carbon dioxide emissions from Siberian forests, and driving Greeks to flee their homes by ferry.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05



Success of intra-Afghan dialogue depends on leadership: Qureshi

ISLAMABAD
APP

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Monday said that Pakistan has played its role in Afghan peace and reconciliation process and now it is up to the Afghan leadership to further move the process. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, the foreign minister said that the Afghan leadership would be responsible for the success or failure of the dialogue process. He said Pakistan would continue with its role in the Afghan peace process as there should be no ambiguity. Qureshi regretted that allegations were being levelled against Pakistan for the failure of Afghan peace process. The foreign minister said Prime Minister Imran Khan had been consistently saying that there was no military solution to the Afghan issue. He stressed that a well-negotiated, all-inclusive and broad-based political settlement was the only way forward to establish peace in Afghanistan. To a question, the foreign minister maintained that they had facilitated the Afghan civilians despite the coronavirus pandemic. "Pakistan has been a generous and hospitable host to the three million Afghan refugees for four decades despite its limited resources," he said, adding that if there was any new influx of Afghan refugees, Pakistan did not have the capacity to host them. He further said it would be the collective responsibility of the international community and other neighbours of Afghanistan in that case, adding that Pakistan had been urging the international community to play their due role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and for the regional peace and stability.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05

PM urges masses to plant one tree each to ensure clean Pakistan

■ IMRAN INAUGURATES WORLD'S BIGGEST MIYAWAKI URBAN FOREST IN LAHORE

LAHORE
APP

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday highlighting the importance of forests in checking global warming and pollution urged the masses, especially, youth to plant at least one tree each and look after it to ensure a clean and pollution-free Pakistan for the future generations.

He expressed these views while inaugurating the world's biggest Miyawaki urban forest, as part of monsoon drive under the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project.

The prime minister hoped that the development of Miyawaki forest in the provincial capital will help revive the



past glory of Lahore, which used to be a city of gardens with trees planted all around, and now was considered as one of the most polluted cities of Pakistan.

He dedicated the Miyawaki forest Lahore to Prof. Dr. Akira Miyawaki, a Japanese botanist and expert in plant ecology, who died on July 16, 2021.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 05

CORONAVIRUS IN PAKISTAN

CONFIRMED CASES:
1,071,620

LAST UPDATED AT 8:14 AM ON AUGUST 9, 2021

DAY'S DEATH TOLL:

53

NEW CASES:

4,040

RECOVERED:
964,404

DEATHS:
23,918

SINDH:
400,400

PUNJAB:
364,680

KPK:
148,619

BALUCHISTAN:
31,177

AJK/GB:
27,288 / 8,796

ISLAMABAD:
90,660

Fawad says govt ready to trial electronic voting in 2023

ISLAMABAD
APP

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Monday said electronic voting was the most effective tool to ensure transparency in the elections and if the opposition parties agreed, the government was ready to introduce the apparatus in the coming general elections.

In an interview, the minister said the work on the new method had been completed and if a consensus was reached between the government and the opposition parties on the proposal, the electronic voting regime could be trialled in the next elections scheduled to be held in 2023.

Electronic voting machines are used in some of the world's biggest democracies to get around some of these hurdles. The machines come in all shapes and sizes, from small touchscreen devices to larger units with physical buttons and a printed ballot paper on the front.

But those nations that have widespread adoption of electronic voting are also developing nations with relatively short democratic histories and their



own unique challenges, ranging from inaccessible rural populations to low levels of literacy.

Fawad said a mechanism will be devised for transparency in the elections, assuring the machines fulfil all the requirements of the Election Commission of Pakistan under the law regulating the entire process. The minister said EVMs were ahead of the incumbent polling regime and would reduce the chances of fraud in the elections and results would be available immediately, including electronic and paper trails.

"Our emphasis on electronic voting machines is because they are not connected to the Internet", the minister

said. Fawad said voting usually ends at 5:00 pm during the election and the people have to wait until the next morning to get the results, but the use of electronic voting machines would make election results available immediately.

Regarding the rigging charges in recent Kashmir elections, he said, the PML-N was in power and the prime minister also belonged to the party.

Moreover, a senior member of the Election Commission was also a close relative of the then prime minister of the region. He said the appointment of the chief election commissioner was also done by the Muzaffarabad itself, the police and the administration were also under their control. But when the PML-N lost the election, the former premier claimed rigging.

If the opposition parties lose the election, they claim rigging and if they win, they say the elections were fair, the minister remarked. He said the best way to get rid of these allegations was to develop a mechanism so that the transparency of the elections cannot be questioned.

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Shireen Mazari says UK never asked Pakistan for Covid-19 data

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Several tourists looted at gunpoint in Swat

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TWO KILLED AS ROOF COLLAPSES DUE TO MORTAR SHELL EXPLOSION

RAHIM YAR KHAN
INP

A father and son were killed when roof of a room collapsed due to a mortar shell explosion on Monday. According to details, the incident took place in Basti Adil Shah of Rahim Yar Khan where a 50-year-old scrap dealer Siraj Ahmad who purchased a mortar shell in scrap was cutting it with angle grinder. The mortar shell exploded during cutting resultantly roof of the roof caved in. Two including Siraj, 50, and his son Sajjad, 15, were killed in the roof collapse. The bodies was laid to rest at local graveyard. The CTD and other security agencies gathered the evidences from the scene of blast, confirmed that blast resulted to exploding of mortar shell and dispatched the report to authorities.



Police fail to determine motive behind murder of Mubashir Khokhar

LAHORE
INP

Police have failed to determine the motive behind murder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) member Punjab Assembly Asad khokhar’s brother even after three days. Police is facing difficulties as the suspect has changed his statement three times in the last few days. The accused in an initial statement said that deceased Malik Mubashar alias Malik Goga was involved in the murder of his uncle and killed him to avenge the murder of his uncle. Later he retracted his earlier statement and said that he shot Mubashir over personal enmity. Mubashir was shot dead on Friday night during the wedding ceremony of Asad’s son that was also attended by Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar and other senior leaders of the PTI. Mubashir was laid to rest on Saturday in the graveyard of his native village, Manowal, on Multan Road.

Five suspected of abducting politician killed: police

QUETTA
MONITORING REPORT

The counterterrorism police said Sunday they killed five people involved in the abduction for ransom and subsequent death of a political party leader. The raid took place overnight in Pishin, according to the Balochistan Counter-Terrorism Department. Malik Ubaidullah Kasi, leader of the Awami National Party, was abducted for ransom from his native Kuchlak town near Quetta in late June. His body was found Thursday near an Afghan refugee camp in the Pishin district. A statement issued by the CTD said investigators arrested a man after Kasi’s body was found. The suspect subsequently led investigators to the hideout in Pishin. Officers killed five men allegedly involved in Kasi’s abduction late Saturday night in a gun battle. Machine guns, hand grenades and hand guns were recovered from the abductors’ hideout, police said. Kasi, a prominent political leader, was the first political figure abducted for ransom in the province.

SEVERAL TOURISTS LOOTED AT GUNPOINT IN SWAT

NEWS DESK

THE Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police said that around 20 tourists were looted at gunpoint in Swat’s Bahrain area on Monday, according to Dawn.

A police official told Dawn that “around 20 tourists from Lahore were travelling to Kalam in a coaster when they were stopped by motorcyclists.” He further told that the armed men then entered the coaster and looted the tourists.

He said that the tourists, however, managed to escape with Rs400,000 in cash and nine smartphones, adding that

as soon as the robbery was reported, the police reached the area and started an investigation.

Earlier on Thursday last, tourists going to different scenic spots in the province were looted at gunpoint. Several dacoits had stopped one coaster van at Osakai on Dir-Chitral road and another in the limits of Malakand Police Station, and looted the tourists at gunpoint. The dacoits had snatched precious mobile phones, watches, cash, ATM cards and other valuables from the tourists, according to a report.

So far, the police have failed to arrest the people behind the tourists’ robbery incidents.



SHC chides prosecution for ‘letting big fish go scot-free’ in Baldia factory case

KARACHI
INP

Nine years after a deadliest industrial blaze in Pakistan’s history, the pursuit of justice languishes as the Sindh High Court on Monday took to task the prosecution for failing to file appeals against prime suspects roaming scot-free.

Over 260 workers were burnt alive when Ali Enterprises, a multi-storey garment factory in Baldia Town neighbourhood of Karachi, was set on fire on September 11, 2012.

A subsequent investigation that ran for eight years found out Muttahida Qaumi Movement workers set the factory on fire because the owner had refused to give in to extortion demands.



One of the owners of the factory had testified the party had asked him to pay

Rs250 million or give a 50 percent share in his business.

NCOC daily report: 4,040 new cases, 53 deaths from Covid-19

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

Pakistan on Sunday reported 4,040 new Covid-19 cases, the National Command and Operation Centre said on Monday. The NCOC, a department leading campaign

against the pandemic, said that the number of overall confirmed cases has risen to 1,071,620, including 964,404 recoveries. The number of active cases has risen to 83,298, including 3,805 critical patients.

According to the NCOC, 53 more patients died on Sunday, bringing the overall death toll to 23,918.

Sindh is the worst-affected province by the pandemic with 400,400 infections, followed by Punjab which has reported 364,680 cases.

The NCOC said on its website that the country has administered 37,424,706 doses of vaccine and has fully vaccinated 7,635,391 persons as of Sunday night.

Well-timed digitalisation can ‘catapult’ Pakistan to progress: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD

APP

President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday said with timely decisions and preparedness on digitalisation, Pakistan could make great strides in technological revolution.

“Pakistan will be catapulted in the era of technological advancement if it keeps making fast decisions to join the global digital journey,” he said in his address at the Digital Government Summit, held here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The summit, themed ‘Innovative technologies on transforming the public sector’, gathered information technology and digital policy experts, besides taking onboard the officials of Google Cloud via video-link from Singapore. Organized by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication in collaboration with TechValley Pakistan, the digital summit focused on Google-powered innovative technologies to transform the public sector.

President Alvi said in the age of information overload, it was important for countries like Pakistan to adopt innovative data management tools offered by Google Cloud and find solutions for public services.

He said the global pandemic made digitalisation imperative for the delivery of public services including education, healthcare, transportation, security surveillance and building smart cities.

“The future is changing faster than you think...The digital evolution is imminent,” he said, stressing the importance of pursuing the government’s vision of a Digital Pakistan.

In the education sector, he said, the information and academic knowledge was no longer limited to books, but could be accessed through the data available at Google Cloud and other digital platforms.

He said Pakistan could greatly benefit by helping its students and professionals join the global digital club

of knowledge and ensure their access to the academic lectures of international standards.

As an enthusiast of emerging technologies himself, the president recalled that during his political canvassing in 2016, he personally handled the data of his constituencies by putting ‘layers’ on the Google Map, leading to an increased efficiency to win the election. Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Aminul Haq sharing the government’s vision of a Digital Pakistan said his ministry would collaborate with Google Cloud and TechValley in adopting the cutting-edge technology in areas including block-chain technology, artificial intelligence, finding industrial solutions and building smart cities.

Taking the challenge of Covid-19 lockdown as an opportunity, he said, his ministry took the steps to improve connectivity in ensuring facilities in education, health and finance. He mentioned that 100 million people at present were using broadband facilities, adding that a spectrum auction was an option to gain US\$ 1 billion. The ministry achieved the export target of US\$2.1 million US dollars with a further target set for US\$3.1, he added.

He announced that 5G service would be launched by next December. Also, Beep, a mobile chat platform like WhatsApp would be introduced, initially for the government employees.

Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood said after Covid-19, the canvas of the education system in Pakistan was changed with the introduction of distant learning through television and radio schools.

He pointed out the challenge of ‘digital divide’ and said focus would be laid on ensuring e-learning facilities to the students in remote areas for an access to academic lectures and teachers’ training.

He said the Ministry of Education was working

with Google Cloud and TechValley to launch a project in Islamabad based on the concept of blended technology by experimenting with smart boards, tablets and smart phones as per different age groups. Also, the lectures of Khan Academy are being translated into Urdu for facilitation of students, he added.

Federal Minister for Railways Senator Azam Khan Swati said Pakistan Railways was heading on the path of digitalisation and productivity as Google Cloud and TechValley had introduced cutting-edge technology to make the institution an emerging public department.

By the end of June 2022, he said, Pakistan Railways would become a profitable public sector entity through technological solutions in environment-friendly transportation, increased passenger and freight trains, checking scrap theft and outsourcing of dry ports.

Managing Director Google Cloud for Asia Pacific Paul Wilson in his video address from Singapore said Google was collaborating with public agencies to support economic development aligned to the situations, especially during Covid-19.

He expressed pleasure that the government of Pakistan was endeavouring to achieve better outcomes across the public sector through employee productivity and effective agency operations.

He mentioned that Google expertise could be applied to build government solutions in streamlining workflows, intelligent transportation, health and human services platform, smart and sustainable cities and the remote office and finance platforms.

CEO TechValley Pakistan Umer Farooq said as a partner with Google Cloud and the Ministry of IT, his company was promoting the culture of technology to pave the way towards economic development.

He mentioned that TechValley had so far trained 8,000 professionals and conducted 5,000 workshops on areas such as access to world class services, industry solutions and real-time analytics.

GAS CYLINDER EXPLOSION KILLS NINE IN PUNJAB

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

NINE people were killed and three others injured when the gas cylinder of a passenger van exploded in the Gujranwala district of Punjab late on Sunday night. The van caught fire following the explosion, killing

five people at the spot while four others succumbed to injuries in hospital. The injured people were also shifted to a hospital where their condition is said to be critical. Firefighters rushed to the site to douse the fire and recovered the bodies of the dead. Vehicles in Punjab are allowed to run on gas cylinders, but the poorly maintained old vehicles often pose a danger for the passengers.



Muharram moon sighted; Ashura on August 19

The crescent for the month of Muharram was sighted on Monday night and Ashura would be held on August 19. The Day of Ashura is marked by Muslims to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions on 10th of Muharram. On 9th and 10th of Muharram, processions are taken out in all the major cities of the country with government deploying police and paramilitaries to ensure the security of mourners. **NEWS DESK**

Court extends detention of suspect’s parents for two weeks in Noor murder

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Monday extended until August 23 the judicial remand of parents and two domestic helpers of the prime suspect in the murder of the daughter of a former ambassador. Noor Mukadam, 27, was found murdered at the residence of one Zahir Zakir in Sector F-7/4 of Islamabad last month. Zakir, widely believed to be the killer, was arrested the same day for his purported involvement in the gruesome incident. A first information report registered on the complaint of Ambassador Shaukat Ali Mukadam nominated Zakir under Section 302 (premeditated murder) of the Pakistan Penal Code. Islamabad police on July 24 arrested Zakir Jaffar and Asmat Adamjee, the parents, and the domestic staff for “hiding evidence” and “being complicit” in the incident that shook the nation, prompting outrage and nationwide protests. Following their arrest, the parents were sent to jail on judicial remand until August 9. They subsequently moved a bail petition challenging their detention. It, too, was rejected on August 5. The extension was sought following the expiry of the two-week remand pronounced on July 27. After judicial magistrate Muhammad Naseer-ud-din granted a fresh extension of remand Monday, the suspects are now set to remain in Adiala Jail for another two weeks. **STAFF REPORT**

Graana.com x NUST launch 3rd edition of Real Estate Science Level 1 Certification

Graana.com partners with the National University of Sciences Technology (NUST) to conduct a fully-booked 3rd Edition of Real Estate Science Level 1 Certification. The Diploma in Real Estate Science Level 1 is Pakistan’s first-ever formal training programme, focusing on the real estate sector, introduced by Graana.com – Pakistan’s First Online Real Estate Marketplace, in collaboration with NUST. The four-week diploma programme to be taught in NUST Professional Development Centre will conclude on August 27, 2021. Among those teaching the course are CEO Graana.com Mr. Shafiq Akbar, who holds a Master’s degree in Policy Analysis from the University of Cambridge and an MSc in Public Policy. The other experts teaching the course modules are Group Director Mr. Farhan Javed, Mr. Taimour Abbasi, and senior professionals of the company, including Mr. Asim Iftikhar, Ms. Iqra Musaddaq, and Ms. Saima Latif. **RESS RELEASE**

HEC takes U-turn on contentious PhD admission policy

ISLAMABAD
INP

Months after the Higher Education Commission launched a new policy of allowing candidates to take up PhD degree programmes after a four-year honours degree, the body has reverted to its previous policy, making the requirement for obtaining an MPhil degree mandatory to pursue a doctorate. With the move, a one-year masters degree after 16-year of schooling has become the minimum requirement for direct admissions to PhD. The commission, in a meeting, approved the new policy and informed all the universities of its decision. It also announced to review the direct admission policy in 2022. The policy of direct admissions was rejected by the academic circles who said the HEC had made recommendations without taking higher education institutions and academia on board.

Prosecution seeks adjournment of indictment in Maha suicide case

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

The prosecution has requested the Additional District and Sessions Court (South) to include sections of the disappearance of evidence in the indictment of suspects in the case related to 2020 death of a young woman in Karachi. A doctor practising at a private hospital in Clifton neighbourhood, Maha Shah committed suicide by shooting herself at her home in Defence Housing Authority in August last. Subsequently, on the complaint of the deceased’s father, the police last week registered a case against her friends under Sections 334 (hurt), 337-J (causing hurt by means of poison), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

PM, Punjab governor discuss political, governmental matters, reforms in universities

LAHORE
STAFF REPORT

Punjab Governor Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar called on Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday and discussed with him political, governmental matters and his visit to USA and reforms in universities. The governor congratulated Prime Minister Imran on the victory in Azad Jammu and Kashmir’s elections and apprised him that an Overseas Pakistani Convention at Governor’s House will be called very soon in which foreign investors, including overseas Pakistanis, will be invited to invest across the country. Premier Imran appreciated the efforts of the governor for launching more than 1,500 new projects under Punjab Aab-e-Pak Authority for provision of clean drinking water to people. On the occasion, Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Bazdar, Law Minister Raja Muhammad Basharat, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Shehbaz Gil, Minister of State for Information Farrukh Habib, Aab-e-Pak Authority Chairman Dr Shakeel Ahmed and Punjab Aab-e-Pak authority board’s member Rabia Zia and others were also present. During the meeting, Prime Minister Imran



appreciated the projects of Punjab Aab-e-Pak authority and the steps taken by the governor to solve the problems of overseas Pakistanis and Prime Minister Imran has also directed to expedite the provision of clean drinking water projects. Talking to media after the meeting, Sarwar said that “all the concerned departments, including federal and Punjab government are on the same page for providing clean drinking water to the people of Punjab and Insha’Allah, we will ensure the provision of all basic amenities including clean drinking water to the people as promised”. The Punjab governor further added that with the support of NGOs and without any government fund, we will provide safe drinking water to the same number of people as the number of beneficiaries achieved by the Punjab Aab-e-Pak Authority. **PM, BUZDAR DISCUSS STRATEGY TO CHECK INFLATION, HOARDING IN PUNJAB:** Separately, Chief Minister Buzdar called on Prime Minister Imran on Monday. Administrative matters of Punjab, measures for the relief of masses, strategy to check inflation and hoarding and the progress of ongoing development projects were discussed in the meeting.

Security staff stop Firdous Ashiq Awan from entering Punjab Assembly

NEWS DESK

Former provincial special assistant Firdous Ashiq Awan faced an awkward situation on Monday when she was stopped at Punjab Assembly gate by the security staff. The security staff told Ashiq, “Sorry madam! You don’t have the permission to enter in the Punjab Assembly.” Firdous was stunned and shocked after the PA security staff apprised her about the update that she could not go into the legislative assembly. She went to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Ahsan Saleem Barryar who won in a recently held by-election on a PTI ticket from Sialkot. Firdous said in Punjabi,” Ki Matlab Aey,” (What do you mean?), to which the Punjab Assembly security




personnel said, “You are respectful, but you are now not allowed to go inside as your name is not on the list.” She insisted the staff to look again her name in the name but all her efforts go in vain and she had to move back from Punjab Assembly. Talking to the media outside the provincial legislature, she said she was late to the oathtaking ceremony and the session had already ended, therefore “there was no need for me to go there. That is why I felt appropriate to not go to the assembly so there is nothing like this that anyone targeted me and stopped me from going inside”. She said that the PML-Q was an ally of the PTI and the speaker of the Punjab Assembly, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, had the right to permit or refuse entry as the custodian.






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PID (I) 794/21

TRADE DEFICIT INCREASES BY 85.53PC YOY TO \$3.104BN IN JULY

ISLAMABAD
TLTP

THE country faced a trade deficit of \$3.104 billion in the first month of the fiscal year 2021-22, which surged by 85.53 percent in July 2021 as compared to a deficit of \$1.673 billion recorded in July 2020.

According to the data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics on Monday, the exports from the country witnessed an increase of 16.44 percent

during July 2021-22 as compared to the corresponding month of last year. According to PBS data, the exports from the country stood at \$2.330 billion during July 2021 against the exports of \$2.001 billion recorded during July 2020, showing growth of 16.44 percent.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country witnessed negative growth of 14.59 percent during July 2021 when compared to the exports of \$2.728 recorded during June 2021.

On the other hand, the imports into the country during the month under re-

view also went up by 47.90 percent by growing from \$3.674 billion in July 2020 to \$5.434 billion in July 2021. Likewise, the imports into the country during July 2021 also witnessed 14.45 percent decline when compared to the imports of \$6.352 billion in June 2021, according to the PBS data.

The government's battle against bloated trade deficit is reversing as it widened 85.53 percent in the first month of the current fiscal year (FY22), driven largely by almost double the increase in imports compared to exports from the

country.

Trade deficit reached an all-time high of \$37.7 billion in the fiscal year 2017-18. However, the government's measures led to a drop in trade deficit to \$31.8 billion in 2018-19 and \$23.183 billion in 2019-20.

The trend reversed and the trade deficit was recorded at \$30.796 billion in the fiscal year 2020-21. The trade gap has been widening since December 2020, mainly led by exponential growth in imports and comparatively slow growth in exports.

Farm credit lending surged 12pc to Rs1,366bn in 2020-21: SBP

NEWS DESK

The State bank of Pakistan (SBP) has said that credit disbursement to the agriculture sector increased by 12 percent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis to Rs1,366 billion in the fiscal year 2020-21 against 2019-20, despite challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. In a statement issued on Monday, the central bank said that the disbursement is a collective effort of 49 financial institutions which together managed to achieve together 91 percent of their assigned target of Rs1,500 billion for the year. The outstanding agricultural credit stood at Rs628 billion as on June-end 2021, witnessing a growth of over 8 percent over end June 2020, which complements the overall positive outlook of the agriculture sector which grew at 2.77 percent during the fiscal year 2020-21. However, the number of agricultural credit borrowers witnessed a decline of 5 percent, falling from 3.7 million in 2019-20 to 3.5 million in 2020-21, primarily due to limited outreach owing to the ongoing pandemic. During 2020-21, the commercial banks, specialised banks, and Islamic banks posted a satisfactory performance, by disbursing Rs1,210 billion, against their target of Rs1,277 billion, thus achieving 95% of their assigned disbursement target. However, micro-finance banks as a group achieved 73% of their target by disbursing agricultural loans of Rs132 billion to small farmers. Likewise, the microfinance institutions/rural support programs collectively achieved 57% of their target by disbursing Rs23 billion to small and marginalized farmers.

PSX sheds 366 more points on Covid, CAD concerns

KARACHI
TLTP

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed another red session on Monday amid lack of positive economic triggers, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index shedding 366.33 points (-0.77 percent) to close at 47,123.62 points.

The market opened on a positive note with a gain of 44 points and remained positive in the initial hours but it turned towards south amid profit-taking activity. The market has shed around 670 points in the last three sessions.

The KSE-100 Index moved in a range of 571.8 points, showing an intraday high of 47,625.4 points and intraday low of 47,053.6 points. Among other indices, the KSE All Share Index shed 263.52 points (-0.81 percent) to close at 32,280.47 points, while All Share Islamic Index shed 210.28 points (-0.90 percent) to close at 23,060.95 points.

A total of 382 companies traded shares in the stock exchange, out of them shares of 70 closed up, shares of 289 closed down while shares of 23 companies remained unchanged. Out of the 96 companies which traded shares in the KSE-100 Index, shares of 22 closed up, 70 closed down, while shares of four companies remained unchanged.

The overall market volumes decreased by 162.44 million to 337.30 million shares. Total volume traded for the KSE-100 Index was 107.17 million shares. The number of total trades decreased

by 22,904 to 120,780; while the value traded decreased by Rs2.32 billion to Rs11.34 billion. Likewise, the market capitalisation decreased by Rs67.53 billion.

Among scripts, WTL led the volumes with 42.23 million shares, followed by FFL (17.4 million) and GGL (17.33 million). Stocks that contributed significantly to the volumes include WTL, FFL, GGL, BYCO and TELE, which formed over 31 percent of total volumes.

Sector wise, the index was let down by cement with 87 points, technology & communication with 69 points, power generation & distribution with 30 points, fertilizer with 29 points and oil & gas marketing companies with 25 points. The most points taken off the index were by TRG which stripped the index of 55 points followed by LUCK with 42 points, HUBC with 27 points, ENGRO with 24 points and GHGL with 17 points.

The sectors propping up the index were automobile parts & accessories with three points, close-end mutual fund with two points and refinery with one point. The most points added to the index were by MCB which contributed 13 points followed by HMB with nine points, HINOON with four points, FCEPL with four points and ABOT with three points.

According to analysts, the market opened on a positive note as business and commercial activities shuffled back to normalcy amid the removal of lockdown implications in Sindh province. Nonetheless, the continuation of the prevailing virus spread in the country and concerns on rising current account deficit (CAD) and inflation on the back of possible tariff hike disrupted investors' sentiment and exerted pressure at the bourse.

Rupee dips to 10-month low of 163.90 against dollar

Pakistan rupee continued the losing streak against the US dollar for the second straight session on Monday and hit a 10-month low after depreciating by Rs0.45 (-0.27 percent) in the interbank. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the US dollar opened at Rs163.45 and closed at Rs163.90. Previously, rupee was seen at Rs163.90 on October 7, 2020. Within the open market, the rupee was traded at Rs163.50/164.50 per dollar. Overall, Pakistani rupee shed Rs1.02 against the US dollar during the last week, while depreciation during the fiscal year 2021-22 has been Rs6.54. The local unit has shed Rs3.71 against the US dollar in the current year 2021. The currency experts said that demand for dollars remained high in the day as the market opened after two weekly holidays. They said the local currency remained under pressure due to the higher dollar's demand for import payments. They also attributed it to the ease in the restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic. The dealers; however, are hopeful of the rupee's recovery on the back of encouraging inflows of export receipts and workers' remittances. They said that the rupee is likely to make gains in the coming days due to expected inflows of \$2.8 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during this month. **NEWS DESK**

Bitcoin hits \$45,701 as crypto market cap nears \$2tn

The cryptocurrency market remained on the upward slide on Monday, with the market cap increasing 1.6 percent to \$1.91 trillion as of 1255 hours GMT. The price of Bitcoin (BTC), the largest cryptocurrency, jumped to \$45,701 by gaining 1.44 percent. With this increase in price, the market capitalisation of the BTC has reached \$858.2 billion. However, ethereum (ETH) price turned south and shed 0.54 percent to reach \$3,124. With this decrease in price, the market capitalisation of ETH has reached \$365.6 billion. On the other hand, XRP gained 0.54 percent to reach \$0.816. The market capitalisation of XRP stands at \$81.5 billion after this increase. Similarly, Cardano (ADA) price reached \$1.46 with a 1.05 percent decrease in its price. Its market capitalisation has reached \$47.2 billion after this decrease. Likewise, Dogecoin (Doge) price depreciated by 3.45 percent to reach \$0.255. With this decrease in price, the market capitalisation of Doge reached \$33 billion. According to analysts, Bitcoin rallied above \$45,000 as upside momentum improved over the past two weeks. They said that next level of resistance is seen at \$50,000, which could limit further upside given short-term overbought signals. They, however, said the weekly RSI is rising from neutral levels with a positive momentum signal for the first time since October 2020, which reignited the long-term uptrend. Buyers could remain active on pullbacks this week as bitcoin cleared important technical levels such as the 100-day moving average, they further said. **NEWS DESK**

Gold extends losses to reach Rs92,000 per 10gm

NEWS DESK

Gold prices edged down for the third straight session in the international market on Monday and has shed almost \$60 an ounce since Friday last.

At 1245 hours GMT, gold in the international market was available at \$1,743.40 per ounce after shedding \$21.20 as compared to its closing value on Friday last. Meanwhile, the price of 10 grams of yellow metal in Pakistan decreased to Rs92,000 after shedding Rs1,000. The closing prices of the yellow metal in the country settled at Rs93,000 on Friday last.

According to experts, gold has stalled its recovery from five-month lows of \$1688, having failed to find acceptance above \$1750, as the US dollar continues to

hold the recent gains fuelled by Friday's Nonfarm Payrolls (NFP) data. A big beat on the US employment report fanned expectations of earlier Fed tapering. Investors now assess the implications of a sooner than previously thought Fed's monetary policy assessment, with all eyes on this week's US inflation report. They said that gold is heading towards powerful support at \$1736, which is the convergence of the pivot point one-month S2, pivot point one-week S1. The next relevant downside target is seen at \$1729, the pivot point one-day S2. Further south, the bears will need to beat the fierce cap at \$1723, the Fibonacci 161.8% one-month. They said that on the flip side, the confluence of the SMA5 four-hour and pivot point one-day S1 at \$1746 will offer a stiff resistance on any fresh upside attempts.

IHC hears convicts' plea against sentence in Imran Farooq murder case

ISLAMABAD: While resuming the hearing of criminal appeals in Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader Imran Farooq murder case on Monday, Chief Justice Islamabad High Court raised question whether one of the accused Moazzam Ali recorded confessional statement during trial of the matter.

A division bench of the Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Aamer Farooq was hearing the appeals of three convicts including Khalid Shamim, Moazzam Ali and Mohsin Ali challenging an Anti-Terrorism Court's verdict of June 18, 2020 that had awarded them sentence to life imprisonment. The convicts – Khalid Shamim, Moazzam Ali and Mohsin Ali – filed the appeals through their counsel and requested the high court to set aside the

verdict and get them acquitted. They made the state and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) as respondents in the appeals.

On June 18, 2020, the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Islamabad had sentenced the appellants to life imprisonment in the high-profile murder case of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader Dr Imran Farooq. They were also imposed a fine of Rs1.2 million each. In his appeal, Mohsin informed the court that the ATC judge had convicted him despite the fact that evidence with the prosecution was insufficient to connect him with the crime. He contended that he had been implicated in the case because of some banking transactions. **TLTP**



Directorate General of Immigration & Passports Islamabad

TENDER NOTICE FOR SYNCHRONIZATION OF 3 X DIESEL GENERATOR SETS & UP GRADATION OF POWER PANEL

Sealed tenders are invited from the NTN/GST registered firms for Synchronization of 3 x diesel generator sets & up gradation of power panel at Directorate General Immigration & Passports G-8/1, Islamabad. Tender document containing complete specifications of work/items and Terms and Conditions of this tender can be obtained from the office of the undersigned, on payment of Rs. 1000/- (non-refundable) in the form of pay Order/ Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque or in the form of cash in favor of Director General Immigration & Passports, by presenting request on company letter head.

2. Terms & Conditions for Submission of Proposals:

- National Tax Number (NTN) and Sales Tax
- Registration Certificate.
- The proposals must reach the undersigned on or before **August 26th 2021 at 1130 hrs.**
- The Tender shall be evaluated on the basis of both Technical & Financial Proposals, single stage two (2) envelope procedure (Rule 36 (b) of PPRA Rules, 2004)
- Technical and Financial Proposals should be submitted in separate envelopes, the words 'Technical Proposal' or 'Financial Proposal' as the case may be, and 8/1/2021-22/GENSET/SYN/LOG being clearly written on the top of the respective envelope and both 'Technical and Financial Proposal' should be in one envelope.
- In the first instance, Technical Proposal shall be opened by a committee **on August 26th 2021 at 1200 hrs** in the conference Room of this office. After technical evaluation, Financial Proposals of only technically qualified companies shall be opened on a date/time to be announced subsequently.
- A **Tender Security equal to 2% of the tender price must be attached with the Financial Proposal in the form of a Pay Order/Demand Draft/Bank Guarantee in favour of Director (Hqrs).**
- All taxes shall be charged as per Government Rules on the subject.
- Directorate General, Immigration & Passports reserves the right to cancel or reject any/all tenders under rule 33, of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rules, 2004.
- Incomplete and without bid security proposals shall not be entertained.
- This tender notice has also been posted onto PPRA Website www.ppra.org.pk
- Detailed terms and conditions have been elaborated in the bidding document.
- The successful companies shall have to display their capability to supply/install the equipment within the prescribed delivery schedule of Four (04) Weeks from the day of issuance of work order.

ASIM FAWAD MIRZA
 Manager (Logistics)
 Directorate General Immigration & Passports
 Sector G-8/1, Mauve Area, Islamabad.
 Ph: 051-9107078

PID (I) 806/21

PM urges masses to plant one tree each to ensure clean Pakistan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

He said that contrary to the only 640 million trees planted in the country’s history by 2013, the government of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa planted one billion trees in the province during 2013 to 2018. The premier said that now the government’s target was to plant 10 billion trees across the country. He said that as the world was faced with the issue of global warming due to various reasons including deforestation, Pakistan was doing, what it can do, to check the phenomenon through various measures, adding, but there was a need to take measures at global level. The prime minister lauded the efforts of Chief Minister Punjab and his team for developing Miyawaki forests in Lahore. On this occasion he was told that Miyawaki forest has been developed over 100 kanals with a total of over 160,000 plants which grow ten times quicker than a normal forest owing to the unique Miyawaki technique. It uses specialised land preparation as well as indigenous varieties with varying growth rates to produce fast growing urban forests. Prime Minister Imran was further told that another 53 Miyawaki forests were being grown at different parts of Lahore to create sinks for carbon as well as for better pollution abatement in the city. All have been geo-tagged for monitoring of their growth and development. About 500 million trees were being planted across the country under the ongoing monsoon plantation drive which was the largest ever such drive in Pakistan.

Success of intra-Afghan dialogue depends on leadership: Qureshi

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

He said Pakistan had accomplished about 98 percent work on fencing of Pak-Afghan border to stop illegal movement of people. He said Pakistan was a facilitator and not a guarantor of peace in Afghanistan. Qureshi said India had violated its obligation as the United Nations Security Council’s president by not allowing Pakistan’s request to brief the forum on the situation and its role in Afghanistan peace process. To another question, he said Pakistan had clear priorities and about China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), there was a national consensus. The foreign minister said the CPEC had been targeted by the enemies of Pakistan, but they had unflinching resolve to foil all such attempts. Citing different incidents like Serena, Dasu and Johar Town attacks, and Quetta blasts, he reiterated that work on the CPEC would continue. Responding to another query, Qureshi said Pakistan had expedited its efforts to become a president of the UNSC during 2025-26. About the incident of Afghan ambassador’s daughter, the foreign minister said that they had shared all the details and evidences with the Afghan delegation as their moral responsibility.

No train travel for unvaccinated citizens from Oct 1: NCOC

ISLAMABAD
TLTP

After slapping a ban on air travel for unvaccinated people, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) announced on Monday that only vaccinated individuals will be allowed to travel by train from October 1. The decision was taken during a meeting chaired by NCOC chief Asad Umar. During the meeting, the high-level forum expressed concern over the alarming increase in Covid-19 infections across Pakistan, particularly Rawalpindi and Peshawar. In Peshawar, traders have ignored the government’s calls for compliance with Covid-19 SOPs, resulting in an increase in cases. Although shops remained closed in Saddar and University Road areas of the city on Sunday, traders in most parts of the city largely ignored the call for lockdown and kept their shops open, the NCOC noted. In light of these violations, the NCOC issued instructions to the authorities concerned to ensure compliance with the anti-virus SOPs in an effective manner.

REPORT ON DASU ATTACK TO BE UNVEILED SOON: RASHEED

ISLAMABAD
MIAN ABRAR

INTERIOR Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed Monday announced that the probe into the Dasu attack has been completed and the media would soon be taken into confidence over the findings by Minister of Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi. “No obstacles in the way of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will be tolerated. The entire nation is united on the matter of Kashmir and CPEC,” said the minister while addressing a press conference here. He said he had held two meetings with the Chinese ambassador and assured him of tight security of the Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. The minister made it clear that the CPEC project would not become the victim of any external conspiracy.

He said, “No one can become a hurdle in the relations between Pakistan and China.”

The minister also shed light on several national and international issues. He said that Israel and India wanted to play with Pakistan’s peace, adding, “the opposition is not willing to understand what is going to happen in the region in the next six months”.

“We have to thwart the conspiracies of India, Israel and Afghanistan’s National Directorate of Security against national security,” he said and added that India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Afghanistan’s Intelligence Agency, NDS and Israeli spy agency were trying to sabotage peace in Pakistan.

“The enemy is also using media to create disharmony among various sections of the society of Pakistan. It is high time to jointly fail the conspiracies of enemies as they were always active against our beloved country,” he asserted.

He said the interior ministry had completed its investigation in Afghan ambassador’s daughter case and it had shared factual situation with the Afghan investigation team through Foreign Office.

He said a vaccination portal would be developed in a few days to serve the vaccination certificates to the citizens for Muslim countries. He said the government had decided to start 1122 service in the federal capital to ensure immediate help during flood like situation as no such quick response service was available here.

He said new vehicles would be provided for the purpose. He said strict action would be taken against those allegedly involved in illegal construction in Sector E-11.

He suggested PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif to come back to Pakistan and face his court cases if he was true leader. He announced to cancel his annual event of public gathering and fireworks at Lal Haveli on August 13 due to prevailing corona situation.

Hostile players won’t succeed to sabotage CPEC: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD
TLTP

CHINA TO PROVIDE 6M COVID JABS THIS WEEK, 100M BY YEAR-END



Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their resolve to further boost bilateral cooperation in various fields for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

This was discussed at a meeting between President Dr Arif Alvi and Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong on Monday.

Both sides emphasised the need for making collective efforts to promote peace, prosperity and development in the region. The meeting also underlined the need to enhance cooperation in the field of information technology (IT).

The president said that China and Pakistan enjoy excellent relations and the All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership between the two countries would further take the bilateral relationship to new heights. He said that both time-tested friends have always stood by each other through thick and thin.

The president reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to the One-China Policy and firm support to China on core issues of its national interest, such as Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and the South China

Sea. He appreciated China’s support for Pakistan’s core national issues like the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, Nuclear Suppliers Group and Financial Action Task Force (FATF). He also thanked the Chinese government for providing support to Pakistan in containing the Covid-19 pandemic.

The president underlined that Pakistan is committed to the timely completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project that has huge

potential to contribute to the socio-economic development of Pakistan. He said that certain hostile players are not happy over the project and are trying to sabotage it but they would not succeed as both the iron brothers are strongly committed to implement the project.

Offering condolences to the government of China and the bereaved families who lost their dear ones in Dasu blast, the president underscored that the security of Chinese nationals, working in various

projects in Pakistan, is the highest priority of Pakistan and the government is making all-out efforts for their protection and security.

Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong said that Pakistan is the closest friend of China and his country wants to further strengthen bilateral cooperation with Pakistan. He added that his country would share its experiences with Pakistan that would help in its social and economic prosperity.

He lauded the steps taken by the government of Pakistan that successfully contained the Covid-19 pandemic. The ambassador informed that China would provide six million vaccine doses this week while 100 million vaccine doses would be provided by the end of the year.

He also referred to the recently held Strategic Dialogue between the foreign ministers of the two countries last month and expressed the hope that the Dialogue would further push forward the relations between the two brotherly countries.

UN report says global warming dangerously close to being out of control

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

Further warming could mean that in some places, people could die just from going outside.

“The more we push the climate system ... the greater the odds we cross thresholds that we can only poorly project,” said IPCC co-author Bob Kopp, a climate scientist at Rutgers University.

IRREVERSIBLE: Some changes are already “locked in”. Greenland’s sheet of land-ice is “virtually certain” to continue melting, and raising the sea level, which will continue to rise for centuries to come as the oceans warm and expand.

“We are now committed to some aspects of climate change, some of which are irreversible for hundreds to thousands of years,” said IPCC co-author Tamsin Edwards, a climate scientist at King’s College London. “But the more we limit warming, the more we can avoid or slow down those changes.”

But even to slow climate change, the report says,

all the requirements of the ECP.

Regarding the concerns of the stakeholders, the minister said the stakeholders include the Election Commission and the opposition parties and these machines fulfil all the conditions of the commission as far as the opposition is concerned, they have not seen this technology as yet.

He said that the opposition should first have a look at these machines and then make its own decision. Fawad said at present, there were three types of technologies being dis-

cussed in electoral reforms which include electronic voting machines, internet voting and biometrics, these three were not inter-linked. He said that at present, five companies were developing EVMs which meet the requirements of the ECP. He said that there was no problem with technology and the issue of their price may be discussed.

Responding to a question, he said that there were two parts of the legal provisions in this regard, one part was related to giving powers to the Election Commission. He said

the world is running out of time.

If emissions are slashed in the next decade, average temperatures could still be up 1.5C by 2040 and possibly 1.6C by 2060 before stabilising.

And if, instead the world continues on its the current trajectory, the rise could be 2.0C by 2060 and 2.7C by the century’s end.

The Earth has not been that warm since the Pliocene Epoch roughly 3 million years ago — when humanity’s first ancestors were appearing, and the oceans were 25 metres (82 feet) higher than they are today.

It could get even worse, if warming triggers feedback loops that release even more climate-warming carbon emissions — such as the melting of Arctic permafrost or the dieback of global forests.

Under these high-emissions scenarios, Earth could broil at temperatures 4.4C above the preindustrial average by the last two decades of this century.

Power generation reaches 24,303MW on August 9, NA told

NEWS DESK

The National Assembly has been informed that the government is making all-out efforts to meet electricity demand, which is evident from the fact that 24,303 megawatt power generation was recorded on Monday (August 9). Minister of Energy Hammad Azhar informed the Lower House of teh Parliament during the question hour that no scheduled load-shedding is being carried out in the country. He said that installed generation capacity is sufficient to meet the demand. Minister of Science and Technology Syed Shibli Faraz informed the house that ministries of science and technology and national health services, regulations and coordination have signed a memorandum of understanding to promote local manufacturing of medical devices. Responding to another question, the minister said that the government is taking effective measures to provide clean drinking water to the masses.

Fawad says govt ready to trial electronic voting in 2023

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

Fawad said that for ensuring transparency in elections, the position of Prime Minister Imran Khan and PTI was to move towards technology as it would bring transparency in elections like the developed democracies.

The election commission set 36 conditions, he said, adding if an electronic machine meets those conditions, it can be used in the election process. He said that the new technology brought by the government met

Quetta blast

Uptick in violence imminent as the Afghanistan conflicts worsens

QUETTA yet again became the target of terrorism, with another attack being carried out in the vicinity of a five-star hotel in the provincial capital of Balochistan. The last incident took place in April when a powerful bomb exploded in the parking lot of the establishment, targeting the Chinese Ambassador who was staying there but not present at the time of the attack. The IED that went off on Sunday was strapped to a motorcycle that targeted a police vehicle, killing two policemen and injuring at least 12 people. Terrorist activity in Quetta has risen substantially over the past few months with security personnel being primary targets. As the situation in Afghanistan continues to worsen, fears that effects of the conflict would spill over into Pakistan are slowly but surely being realized. Emboldened by the success of the Taliban in taking over an increasing number of districts following US troops' abrupt exit from Afghanistan, groups such as the TTP have issued fresh threats to Pakistan, with its new and current chief Wali Mehsud, in an interview to CNN stating that the group's primary target is to fight against Pakistani Security Forces and gain control over the country's tribal regions. The TTP has claimed responsibility for at least 32 attacks in Pakistan in the first two months of the current year.

While the threat from such groups and others was never completely eliminated, it was being managed to an acceptable degree whereby the frequency of deadly attacks in major cities and sensitive locations had gone down significantly after the success of various consecutive military operations. However, the volatility of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan where provincial capitals have started to fall and Afghan pilots are being assassinated by the Taliban to eliminate the Afghan army's aerial dominance, a situation is developing whereby Pakistan may start seeing terrorism numbers similar to what they were almost a decade ago, when it was a bloodbath on an almost daily basis. While it is very difficult to thwart all possible attempts being made by terrorists to attack, efforts to gather actionable intelligence must still be ramped up to preempt and stop as many as possible. It would be impractical at this point to hope for any negotiated peace deal and therefore all regional countries, especially Pakistan, must prepare for what seems like an eventuality: a heightened threat level and sensitive security situation leading to more violence.

Need for immediate assurances

Pakistan cannot afford to be seen promoting lawlessness

THE PTI govt needs to take urgent measures to project a positive image of Pakistan abroad, especially in friendly countries who render significant help and assistance to Pakistan. The govt has to specially value its relations with the United Kingdom and European countries that have been nurtured over decades of diplomacy.

Pakistan has been the top recipient of UK aid and remained a strategic priority for its Department for International Development (DFID) over the last many years. The Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) of the European Union allows Pakistan to pay less or no duties on its exports to the EU. GSP+, a component of GSP, offers additional trade incentives in return for the implementation of 27 international covenants, treaties and conventions. The EU is mandated to review Pakistan's human rights progress every two years under GSP+.

European countries give importance to human rights and media freedom. In May, Information Minister Fawad Choudhry was grilled by Stephen Sackur in BBC's Hard Talk about incidents of violence against journalists in Pakistan allegedly by security agencies. This should have sent the right message to the government. However, within days of the interview a veteran Geo TV host was sent on long leave against his will. Last week two journalists were picked up in defiance of legal procedures, only to be released after strong reaction from the community. A report in the Guardian/Observer now tells of European and British intelligences agencies having warned Pakistani dissidents and rights activist living in the region who criticize Pakistan's agencies that their lives are in danger. According to the report the concern now is that Pakistan appears to be moving from suppressing criticism within its borders to targeting critics based in foreign countries. This is a highly serious allegation that must not be taken lightly. Any action of the sort would do irreparable damage to Pakistan.

The government needs to realize that Pakistan's opponents would use the situation to create a rift between Islamabad and its Western partners. The government needs to assure the countries concerned that being a responsible administration it will not allow any department or agency to indulge in any illegality at home or abroad.

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Civic and ethnic nationalism in a populist world

Peace and justice at risk



WALI EJAZ NEKOKARA

BEING distinguished and seeking recognition of dignity can be taken as one of the drivers of nationalism. This desire to be distinguished has been existing for a long time and in today's world, this can equally be found. For instance, Ukrainians and Chechens perceive themselves differently from Russians, Kurds distinct themselves from Turks and Iraqis, and Taiwanese want separation from China based on their distinctiveness. It is human nature that they want to be recognized by others based on their uniqueness and want to be esteemed as Francis Fukuyama writes in his book "Identity: demand for dignity and politics of resentment" that "Self-esteem arises out of esteem by others". Some of the important features of nationalism are the concept of the nativity to soil, self-determination, and popular sovereignty.

Many scholars have worked and are still working to grasp the true essence of nationalism. Modernist theorists perceive nationalism as a modern phenomenon. Hans Kohn is one of the most prominent scholars on nations and nationalism. He maintains that due to the settlement of borders before the rise of nationalism, western European countries like (UK, France, Switzerland, and Netherland) drew their focus on the democratic procedure. Therefore, nationalism adopted the narrative to transform the oppressed inhabitants into citizens. American sociologist Charles Tilly de-

scribes this nationalism as "State-led nationalism". On the other hand, Eastern European countries' borders were settled after the rise of nationalism, so in Eastern Europe's case, ethnic nationalism garnered more attention. C. Tilly mentions this as "State-seeking nationalism". To further illustrate the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism we have to highlight some features of both. As far as civic nationalism is concerned, it is defined by common citizenship, not distinction based on (color, creed, gender, religion, and language), and equal rights. On the other hand, ethnic nationalism bases on religion, language, customs, and the concept that nations create the states. Civic nationalism is democratic but ethnic is not. The recent wave of populism has shown an inextricable nexus between Populism and ethnic nationalism. Populism is a very complicated and contested concept but it is defined by "Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser" in the book "A very short introduction to populism" as "a thin-centered ideology that divides the society into two parts 'the pure people' vs. 'corrupt elite' and emphasizes that politics should be an expression of the general will of people". In the current political scenario, populism revolves around a "charismatic leader" who woos the gullible people for consolidating his power. In this self-centered politics, political parties lose their significance and elections become redundant.

Take the example of India, populism has decimated the Indian democracy which was considered as the greatest one. It was known for its liberal, secular and civic values but populist leader Narendra Modi corroded democratic values and changed them into a 'kakistocracy'. An official agenda to marginalize the Muslims of India and turning India into a

Hindu-dominated state is continuing unabatedly. All the institutions are under the massive clout of the BJP and playing their role in marginalizing Muslims as policemen were cited during breaking CCTV cameras to hide their partisanship when people were protesting against the citizenship bill. Most of the media channels are promoting Modi's ideology and the ultra-nationalist mindset is being prepared. The hegemony of Hindu ideology, waning transparency of institutions, shrinking room for Muslims, and dying values of democracy are changing India into an ethnic nationalist country. Similarly, the American democracy under the stewardship of Donald Trump witnessed crisis after crisis. Donald Trump's policies to marginalize black people and his mantra of white supremacy changed the political landscape of the USA. Furthermore, the killing of George Floyd at the hands of policemen sparked protests across the country. The poor handling of the coronavirus further exposed the hollowness of populism. A country like the USA which always raised its voice to extend the notion of democracy could not maintain democracy at home. Due to the racist and exclusive approach of Trump, civic nationalism eroded and ethnic nationalism gained ground. So, in the populist world, civic nationalism has disappeared and lacuna has been filled by ethnic nationalism. If populist tendency continues in the future, it can exacerbate the peace and can also intensify the conflicts and injustices in the world. Populist leaders have emerged as an image of inefficiency, ineffectiveness, imprudence, and impracticality.

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Afghanistan: An insurgency free tomorrow?

Foreign interference must end first



ALI SUKHANVER

SOME are happy and some are grieved at US' decision of pulling out its forces from the Afghan land but at the same time some are yet not clear whether to be happy or to be sad on this 'epoch-making' decision. Definitely the decision is going to change the whole future scenario of the war-torn Afghanistan, might be in a positive way and might be negatively. But one thing is very much clear that things would take a long time in permanent settlement. At present a tug of war between the Afghan government and the Taliban is simply making the situation over there more horrible and more atrocious. The Taliban have to fight not only the Afghan government but also the veiled supporters of US in Afghanistan. Agents of the R&AW are also there to counter Taliban with all their zeal and zest, even the Ashraf Ghani government is doing all the best possible for its survival. In short, situation there is not very favourable for the Taliban but not in control at the Ashraf Ghani government at the same time. And no doubt this was the situation desired by the US policy makers.

Experts are of the opinion that the Taliban could be successful but not in blinking of an eye; things could take time. There is expected a long tug of war in which it would be very difficult to defeat the Taliban as they are enjoying a very strong support of the local people. Moreover, after US withdrawal, they would be having no strong military opposition as the Afghan Army has no professional skill to compete the

Taliban. There are reports that many soldiers of the Afghan Army are joining Taliban troops as they think it is in better interest of their country. The Ashraf Ghani government is also aware of the fact that the Afghan Army lacks professional skills and it won't be a wise step to instigate the Taliban by showing closeness to India at this crucial time. That is the reason that recently on 26 July Afghan Army Chief Gen. Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai cancelled his planned visit to India just because of the possibility of offending the Taliban leadership. The purpose of his three-day visit to India was to explore ways to deepen bilateral military ties in the backdrop of the Taliban carrying out offensive operations across Afghanistan following the withdrawal of foreign forces but according to an official of the Afghan Embassy, "The visit by our Army Chief has been postponed due to intensity of war and Taliban's increased assault and offensive." Reports say that Gen Ahmadzai had plans to hold wide-ranging talks with top Indian military brass including his counterpart Gen. MM. Naravane and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

However, there is another question too; would the Taliban-control be fruitful for the people of Afghanistan? It is a bitter fact that for the last three decades, Afghanistan has been 'misused' rather exploited as a battlefield of interests for so many western countries. In the name of war on terror, a very fertile and minerals-enriched country has been changed into debris. No doubt India had always been a facilitator to all those who joined hands together with one another in 'excavating' the Afghan lands. It has been in media-analysis that the Taliban being 'sons of the soil' could never forget the atrocities and cruelties of the NATO forces and the US troops, done against the real land-owners. Apprehending the 'danger' of Taliban's coming into power

after US' withdrawal from Afghanistan, India has already started planning to bring a shift in its policy towards the Taliban. According to Aljazeera, 'in early June, the Indian media reported that New Delhi has started talking to certain factions and leaders of the armed group against the backdrop of the withdrawal of the United States forces from Afghanistan. A few

days later, India's Ministry of External Affairs also confirmed these reports, stating that they were in touch with various stakeholders.'

India is well aware of the fact that the Taliban regime could never be very pleasant and encouraging for India as the Taliban claim to struggle for supremacy of the Muslim community. In case, the Taliban come into full power with all authority, the ball would not remain in India's court. The Taliban would never honour the deals already done between the Ashraf Ghani government and India. It is also a fact that India has invested a lot in Afghanistan specifically in the last ten years. This investment is mainly in construction of roads, dams and infrastructure projects. Other than an economic activity, this investment provides India an opportunity of sending terrorists to Afghanistan in guise of laborers and other technical staff. Control of Taliban on Afghan affairs would simply deprive India of this golden opportunity. The fact of the matter is that Afghanistan could never move to a better direction unless foreign interference in Afghan affairs is not eliminated. Peace and prosperity in Afghanistan could be a desire of countries like Pakistan, Iran, Russia and China but for US and India the desire might be otherwise. Let us wish our Afghan brothers an insurgency-free tomorrow.

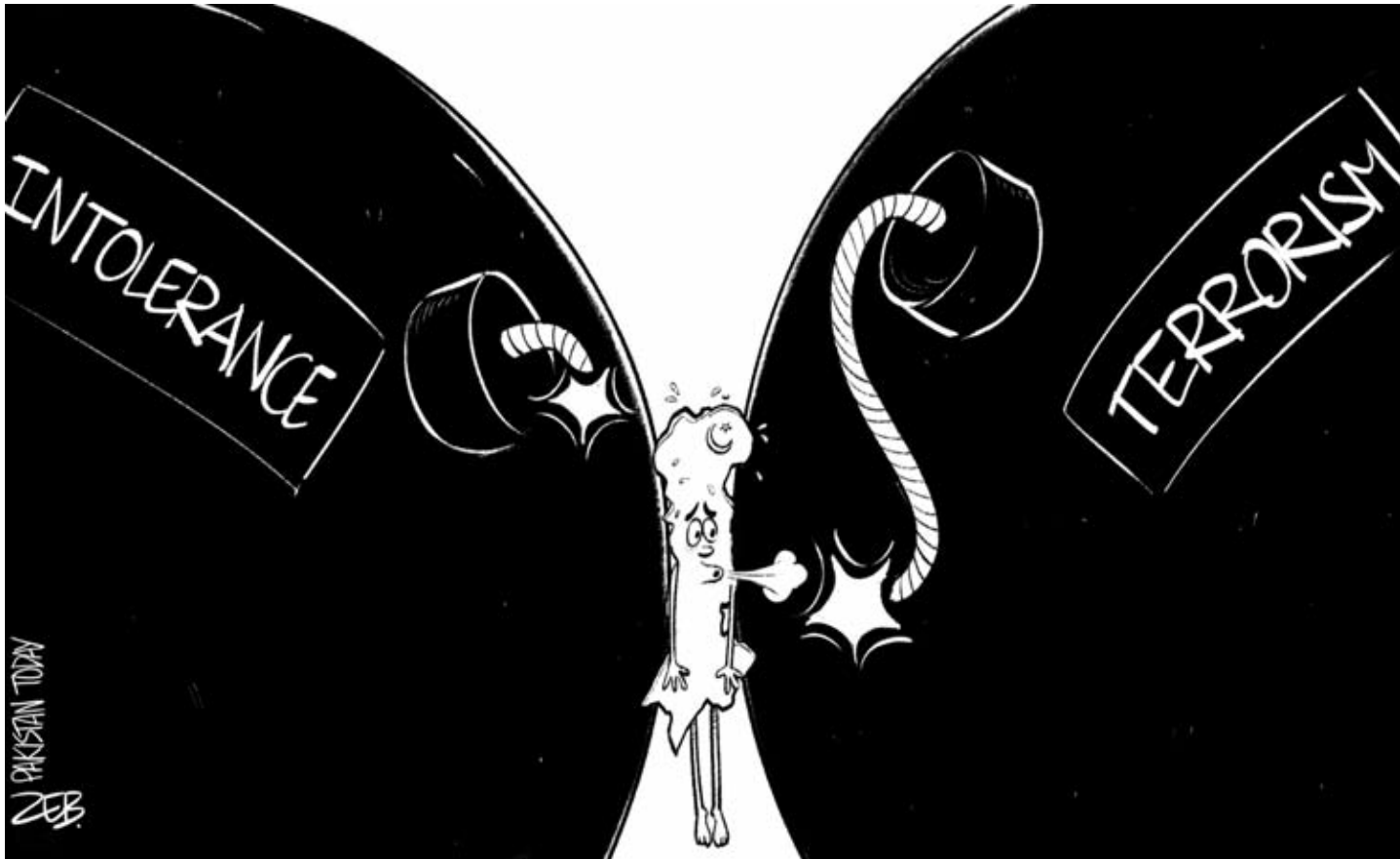
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Kashmir Premier League

And Indian sports terrorism



PROF. ABDUL SHAKOOR SHAH

“Sports taught me to set goals; it really gave me a voice and identity”, Mia Hamm.

DESPITE all the trials, tribulations and difficulties, Kashmir Premier League is hailed and celebrated as a national triumph throughout the country. Especially the Kashmiri glee knew no bounds. The zeal, zest and vigor of Kashmiri worldwide is exemplary. The unexpressed feelings of gratitude are like wrapping a gift and not giving it. KPL is going to dawn a new era for Kashmir cause. It is a nontraditional step ahead to accentuate Kashmir cause. The paramount significance of KPL can be ballpark figured from its popularity and opposition. It is a lining in the dark clouds for the Kashmir nation. KPL is the harbinger of Kashmiri culture, identity, freedom and fundamental rights. The inborn right of freedom can never be snatched away by brutal force and winds of state terrorism. India is too scared to bear the reality that Kashmiri neither will surrender nor will be taken in their struggle for self determination. India has cunningly endeavored to sabotage the event by contacting ICC not to recognize the League. The Hindu conspiracy and eternal enmity with Kashmiri has also been exposed by letter to the English and South African Cricket Boards. Marshal Gibbs and some other international players have unveiled the Indian fascist face. Some of the international players have been horrified, terrorized and threatened not to be a part of KPL. The India sport terrorism is unbearable. BCCI is once again middling in the internal affairs of the ICC members. The fascist

state has forcibly banned its retired cricketers’ participation. The commentators and broadcasters have also been terrorized not to be a part of KPL. India must bear in mind that spirits and vigor can never be terminated by brutal force. The Indian sports jealousy is now crystal clear to every soul. India has heartened the universal feelings of sports and peace by opposing, conspiring and propagating against KPL. It is all due to Indian Luciferian enmity with Kashmiris.

India can never stomach Kashmiri identity and their voice being heard internationally. It is really a death delirium for fascist India to watch Kashmir youths sitting, playing and practicing with international players. KPL is going to usher in a new era of Kashmiri culture, identity and their peaceful struggle for freedom. It will also pave the way for tourism, sports journalism, regional harmony, sports investment and world peace. India has licked the dust by opposing KPL as it has utterly failed to politicize the event. India is cocked sure that KPL is going to be a

“The series of KPL must be continued in future to promote sports, investment, tourism, peace, harmony and equal opportunities especially for AJK and GB. Kashmiris also aspire to gain representation in international organizations to present their case on international level. It is the responsibility of Pakistan to ensure Kashmiri representation with the help of intimate countries. Kashmiris are highly grateful to KPL management and we are fully optimistic that in future

lieve in the peaceful solution of the long standing Kashmir issue as per UN resolutions. Actually, KPL has given a new dimension to the

Kashmir cause. From the very name “Kashmir Premier League” it is evident that its axis is Kashmir cause, Kashmiri identity, Kashmiri culture and freedom struggle of Kashmiri nation.

“Actually, KPL has given a new dimension to the Kashmir cause. From the very name “Kashmir Premier League” it is evident that its axis is Kashmir cause, Kashmiri identity, Kashmiri culture and freedom struggle of Kashmiri nation. We, Kashmir, want peace. We want a bat not a bullet. The Hindu state terrorism brutalities, massacre of Muslims, the streets are littered with Kashmiri blood and India has turned occupied Kashmir into world’s largest prison.

again enlivened and highlighted the Kashmir issue to the international front. A lay man is unaware of the vitality of this league. He is limited to the sports level of KPL while the reality is quite different. KPL is much more than a sports festival. Its results will be revealed in the near future. The win or defeat are part of the game, but so far as KPL is concerned we have a win-win position from every angle. Kashmir Premier League is also in the spotlight of international media. The Hindu state has utterly failed to politicize the League. We need to take solid initiatives regarding the Kashmir issue, the anxiety of Kashmiris cannot be minimized only by sports. Pakistan should include Kashmiri cricketers in its national and international teams for representation like the rest of the provinces. It is the need of the hour to give the Kashmiri representation on all national, regional and international fronts. It is the fundamental right of the people of AJK and GB to be selected for all sports so that they can become a source of their identity. The series of KPL must be continued in future to promote sports, investment, tourism, peace, harmony and equal opportunities especially for AJK and GB. Kashmiris also aspire to gain representation in international organizations to present their case on international level. It is the responsibility of Pakistan to ensure Kashmiri representation with the help of intimate countries. Kashmiris are highly grateful to KPL management and we are fully optimistic that in future, KPL will be a stalwart event. We must improve the drawbacks and uplift KPL to international level. Kashmiri must be given their due share from KPL income.

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EDITOR’S MAIL

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E-mail: letters@pakistantoday.com.pk

Letters should be addressed to Pakistan Today exclusively

Effect of COVID 19 on Mental Health

SINCE the outbreak of COVID 19 in late 2019, hundreds of thousands have died worldwide. In order to control the spread of the virus, countries imposed lockdown, confining people to the boundaries of their home. With the outburst of Corona dating back to over a year, many people have suffered severe mental health issues due to the confinement faced after the announcement of lockdown.

Mental health issues are a range of conditions which can have a negative effect on one's mood or behaviour. Common mental health issues include depression and anxiety.

Stress, pressure and loneliness faced by people, often due to self-isolation can be inducing factors that can ultimately lead to mental health issues. In the months since COVIDs outbreak in Pakistan, the number of people diagnosed with mental issues has dramatically risen, as well as the suicide rate across provinces. Over 25 suicide cases have been linked with COVID since its outbreak, with likely more to come if measures aren't taken. It is estimated that about 50 million people suffer from mental health issues in Pakistan, with a severe lack of psychiatrists to treat them. This means that obtaining mental health treatment can be an issue for many people, resulting in their disorders worsening. Fear of coronavirus as well as sadness caused by isolation and the thought of confinement has only increased the number of mental health issues not only in Pakistan but worldwide.

However efforts are being made by the government in order to curb the spread of mental illnesses, through methods such as, providing relevant information about mental issues impact and methods of prevention. In addition the government has published a 26 page document providing instructions on how to avoid mental issues, especially during lockdown. NGOs across Pakistan have taken charge of raising mental health awareness as well, with talks being organized to achieve this.

WALEED QASIM BASHIR
LAHORE

Afghan war: Who is to blame?

SEPTEMBER 11th is the deadline for the American army to leave Afghanistan and end it's decades long war. A lot of people are asking questions of why this war went on for so long and why America has lost this war. And a lot of people end up blaming Pakistan for America's failures.

“Directorate S” is a book written by Steve Coll, that explains Pakistan's position categorically from the start of the war till the end. From Ex President Musharraf till current Prime Minister Imran Khan, every Pakistani military and civilian leader have been telling the US only one thing, negotiate with the Taliban as they are local Afghani's and cannot be expelled from their own country.

The book also categorically tells us how the USA always went against Pakistan's advice, whether it was to help the Northern Alliance take over Kabul, or whether to give Pakistan time to deploy troops to the borders before the USA bombed Tora Bora mountains or even when Pakistan asked them to negotiate a peace with Taliban.

The book also highlights how the USA used India's funded Ahmed Shah Masood's Northern Alliance group whose second command was Amrullah Saleh, the current VP of Afghanistan who likes to spew hatred against Pakistan at every opportunity he gets. Incidentally Ahmad Shah Masood was killed in a suicide attack, two days before September 11th World Trade Center incident, and he was pronounced dead in an Indian funded hospital in Tajikistan. Reading the book the readers would understand how Pakistan had always tried to help the USA and even how the Taliban continuously asked to negotiate Peace with the USA, but in both cases their requests were turned down. Therefore at this juncture the people of America, Afghanistan and Pakistan should be asking themselves is why the USA Government and CIA allowed the US Army and coalition forces to continue a war, when in the end the USA Government had to negotiate a peace settlement anyways?

SHAHRYAR KHAN BASEER P. ENGR.
PESHAWAR

Vaccine hesitancy

THE Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc all over the country. Many countries are trying hard to get rid of the virus. The government of Pakistan is also working tirelessly to make Pakistan free from this highly transmissible virus. There is no doubt that the government is playing a laudable role in dealing with this disastrous situation. However, the people are not ready to listen to the authorities. Many people are still reluctant to get vaccinated because of the misconceptions that they are viral on social media and other platforms. A few days ago, I found myself in a queue outside a vaccination centre. While waiting for my turn, I talked to a few people who were standing behind me in the queue. They said that they are getting vaccinated because of the restrictions that the government had announced for the unvaccinated.

They added that had it been up to them, they would have remained unvaccinated because they had heard that the Covid-19 vaccines have adverse side effects. These misconceptions are the reason that many people are still unvaccinated. Religious scholars and political leaders must take steps to encourage people to get vaccinated.

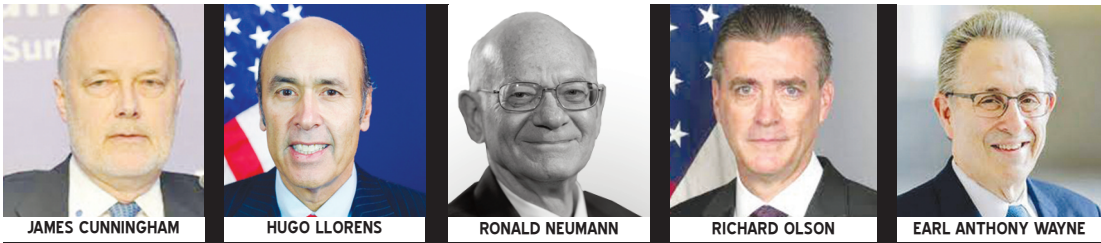
HAMMAL ZAHID
KOLAHOO

Protecting our kids

AT this stage when the child abuse cases, be it in terms of sexual assault, pornography or child trafficking are taking alarming proportions and adversely affecting the individuals, families as well as the whole society, it was a beautiful piece of jurisdiction by the Senate. Dearth of laws and bodies to check such incidents had led the numbers to suffer in the past but today the imposition of this law would assist in curbing the rate of such cases which are leading to serious threats including guilt, self blames, nightmares, insomnia, suicidal ideation, self injury, depression, aggressive behavior etc among the children. Highly hoping to see a positive change.

USMAN MIR
KARACHI

DON'T LOSE AFGHANISTAN



NEW ATLANTICIST

STAGING a major military offensive. Ignoring calls for peace negotiations. Threatening women and executing prisoners and civilians. Given the Taliban’s behavior lately, US President Joe Biden’s decision to rapidly withdraw US forces from Afghanistan appears increasingly questionable. While it’s not certain the Afghan resistance to the Taliban will crumble, a catastrophic outcome is still possible. Abandoning a courageous people as they attempt to fight back could leave millions of Afghans vulnerable to Taliban repression.

That’s why we recommend a course correction involving redoubled efforts to support the Afghan security forces—particularly through airpower, which is immediately critical—as well as the vigorous implementation of US promises of continued security, economic, humanitarian, and diplomatic support.

With continued limited engagement, which is the approach the United States is currently taking in Iraq, it is not too late to avoid complete state collapse and more chaos in the region. But the US government must act swiftly and resolutely in Afghanistan and in mustering global support.

A COUNTRY IN THE BALANCE: In consistently failing to engage the Afghan government in good-faith negotiations, the Taliban has signaled that it is going for all-out victory. The terms the group seeks—control over the country’s police, military, and intelligence service, as well as the power to effectively remove and appoint the head of state and other top officials—amount to a demand for surrender.

The Taliban has also broken promises to keep freed prisoners off the battlefield and maintained its ties with al-Qaeda, while continuing to mistreat women and girls as well as mete out brutal justice against perceived enemies. Its members are flouting the supposed commitments they made to take the Doha peace process seriously.

All this suggests that the Taliban is intent on removing the current elected government in Kabul and restoring something resembling the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, consistent polling over many years suggests that large numbers of Afghans do not want to live under the Taliban. Those figures are now reflected on the battlefield as civilians increasingly join the resistance. In the western provincial capital of Herat, for example, an uprising led by former warlord Ismail Khan and aided by Afghan security forces pushed the Taliban back in recent days. That led to dancing and singing in the streets

of Herat—celebrations that were soon echoed in Kabul. Yet while Afghans’ willingness to take up arms against the Taliban appears to be growing, it is not yet widespread. Significant in some provinces—such Takhar and Baghlan in the north and Nangahar in the east—but weak in others, the resistance remains disorganized. On Friday, for example, the capital of the southern Nimruz province fell to the Taliban despite local resistance by security forces and civilians. But if the latter are properly led and supported, they may yet become a potent force.

For its part, the Taliban is trying to counter this resistance with a combination of military moves and offers to cut deals with power brokers for privileged positions in a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

WHY AIR SUPPORT MATTERS: A pivotal element to holding Herat, as well as avoiding the loss of other key cities, effective air support not only boosts the morale of Afghan officials and security forces but also supports intelligence and logistics operations. For the Afghan state, it buys time to recover its balance; for the United States and its allies, it provides space to consider what might still be salvaged after twenty years of development work. This is why the Biden administration must urgently reconsider its decision to end close air support for Afghan forces by August 31.

More broadly, the United States needs to work with the Afghans to establish an air force of the size and structure that they need. After all, the slow development of the Afghan air force—though it is now performing well—is partly a US responsibility: While corruption and mismanagement plagued the Afghan side, the United States also wasted \$549 million on shoddy cargo planes and lost a great deal of time by switching from rebuilt Russian helicopters to more complicated American Blackhawks. Washington also devised a system heavily dependent on support from foreign contractors and then decided to pull those contractors out of Afghanistan as part of the sudden withdrawal.

The urgent work ahead must include adequate training and maintenance to keep the Afghan air force flying. Plans and timelines should be realistic and developed with NATO and other allied cooperation and funding. NATO should also renew its commitment to providing its own air support until the Afghan air force is fully built (or peace negotiations are successful). This will spread out the burden and risk. Importantly, the United States should designate a senior Department of Defense official to oversee defense-assistance efforts.

CLEAR-CUT POLICY IS KEY: Continued air support, however, is a short-term tactic to avoid defeat—not a policy. Nor is withdrawing US and NATO forces with-

AN IGNOMINIOUS AMERICAN DEPARTURE FROM AFGHANISTAN WOULD SEND A TERRIBLE SIGNAL TO OTHER COUNTRIES AS THE UNITED STATES COMPETES WITH CHINA AND OTHER AUTHORITARIAN STATES. IF US SECURITY GUARANTEES ARE NOT CREDIBLE, WHY NOT CUT DEALS WITH CHINA?

out sufficient planning for what comes next. Supporting negotiations is helpful, but only talking about negotiating while the other side is winning militarily and pushing for surrender is futile.

The US approach should be to prevent the defeat and collapse of the Afghan state until a stalemate can force serious negotiations and a sustainable settlement. A deal that protects the broad spectrum of ethnic and tribal interests, including guarantees protecting the hard-fought gains of Afghan women, will only be possible through these kinds of talks. This is why negotiations should be constantly supported but not allowed to cripple military action, as was the case during the past year when the United States was largely on the defensive. Providing humanitarian assistance is also crucial, as the Taliban’s military offensive has displaced tens of thousands of people and pushed Afghanistan toward a humanitarian and refugee crisis. The United States, which now shoulders an even greater responsibility for those left behind amid its withdrawal, should lead an international effort to marshal emergency humanitarian support for those affected by the violence. This could help avoid a potentially massive refugee movement throughout the region and beyond.

There is no reason for Americans to turn their backs on the suffering Afghan people—especially when those Afghans are still putting up a fight. Many have adopted the values of freedom, human rights, and political liberalism that the United States has preached for twenty years. Now they seek refuge from death and persecution. Most want to stay and help Afghanistan; the US government must empower them.

MUSTERING GLOBAL SUPPORT: Peace, no matter how far off it seems, still needs diplomatic support. With the Doha agreement on the withdrawal of American forces failing to deliver serious Afghan-to-Afghan negotiations, Biden should appoint and support a new US envoy for Afghanistan and the region to reinvigorate diplomacy.

The envoy should be complemented by a United Nations (UN) counterpart with the authority to take the lead in working with the Afghan government, the Taliban, and regional players with a strong interest in stability in Afghanistan. These regional powers will not come together on their own, and the United States cannot lead such a process given its lack of relationship with Iran, a key actor.

The United States needs to play a supportive role in this process rather than engaging in independent initiatives. It should also get clear and collective agreement from crucial stakeholders—such as China, Russia, the European Union, the United Kingdom, India, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan—that they will not recognize or provide economic or financial assistance to a Taliban

government imposed by force.

Helpfully, the UN Security Council this week issued a strong condemnation of escalating violence, human-rights abuses, and civilian casualties. But UN sanctions on the Taliban should not be lifted and no more Taliban prisoners should be released until the group takes tangible steps to reduce violence and engage in good-faith talks with the Kabul government. The Security Council should urgently consider imposing new restrictions on the Taliban, including a travel ban, unless such significant steps are taken.

The US government also needs to consider the wider impact and long-term effects of its new policy in Afghanistan. The toppling of the government in Kabul would destabilize South Asia—a region dominated by India and Pakistan, two antagonistic, nuclear-armed powers. But above all, an ignominious American departure from the country would send a terrible signal to other countries as the United States competes with China and other authoritarian states. If US security guarantees are not credible, why not cut deals with China?

It is late in the day, but the United States can, and must, act forcefully in Afghanistan with air and defense support along with robust diplomacy. The country’s future—as well as Washington’s global credibility—is at stake.

Ambassador James Cunningham was US ambassador and deputy representative to the United Nations (1999-2004), US ambassador to Israel (2008-11), and US deputy ambassador and ambassador to Afghanistan (2011-2014). Ambassador Hugo Llorens was US assistant chief of mission in Afghanistan from 2012-2013 and special charge d’affaires from 2016-2017. Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann was the US ambassador to Afghanistan from 2005-2007 as well as ambassador to Algeria and Bahrain. He is president of the American Academy of Diplomacy. Ambassador Richard Olson was US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (2015-2016), US ambassador to Pakistan (2012-2015) and coordinating director for economics and development at the US Embassy in Kabul (2011-2012). He previously served as US ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne was US deputy ambassador to Afghanistan and coordinating director for development (2009-2011). He is a nonresident senior fellow in the Atlantic Council’s GeoEconomics Center and a diplomat in residence at American University’s School of International Service. He also oversees the Wilson Center’s USMCA and North America program.



AL-MONITOR
KHALID HASSAN

SEIF al-Islam Gadhafi, son of late Libyan President Moammar Gadhafi, reared his head again, 10 years after his disappearance following the outbreak of popular protests against the Gadhafi regime back in February 2011.

In an interview published by The New York Times Magazine July 30, he revealed his intention to return to political life: “After an awkward silence, I asked Seif if he was still a prisoner. He told me he was a free man and was organizing a political return. The rebels who arrested him a decade ago became disenchanted with the revolution, he said, and eventually realized that he could be a powerful ally. Seif smiled as he described his transformation from captive to prince in waiting. ‘Can you imagine?’ he said. ‘The men who used to be my guards are now my friends.’”

Seif al-Islam said in the interview with New York Times Magazine reporter Robert F. Worth conducted back in May that he was no longer a prisoner and that he is arranging for his return to the political arena. He said the fighters who arrested him 10 years ago have become free of the illusion of revolution and have come to the realization that he could serve as a powerful ally for them.

Seif al-Islam was captured by rebel fighters following the ouster and killing of his father in 2011. A Libyan court sentenced him to death in 2015, before releasing him two years later. Since then, he has been living in hiding in the northwestern city of Zintan.

Gadhafi’s son announces return to Libyan politics

AS SOON AS SAIF AL-ISLAM, THE SON OF LATE LIBYAN PRESIDENT MOAMMAR GADHAFI, ANNOUNCED HIS PLAN TO RETURN TO POLITICAL LIFE, MEDIA OUTLETS CLOSE TO THE REGIME IN EGYPT RUSHED TO ANNOUNCE THEIR SUPPORT, THUS RAISING MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT EGYPT’S POSITION AND WHETHER CAIRO WOULD SUPPORT HIM IF HE RUNS FOR THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NEIGHBOURING LIBYA

“They raped the country — it’s on its knees,” he said in his interview. “There’s no money, no security. There’s no life here. Go to the gas station — there’s no diesel. We export oil and gas to Italy — we’re lighting half of Italy — and we have blackouts here. It’s more than a failure. It’s a fiasco.”

As soon as he reappeared to the public eye, pro-regime Egyptian media outlets rushed to defend him and announce their support for him.

On his TV program “Bel War’a wel Alam” (“Paper and Pen”) broadcast July 31, Neshat al-Dhehi, a journalist close to the Egyptian government, promoted the candidacy of Seif al-Islam in the upcoming Libya elections slated for Dec. 24. He said that Seif al-Islam admitted that there were mistakes before 2011 “during the rule of his father, Moammar Gadhafi.” Dhehi accused foreign intelligence services of tampering with the Libyan internal scene and distorting the image of Seif al-Islam with the aim of keeping him from running for the Libyan elections.

He continued that Seif al-Islam intends to run for the elections and is now seeking to salvage Libya and fulfill the popular desire. However, he added, Seif al-Islam refuses to ascend to power through military force or to be imposed by a certain side.

Amr Abdel Hamid, a pro-regime journalist, said on the “Rai Aam” (“Public Opinion”) program Aug. 1 that Seif al-Islam tried, through his interview, to urge the Libyans to participate in the upcoming elections in

order to get Libya out of its repression.

Abdel Hamid tried to acquit Seif al-Islam from the crises that the Libyan citizens suffered during his father’s rule, saying that he had always sought to solve the country’s crises, but a conspiracy was being hatched in Libya to bring the country down.

Egyptian member of parliament Mustafa Bakri told Al-Monitor that Seif al-Islam will change the equation in Libya, not only because he is Gadhafi’s son, but also because he has a vision and many supporters across Libya, unlike any other political faction that is present in a particular region. Bakri believes Seif al-Islam may be an option for Libyan reunification.

Seif al-Islam enjoys the support of all Libyan regions, as he is backed by the Qadhadhfa, Magarha and Warfalla tribes, who are spread across the city of Sirte in central Libya; Bani Walid and Shwerif in western Libya; and Brak al-Shati and Sabha in the south.

On Aug. 21, 2020, rallies were held in several Libyan cities calling for the nomination of Seif al-Islam in the presidential elections. Bakri indicated that there are some legal obstacles that could hinder Seif al-Islam’s candidacy, which he said must be based on a strong popular opinion and should result from consultations with various political forces.

On July 28, 2015, the Tripoli Criminal Court issued a death sentence in absentia against Seif al-Islam and eight members of the former regime, including Abdullah al-Senussi,

former intelligence chief, and Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi, the last prime minister of Gadhafi’s regime, on charges of committing war crimes and killing citizens during the Libyan revolution that erupted in February 2011.

This year, on May 27, the Supreme Court of Libya — the highest judicial authority — ruled to overturn the death sentence issued against Seif al-Islam and to accept the appeal. On Sept. 9, 2020, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) unanimously ruled that the case against Seif al-Islam for crimes against humanity was accepted and heard before the court.

Recently, on Aug. 3, the Libyan House of Representatives based in Tobruk and headed by Aguila Saleh, discussed a draft law regulating the presidential elections, along with the conditions and procedures for candidacy for the presidency.

In an attempt to respond to Seif al-Islam’s statements, Saleh stressed during the Aug. 3 parliament session that no person convicted by the ICC shall be entitled to run for the presidency of Libya. Asked about Egypt’s support for Seif al-Islam in the upcoming elections, Bakri said that Egypt’s policy is clear and based on the stability of Libya and confronting extremist groups that drain Libya and plunder its resources.

He stressed that Egypt will support the person that the Libyans will choose and the person capable of uniting Libya and putting an end to the years of chaos and collapse that it witnessed in the wake of the fall of Gadhafi’s rule.

Libyan member of parliament Ali al-Saidi told Al-Monitor that Seif al-Islam has the right to run for the upcoming presidential elections, and that the decisions of the ICC are not binding.

Asked about the Egyptian stance on Seif al-Islam’s candidacy, Saidi said that Egypt is well aware that Libya’s security affects its own security. He stressed that the security and stability of Libya will only be established if a person who is able to reunite the Libyans arrives at the helm to fight the armed militias backed by Qatar and Turkey and seeking to control the Libyan soil and its wealth.

On Sept. 18, 2018, high-ranking Libyan and Egyptian sources from within a committee concerned with the Libyan file, revealed to Al-Araby Al-Jadeed newspaper that a high-level meeting had been held between Seif al-Islam and officials from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates to discuss ways to rearrange the Libyan house, Seif al-Islam’s political future and the possibility of using him again to unite some Libyan tribes around him.

Meanwhile, on Libya’s eastern military commander Khalifa Hifter, who enjoys the backing of Egypt, Khaled al-Mishri, head of the Muslim Brotherhood-controlled High Council of State, which serves as an advisory body to the Tripoli-based government, said in a panel discussion on the “Club House” app, which was reported by the media June 26, that most of the international powers, notably Russia and Egypt, have abandoned Hifter.

INTELLIGENT REHABILITATION COULD TRANSFORM MEDICARE INDUSTRY IN PAKISTAN, CHINA

SHANGHAI
INP

“HEALTH Silk Road”, the cutting-edge technology of intelligent rehabilitation has the potential to transform the medicare industry in Pakistan and China, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro.

Fourier Intelligence, a leading Chinese company in the field of intelligent rehabilitation, gained a sizable amount of investment from Prosperity7 Ventures, a fund under the wing of the world's largest petroleum group Saudi Aramco.

“Over the years, Fourier Intelligence has completed the independent research and de-

velopment of a series of core technologies, such as multi-axial force sensors, flexible joints, advanced robot control algorithms, and complex medical interaction technology.

An open robotic technology platform has been built, on which intelligent rehabilitation products have been developed continuously according to clinical needs”, commented Gu Jie, president of the company. Empowered by the robot technology, the company provides comprehensive intelligent rehabilitation solutions for medical institutions and patients.

Rehabilitation is an emerging industry in Pakistan, China, and Saudi Arabia. World Health Organisation defines the term as “a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individ-

uals with health conditions in interaction with their environment”.

Globally, an estimated 2.4 billion people are currently living with a health condition that benefits from rehabilitation. Instead of a service for people with long-term or physical impairments, rehabilitation is for anyone with an acute or chronic health condition, impairment or injury that limits functioning.

In Pakistan, the 6th populous country in the world with 64% of the population living in the rural areas, rehabilitation services urgently call for upgrading and modernisation.

In Pakistan, rehabilitation services are dominated by the public sector. In its National Health Vision 2016-25, innovative technologies are highlighted as a means of

widening accessibility.

To promote smart technology, the government has establish the Presidential Initiative for Artificial Intelligence & Computing (PIAIC) to train future tech talent.

A research paper on the health imperatives in Pakistan also proposes that high-tech medical equipment should be mobilized to realize its Vision 2030 by the Ministry of Planning, which can be achieved through public-private partnership. A Community of Health for All requires modern technology. In the wave of the fourth industrial Revolution, intelligent technologies hold broad prospects to empower the construction of the “Health Silk Road”. PIA announces discounted fares for Canada-Pakistan flights

The Pakistan International Airlines

(PIA) has announced discounted fares for Canada to Pakistan flights.

The national carrier announced to reduce fares up to 25 per cent for flights from Canada to Pakistan for a limited period.

According to the spokesperson, the passengers from Toronto could avail the discounted fares by August 15.

Earlier in the month, PIA had announced special flight operations for the Najaf pilgrimage starting August 11 where 11 flights will take off with pilgrims willing to visit Najaf ahead of Ashura.

The 11 Najaf-bound flights will operate from Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore starting August 11, while the return begins from August 21, the PIA chief Air Marshal Arshad Malik had announced.

CORPORATE CORNER

Dr Amineh Hoti's book Gems and Jewels: The Religions of Pakistan sponsored by Murree Brewery company

RAWALPINDI
PRESS RELEASE

Dr Amineh Hoti, a well-known author and researcher's book GEMS and JEWELS: The Religions of Pakistan” was launched on Monday at the Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi. The book was sponsored by Murree Brewery Company Limited, distinguished guest such as Dr Qibla Ayaz the chairman of Islamic Council and Isphanyar Bhandara the Chief Executive of Murree Brewery Company Limited were present there along with the representatives of different religions in Pakistan. The author of the book, Dr Amineh Hoti said that the book and the launch event was sponsored by Murree Brewery Company Limited, she took this opportunity to thank the chief of Murree Brewery Company Limited Isphanyar Bhandara. People perceive Pakistan as a Muslim nation only throughout the globe, though people from different religions reside in this country too and in this book Amineh Hoti has discussed these religions thoroughly. Furthermore, she added that she named the book because she believes people residing in Pakistan with different faiths are the real gems and jewels of Pakistan. Lastly, she thanked each and every one of the guests and people part of the launch ceremony. At this occasion, the chief executive of Murree Brewery Company said, “People from different faiths residing in Pakistan are wishful of a prosperous and peaceful Pakistan, with patience, resilience and discipline he minorities of Pakistan are enjoying their lives with freedom in the country and this brotherhood amongst everyone in the country shall forever remain intact for the positive upbringing of the country.” While talking about the book, Bhandara added that this book along with the facts about different religions of Pakistan has also brought to light the notion of inter faith harmony and the historical facts about these religion and reading this book will most definitely help our young generation know more about the different people with different faiths in the country. This book is showcasing the soft image of Pakistan where we tell the world the people of all faith living in Pakistan peacefully. This is not just a book but it is a service to the motherland. This book will help building positive image of Pakistan amongst the global world and proves that Pakistan is a peace striving nation.

China plays crucial role enhancing tea production in Pakistan: report

ISLAMABAD
INP

China from the very beginning has played a crucial role in enhancing tea production in Pakistan, says a report appeared in Gwadar Pro, quoting experts.

As potential suitable sites and land for tea cultivation are located alongside the CPEC, China has a big role to play in promoting tea on a commercial scale through joint ventures and technical and financial support, they added.

According to the report, while pursuing tea plantations on a commercial scale, the Government of Pakistan has decided to cultivate tea on an area of about 25,000 acres over the next five years.

“This year we are going to approve a project where we are growing tea on an area of 25,000 acres; we are creating history; we plan to complete the proposed tea plantations over the next five years”, said Jamshed Iqbal Cheema, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Food Security. He was visiting National Tea and High-Value Crops Research Institute (NTHRI) at Shinkiari, Mansehra.

On the recommendation of Chinese tea experts, the National Tea Research Institute (NTRI), later renamed as NTHRI, was set up on 50 acres of land in Shinkiari in 1986. NTHRI is playing a crucial role in promoting tea cultivation in the country.

Out of the proposed 25,000 acres of land, 10,000 are government-owned forests, 12,000 acres are private land where the Forest Department has planted forests while 3,000 acres of land have been identified in Azad Kashmir.

During the next phase, the tea plantation would be extended to all tea-cultivable land of the country, as per the government plan.

Pakistan has great potential for growing tea, according to Mr. Cheema, as the country has 178,000 acres of tea cultivable land. “Pakistan can grow its own tea,” he said, adding that the country imported 30 million tonnes of tea each year from 15 different tea-producing countries.

Jamshed Iqbal Cheema said Pakistan spent Rs. 90 billion annually on importing tea. The import value of black tea is Rs. 89 billion while Rs. one billion goes to green tea's import.

While inviting private tea companies to invest in the tea sector, Jamshed Iqbal Cheema said, “We are ready to facilitate and solve any problems of the private companies regarding their investment.”

The government is providing an opportunity to the private companies to invest and to promote the tea trade, which would also create thousands of jobs for the locals. The Ministry of Food Security has allocated Rs. 8.5 billion budget for high-value crops and cluster development, the report added.

PIA announces discounted fares for Canada-Pakistan flights

MONITORING REPORT

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced discounted fares for Canada to Pakistan flights. The national carrier announced to reduce fares up to 25 per cent for flights from Canada to Pakistan for a limited period.

According to the spokesperson, the passengers from Toronto could avail the discounted

fares by August 15. Earlier in the month, PIA had announced special flight operations for the Najaf pilgrimage starting August 11 where 11 flights will take off with pilgrims willing to visit Najaf ahead of Ashura.

The 11 Najaf-bound flights will operate from Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore starting August 11, while the return begins from August 21, the PIA chief Air Marshal Arshad Malik had announced.

India top court says antitrust probe of Amazon, Walmart's Flipkart should continue

NEW DELHI
AGENCIES

India's Supreme Court on Monday said an antitrust investigation into business practices of Amazon.com Inc and Walmart's Flipkart must continue, rejecting demands of the two e-commerce giants to put them on hold. The Competition Commission of India ordered the investigation in 2020 against the companies for allegedly promoting select sellers on their e-commerce platforms and using business practices that stifle competition. The companies deny any wrongdoing and have repeatedly tried to mount legal challenges against the investigation. The three-judge Supreme Court bench said companies like Amazon and Flipkart should volunteer for such investigations.

Commercial activities resume as Sindh eases Covid-19 restrictions

NEWS DESK

Commercial activities in Sindh resumed on Monday as the provincial government relaxed Covid-19 lockdown restrictions that were imposed from July 31 due to the fast spreading Delta variant of coronavirus. According to a notification issued from the provincial home department, the lockdown has been lifted in the province with ease in restrictions announced until August 31. According to the notification, the businesses have been allowed to open in the province until 8pm with Friday and Sunday declared as safe days. “Milk, pharmacies, petrol pumps, vegetable, and meat shops are exempted from timing restrictions and could remain open round the clock,” it said.

Oil slides on China Covid-19 curbs, strengthening US dollar

MELBOURNE
AGENCIES

Oil prices fell nearly 2% on Monday, extending last week's steep losses on the back of a rising US dollar and concerns that new pandemic curbs in Asia, especially China, may set back the global recovery in fuel demand.

Brent crude futures slid by \$1.27, or 1.8%, to \$69.43 a barrel by 0434 GMT, after having slumped 6% last week, their biggest weekly loss in four months.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell \$1.29, or 1.9%, to \$66.99 a barrel, after having slumped nearly 7% last week in their steepest weekly decline in nine months.

"Concerns about potential global oil demand erosion have resurfaced with the acceleration of the Delta variant infection rate," RBC analyst Gordon Ramsay said in a note.

ANZ analysts pointed to new restrictions in China, the world's second largest oil consumer, as a major factor clouding the outlook for demand growth.

The curbs include flight cancellations, warnings by 46 cities against travel, and limits on public transport and taxi services in 144 of the worst hit areas.

On Monday, China reported 125 new COVID-19 cases, up from 96 a day earlier. In Malaysia and Thailand, infections continue to hit daily records of more than 20,000.

"While the number of cases (in China) is low, it comes just as the summer travel season peaks," ANZ commodity analysts said in a note. "This has overshadowed signs of strong demand elsewhere."

China's crude oil imports dipped slightly on a daily basis in July to 9.71 million barrels per day (bpd), a fourth month in a row

of imports below 10 million bpd and sharply down on a record 12.94 million bpd in June 2020 when refiners were stocking up on cheap crude, data released on Saturday showed.

China's export growth slowed more than expected in July following outbreaks of COVID-19 cases and floods, while import growth was also weaker than expected, pointing to a slowdown in the country's industrial sector in the second half.

A rally in the US dollar to a four-month high against the euro also weighed on oil prices, after Friday's stronger-than-expected US jobs report spurred bets that the Federal Reserve may move more quickly to tighten US monetary policy.

A stronger US dollar makes oil more expensive for holders of other currencies.

Trading was quiet with holidays in Japan and Singapore.



China reports more Covid-19 cases while some cities kick off new tests

BEIJING
REUTERS

China reported more Covid-19 cases as it entered the third week of its current outbreak on Monday, while some cities added rounds of mass testing in the effort to stamp out locally-transmitted infections. The highly infectious Delta variant has been detected in more than a dozen cities since July 20, and officials have asked local government authorities to rigorously track infections and close loopholes in control efforts. "A laxity of mind should be firmly overcome," the National Health Commission said in a statement on Sunday that called for the outbreak to be curbed. Analysts see the Delta variant as the biggest test of China's zero-Covid strategy since last year's initial outbreak, but expect authorities will quash it before it gets out of control, even if at some economic cost. Sunday's 125 new confirmed infections on the mainland included 94 locally transmitted cases, up from the previous day's figure of 96, with 81 locally transmitted, while the rest were imported from abroad, the NHC said on Monday. Most of Sunday's local patients were in the central city of Zhengzhou and the eastern city of Yangzhou, government figures showed. Yangzhou has started a fifth round of mass tests, city authorities said on Monday, when Zhengzhou is expected to wrap up sample collection for its third round of citywide tests. The eastern city of Nanjing, hit hard in the outbreak that began late in July, though it reported no more than five daily local cases since August 2, has also started a third round of targeted testing in some areas, after three rounds citywide. The number of new asymptomatic infections was 39, up from 30 a day earlier. China does not classify them as confirmed cases. China's tally of infections stands at 93,826 since the outbreak began, while deaths stayed at 4,636.

AT LEAST 51 KILLED IN MALI VILLAGE RAIDS BY MILITANTS

BAMAKO
AFP

AT least 51 people were killed when militants raided three villages in central Mali near the border with Niger, a district administrator said on Monday.

The towns of Ouatagouna, Karou and Deouteguef were simultaneously attacked at around 6pm on Sunday, according to a note from the Asongo district administrator to the governor of Gao region.

Houses were ransacked and burned to the ground and herds of livestock carried away, said the note, which was seen by Reuters.

"Provisional toll is 51 killed, several other injured," it said.

No group has yet taken responsibility for the attacks in the area where Malian troops, French and European forces, and United Nations peacekeepers have been battling insurgents linked to the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.

Mali's army spokesman Colonel Souleymane Demele confirmed the attacks but gave no further details.

Other local sources told Reuters that the militants stationed themselves at the towns' entrances and fired indiscriminately upon civilians.

The administrator said Malian troops were sweeping the area. He also requested a military escort to "help with the funerals, reassure the populations and offer condolences to the bereaved families", according to the note.



Locals evacuate the area with their animals as a wildfire rages in the suburb of Thracomakedones, north of Athens, Greece. REUTERS

California wildfire now second-worst in state history

SACRAMENTO
AFP

The monstrous Dixie Fire in northern Cali-

fornia has grown to become the second-largest wildfire in state history, authorities said on Sunday, with three people reported missing and thousands fleeing the advancing

flames. As of Sunday, the fire had destroyed 489,287 acres, authorities said, up from the previous day's 447,723 acres. It now covers an area larger than Los Angeles.

The Dixie blaze is the largest active wildfire in the US, but only one of 11 major wildfires in California.

Over the weekend, it surpassed the 2018 Mendocino Complex Fire to make it the second-worst fire in state history.

"It was like driving out of a war zone that you see in a movie," Tami Kugler told AFP, sitting beside her tent at an evacuation station after fleeing the historic town of Greenville before it burned down.

"My neighbourhood is gone — I mean gone, gone. Everybody I care and love about that's in that neighbourhood, their homes are gone," she said, adding: "I didn't have insurance."

On Saturday, Governor Gavin Newsom visited the charred remains of Greenville, expressing his "deep gratitude" to the teams fighting the flames.

He said authorities had to devote more resources to managing forests and preventing fires.

But he added that "the dries are getting a lot drier, it is hotter than it has ever been ... we need to acknowledge just straight up these are climate-induced wildfires."

Climate change amplifies droughts, creating ideal conditions for wildfires to spread out of control and inflict unprecedented material and environmental damage. The Dixie blaze, which on Saturday left three firefighters injured, remained 21 per cent contained on Sunday, unchanged from the day before, the CalFire website reported.

Crews estimate the fire, which began on July 13, will not be fully extinguished for two weeks.

HIGHER TEMPERATURES FORECAST: Weak winds and higher humidity have provided some succour to firefighters, but they are bracing for higher temperatures expected to exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) in the coming days.

Heavy smoke was making driving hazardous for fire crews in some areas, and steep trails also made access difficult. The state's eight largest wildfires have all come

since December 2017. The still-blackened scars of previous fires have aided Dixie Fire crews at times, reducing available fuel.

Thousands of residents have fled the area, many forced to find temporary housing — even living in tents, and often unsure whether their homes have survived.

At an evacuation site under smoky skies in Susanville, exhausted families sat in folding chairs beside tents and vehicles packed with belongings grabbed from their abandoned homes.

The Plumas County sheriff's office said it was still searching for three people listed as missing, after two others were found over the weekend.

The Dixie Fire has already destroyed about 400 structures — gutting Greenville — and CalFire said workers and equipment were being deployed to save homes in the small town of Crescent Mills, three miles (five kilometres) southeast of Greenville.

More than 5,000 personnel are now battling the Dixie blaze. Despite repeated evacuation orders from the authorities, some residents have refused to flee, preferring to try to fight the fire on their own rather than leave their property.

US, UK to levy new sanctions on Belarus

WASHINGTON
AGENCIES

Britain on Monday broadened its sanctions on Belarus and President Alexander Lukashenko while the US said it will also levy new sanctions on the regime, a year after disputed elections that kept the strongman in power.

Announcing the new British sanctions, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said: "The Lukashenko regime continues to crush democracy and violate human rights in Belarus."

"These sanctions demonstrate that the UK will not accept Lukashenko's actions

since the fraudulent election," he added.

US President Joe Biden will sign an executive order targeting Lukashenko over an ongoing "assault against the democratic aspirations and human rights of the Belarusian people, transnational repression ... and corruption", a White House official told AFP.

Britain in June joined the United States, Canada and the European Union in slapping sanctions on Belarus after the detention of opposition journalist Roman Protasevich.

The UK's latest measures have been introduced because of "the continued undermining of democracy and human rights violations by the Lukashenko regime", the government said.

The package includes preventing Belarusian air carriers from flying over or landing in Britain, and a ban on "technical assistance" to Lukashenko's private jet fleet.

It also bans trade in potash, petroleum products, interception and monitoring goods and technology, goods used in cigarette manufacturing, and "dual-use" goods, which can be used for both civilian and military purposes. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said that would "reduce the amount of revenue flowing to the Lukashenko regime and to limit its access to items that could enable the internal repression" of the public.

The financial sanctions cover a ban on

purchases of transferable securities and money market instruments issued by the Belarusian state and state-owned banks, plus loans. The FCDO said the ban would be extended to insurance and reinsurance to state bodies in Minsk.

Lukashenko has ruled the ex-Soviet state since 1994 but has so far shrugged off Western pressure with the support of key ally Russia. At the now-completed Tokyo Olympics, Belarusian sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya sought protection to avoid being forced onto a plane home, saying she feared for her life if she returned to Belarus after she criticised her coaches.

Tsimanouskaya was among the many

Belarusian sports figures who in August 2020 publicly criticised violence against protesters at demonstrations that gripped the ex-Soviet country after the presidential vote.

In May, Lukashenko's government intercepted a Ryanair plane en route to Vilnius with Protasevich and his girlfriend aboard and forced it to land in Minsk, where both were arrested.

"Since then, the regime has only further expanded its repression, including by threatening the safety of an Olympic athlete outside its borders," the US official said.

"With today's actions, President Biden is abiding by his pledge to hold the Belarusian regime accountable for its abuses."

BANGLADESH DOWN AUSTRALIA TO COMPLETE T20 SERIES WIN

NEWS DESK

It was a nightmarish end to a tough tour for Australia. As if losing the series was not enough, in the final T20I, they lost 8 for 24 to collapse to 62 all out in a chase of 123. This was their lowest total across limited-overs cricket. It meant Bangladesh took the series 4-1 in Dhaka.

Shakib Al Hasan, who nabbed his 100th T20I wicket on the way, led with a haul of 4 for 9, with Mohammad Saifuddin grabbing 3 for 12 as Bangladesh choked Australia, not for the first time, with spin.

Bangladesh decided to open with Mahedi Hasan in place of regular opener Soumya Sarkar, and the move paid off. Along with Mohammad Naim, he ensured the hosts wallowed 33 off the first three overs, all bowled by the spinners. Matthew Wade first went to Ashton Turner's part-time offspin, then to Ashton Agar and finally to Adam Zampa, before introducing pace in the fourth over through Nathan Ellis.

Ellis and Dan Christian pulled

things back as Bangladesh managed only 32 off the next eight. Crucially, they lost three wickets in that passage to be placed at 65 for 3 at the end of 11 overs.

Australia perhaps picked three frontline spinners in the hope that the slowness off the surface and the turn would help apply the brakes, but Ellis reaped the rewards for tight lines, delivering four dots amid a heap of slower deliveries.

Christian was then introduced immediately after the powerplay, and he used the angle from wide of the crease to good effect, stifling both Naim and Shakib with his slower variations. These two were instrumental in sapping Bangladesh of any momentum towards the end, they managed just 20 off the last five as Christian and Ellis finished with a combined 4 for 33.

Left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed's twin blows within the first four overs meant Australia were on the back foot straightaway. Christian, promoted to open after clobbering Shakib for five sixes in an over two nights ago, was foxed by

Nasum's skidder. In the fourth over, in-form Mitchell Marsh was trapped plumb in front trying to sweep.

Saifuddin then killed the chase when he arrived in the middle overs to first fox Alex Carey off a slower ball. As if that was not enough, two balls later, Moises Henriques tickled one behind to the wicketkeeper while trying to run one down to third man. And after Shakib delivered his maiden, Saifuddin got Agar, who was castled after trying to step down and slog one away.

On his way to those magical figures, Shakib became just the second bowler to reach a hundred wickets in T20Is after Lasith Malinga. He wasn't introduced until the seventh over, but struck off his second ball when he dismissed Wade with an arm ball that knocked back his

**BANGLADESH
122 FOR 8 (NAIM 23,
ELLIS 2-16, CHRISTIAN
2-17) BEAT AUSTRALIA
62 (WADE 22, SHAKIB
4-9, SAIFUDDIN 3-12)
BY 60 RUNS**



off pole.

At that stage, Australia were 54 for 6 after 11 overs with the game all but decided, which is when Shakib dismissed Turner to complete three

figures. He got one to turn away from the right-hander, as the batter cut straight to cover. Shakib then had Ellis in the 14th over. When Adam Zampa pushed one to cover to finish

off the innings three balls later, Australia had been skittled out for their lowest T20I total.

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Belarusian sprinter auctions medal to support athletes caught up in crackdown

WARSAW
REUTERS

Sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who was removed from the Tokyo Olympics by the Belarusian team after she criticised her coaches, is auctioning a medal from the 2019 European Games to support athletes who say they have been targeted by authorities.

Belarusian team officials took the 24-year-old to Tokyo's Haneda airport against her wishes on Aug. 1, a day before she had been set to run the 200m.

She refused to board the flight home and has since sought refuge in Poland, fearing for her safety if she returned to Belarus.

Tsimanouskaya told Reuters the reason she had been removed from the team was her public criticism of "the negligence of our coaches."

She said she had been entered in the 4x400m relay without her knowledge after some team members were found to be ineligible to compete because they had not undergone enough doping tests.

The Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation, a group that supports athletes jailed or sidelined for their political views, said on Monday the medal was being auctioned at Tsimanouskaya's request in sup-



port of Belarusian athletes "who suffered from the actions of Lukashenko's regime."

As of Monday morning, bids for the medal had reached \$5,200 on eBay.

President Alexander Lukashenko has been accused of orchestrating an unprecedented crackdown on demonstrators and opposition figures in the wake of a presidential election held a year ago that critics

and observers say was rigged. He denies electoral fraud.

The crackdown has affected elite athletes, some of whom have been jailed for joining street protests.

In a statement carried by the foundation, Tsimanouskaya said the silver medal she won in the team relay at the 2019 European Games in the Belarusian capital Minsk carried special meaning.

"Those competitions were extremely important for me as they were held at the home arena," she said. "Lots of people, including my family and relatives, came to cheer for me."

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Friday ordered two Belarusian officials - athletics head coach Yuri Moisevich and team official Artur Shumak - to have their accreditation revoked and be removed from the Games.

The Belarusian Olympic Committee has said coaches withdrew Tsimanouskaya from the Tokyo Olympics on doctors' advice about her emotional and psychological state.

In an exclusive interview with Reuters in Warsaw on Thursday, Tsimanouskaya said the two officials had told her the order to send her home came from "high up" in Belarus.

KPL: Mirpur Royals down Overseas Warriors by 5 wickets

NEWS DESK

Mirpur Royals defeated Overseas Warriors by five wickets in the sixth match of the Kashmir Premier League (KPL) at the Muzaffarabad Cricket Stadium on Monday. The Shoaib Malik-led Royals and Imad Wasim-led Warriors had faced defeat in their earlier games. On Monday, Overseas Warriors won the toss and elected to bat first against Mirpur Royals. They scored a total of 145 runs with Kamran Ghulam and Azam Khan scoring the highest runs, 47 and 32 respectively. The Royals' bowlers took a total of six wickets with Salman Irshad being the highest wicket-taker as he sent three batsmen back to the pavilion. Then Royals chased the 145 target set by Warriors in 18.1 overs as openers, Mukhtar Ahmed and Sharjeel Khan, held an impressive partnership with Mukhtar scoring 45 runs and Sharjeel hitting 35. In the middle order, Shoaib Malik scored 36 runs off 24 balls. Overseas Warriors' bowler picked up five wickets with Musa Khan taking three. Man of the match award was given to Salman Irshad of Mirpur Royals for his superb bowling performance.

TEAMS:

Overseas Warriors: Nasir Nawaz, Uthman Ali Khan, Haider Ali, Azam Khan, Imad Wasim (captain), Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Haris, Agha Salman, Sohail Khan, Mohammad Musal, M Abbas Afridi.

Mirpur Royals: Shoaib Malik (captain), Mukhtar Ahmed, Sharjeel Khan, Muhammad Akhlaq, Khushdil Shah, Ammad Butt, Kashif Bhatti, Salman Irshad, Abrar Ahmed, Shadab Majeed, Sameen Gul Afridi,

Barcelona fans 'devastated' at Messi exit, one files legal complaints

BARCELONA
REUTERS

Barcelona fans gathered outside Lionel Messi's house on Monday and spoke of their sadness at the club's greatest player leaving after 21 years, while Paris St Germain fans eagerly awaited his arrival in the French capital.

One Barca member filed complaints with a French court and with the European Commission to try to block any move by PSG to sign Messi, according to documents seen by Reuters on Monday.

The 34-year-old on Sunday bid farewell to the club he has spent his entire career at and confirmed that he was talking with the Paris club over a possible move.

There were no signs of movement around Messi's house in the hills of the wealthy Barcelona district of Castelldefels on Monday, however, where fans waited to catch a glimpse of the player.

"I feel devastated," said Cristian Garcia, wearing a Barca shirt with Messi's name and number 10 on the back.

"To see a player that I have always followed, who is an example for me, to see him leave now brings me a lot of pain."

Messi said he had agreed a 50% pay cut in order to stay at Barca and sign a new contract but was unable to finalise the deal due to the Spanish league's financial control rules and the club's debts, which total more than 1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion).

La Liga said last Wednesday it had secured a private equity injection of 2.7 billion euros from firm CVC, with the funds to be shared among the clubs in return for 10% of the league's revenue.

It had been believed this would allow Barcelona to get the Messi deal done, but after Real Madrid rejected the proposal and said they would take legal action against La Liga, Barca also came out against it.

"I don't think the club has done enough to make him stay, I think it was in the club's hands to make him stay, beyond the money," said Barca and Argentina fan Gonzalo Moreno.

Messi said on Sunday that PSG was "a possibility" but that he had not yet signed any deal.

LEGAL COMPLAINT: In the Barcelona member's legal complaints, shared by the fan's lawyer, the member claims that French football authorities have failed to enforce their own financial fair play (FFP) rules in

order to help PSG become a force in European football.

Barcelona, like their main La Liga rivals Real Madrid, are fully owned by their subscription-paying members known as "socios".

The FFP rules notably forbid top European soccer clubs to pay their playing squads an excessive share of their total revenues, according to the complaints, which also state that the transfer of Messi to PSG would breach the code.

PSG and the French football league did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment.

French newspaper L'Equipe reported on Sunday that Messi would travel to Paris on Sunday or Monday for a medical and to finalise a deal with the Qatar Sports Investment-owned club.

Spanish newspaper Marca reported that PSG had formally sent their offer to Messi on Sunday morning.

While Messi did not confirm he would definitely join the Parisians, he said his plans were to carry on playing as long as possible, adding he still harbours ambitions to win another Champions League trophy.

"We're waiting for a legend, the legend



that is Leo Messi," said PSG fan Mehmet Sen, who had been waiting at the gates to

Paris' Le Bourget airport since 2 a.m. for a glimpse of the star.

TALIBAN SEIZE SIXTH PROVINCIAL CAPITAL, PRESS ON WITH NORTHERN OFFENSIVE AFTER WEEKEND BLITZ

KABUL
AFP

THE Taliban seized a sixth Afghan provincial capital on Monday following a weekend blitz across the north that saw urban centres fall in quick succession and the government struggle to keep the militants at bay. Insurgents entered Aibak without a fight after community elders pleaded with offi-

Taliban kill Afghan radio station manager, kidnap journalist: officials

KABUL
REUTERS

Suspected Taliban fighters killed an Afghan radio station manager in Kabul and kidnapped a journalist in southern Helmand province, local government officials said on Monday, reporting the latest in a long line of attacks targeting media workers. Gunmen shot Toofan Omar, the station manager of Paktia Ghag radio and an officer for NAI, a rights group supporting independent media in Afghanistan, in a targeted killing in the capital on Sunday. “Omari was killed by unidentified gunmen [...] he was liberal man [...] we are being targeted for working independently,” said Mujeeb Khelwatgar, the head of NAI. Officials in Kabul suspected Taliban fighters had carried out the attack. Last month the NAI report at least 30 journalists and media workers have been killed, wounded or abducted by militant groups in Afghanistan this year. In southern Helmand province, officials said Taliban fighters had seized a local journalist, Nematullah Hemat, from his home in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital, on Sunday.

cial to spare the city from more violence following weeks of clashes on the outskirts, said Sefatullah Samangani, deputy governor of Samangan province. “The governor accepted and withdrew all the forces from the city,” Samangani added, saying the Taliban were now in “full control”. A Taliban spokesman confirmed the city had been taken. The insurgents have overrun five provincial capitals across the north, sparking fears the government is rapidly losing control of the region. They have also taken Zaranj, capital of Nimroz province, in the southwest. Earlier Monday, the Taliban said they were moving in on Mazar-i-Sharif — the largest city in the north and a linchpin for the government’s control of the region — after capturing Sheberghan to its west, and Kunduz and Taloqan to its east. A spokesman said Taliban fighters had entered the city, but officials — and residents contacted by phone — said the group was exaggerating, with clashes confined to surrounding districts. “The enemy is trying to distort public opinion and create anxiety for the civilian population by their propaganda,” said a statement from the provincial police force in Balkh, where Mazar-i-Sharif is the capital. Mazar’s longtime strongman Atta Mohammad Noor vowed to fight to the end, saying there would be “resistance until the last drop of my blood”. “I prefer dying in dignity than dying in despair,” he tweeted. The loss of the city, steeped in history and long an economic hub, would signal the collapse of Kabul’s control of the north and likely raise major questions about the future of the government. In neighbouring Kunduz, the second-largest city in the north that fell to the Taliban on Sunday, residents said insurgents were all over the city, occupying government offices and institutions. “The security situation is not good and we fled to save our lives,” Rahmatullah, a 28-year-old resident, told AFP. “It is like a horror movie,” he added. Another resident Abdul Qudoos said fears were growing that Kunduz would face

Afghanistan forces battling to retake Kunduz as Taliban advance in north

KABUL
REUTERS

Afghan commandoes launched a counter-attack on Monday to try to beat back Taliban fighters who overran the northern city of Kunduz a day earlier, with residents fleeing the conflict describing the almost constant sound of gunfire and explosions. Kunduz was one of at least three provincial capitals seized by the insurgents in the north over the weekend, as their offensive gathered pace following Washington’s announcement that it would end its military mission in Afghanistan by the end of August. A Taliban spokesman had warned the United States on Sunday against intervening following US airstrikes to support beleaguered Afghan government forces. In the West, near the border with Iran, security officials told Reuters heavy fighting was underway on the outskirts of Herat. Arif Jalali, head of Herat Zonal Hospital said 36 people had been killed and 220 wounded in fighting over the past eleven days. More than half of the wounded were civilians, he said, and women and children were among the dead. In the southern province of Helmand, a hotbed of Taliban activity, security officials reported a loud explosion in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital, on Monday morning. The insurgents have taken dozens of districts and border crossings in recent months and put pressure on several provincial capitals, including Herat and Kandahar in the south, as foreign troops withdraw. “US forces have conducted several airstrikes in defence of our Afghan partners in recent days,” Maj. Nicole Ferrara, a US Central

food and water shortages. **Fighting in the south:** As the Taliban pressed ahead in the north, fighting also raged in the south, where Afghan forces have been locked in heavy street-to-street fighting with the Taliban. The insurgents have for weeks been trying to take Kandahar and Lashkar Gah — both with Pashtun majorities from where the Taliban draw their strength. “We’re clearing houses, roads, and buildings that the Taliban occupy,” General Sami Sadat, commander of the Afghan arm

Command spokesperson, told CNN on Sunday, without specifying where those strikes were made. **FAMILIES FLEE:** In Kunduz, many desperate families, some with young children and pregnant women, abandoned their homes, hoping to reach the relative safety of Kabul, 315 kilometres (196 miles) to the south — a drive that would normally take around ten hours. Police had abandoned their check-posts on the roads around the city. Ghulam Rasool, an engineer, was trying to hire a bus to get his family to the capital as the sound of gunfire reverberated through the streets of his hometown. “We may just be forced to walk till Kabul, but we are not sure if we could be killed on the way [...] ground clashes were not just stopping even for 10 minutes,” Rasool told Reuters. “It’s best we leave this city till it’s decided whether the Afghan government or the Taliban will now govern it.” He and several other residents, and a security official, said Afghan commandoes had launched an operation to clear the insurgents from the city. Taliban fighters had holed up in government buildings in the city centre and had occupied positions commanding roads into two defence bases on the outskirts, according to local government officials. Over the weekend, the insurgents also occupied government buildings in the northern provincial capital of Sar-e Pol, driving officials out of the main city to a nearby military base, Mohammad Noor Rahmani, a provincial council member of Sar-e Pol province, said. On Sunday evening, Ashraf Ayni, a representative in parliament for Takhar province, said its capital Taloqan had fallen to the Taliban who had freed prisoners and taken control of all government buildings, driving officials to a nearby district.

’s 215 Corps, told AFP from Lashkar Gah. The ministry of defence said hundreds of Taliban fighters had been killed or injured in the last 24 hours. Both sides routinely exaggerate death tolls that are virtually impossible to verify. The claims come a day after Kunduz, Sar-e-Pul and Taloqan in the north fell within hours of each other. Northern Afghanistan has long been considered an anti-Taliban stronghold that saw some of the stiffest resistance to militant rule in the 1990s. The region remains home to sev-

eral militias and is also a fertile recruiting ground for the country’s armed forces. Fighting in Afghanistan’s long-running conflict has escalated dramatically since May, when the US-led military coalition began the final stage of a withdrawal set to be completed before the end of the month. The withdrawal of foreign forces is due to finish at the end of this month ahead of the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. The US-led invasion sparked by 9/11 toppled the first Taliban regime in 2001.

Shireen Mazari says UK never asked Pakistan for Covid-19 data

NEWS DESK

Slamming the British government’s decision of retaining Pakistan on its list of countries facing travel restrictions, Federal Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari said on Monday that Pakistan was never asked to share its data on the local coronavirus situation. In a tweet, she said that the government of United Kingdom is dominated by ‘Indophiles’. “Ridiculous! UK govt, dominated by Indophiles and despite globally documented India’s continuing disastrous handling of the COVID pandemic, moved India to the Amber List but keeps Pakistan on the red; then under pressure from Opposition MPs, gives feeble excuse that Pakistan didn’t share data,” she tweeted. Her tweet came in response to a report published in a local newspaper. According to the report, British MPs of Pakistani-origin had held a virtual meeting with Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan on Friday. During the meeting, the issue of whether or not

Islamabad had provided data to the British government was discussed. “According to the MPs, Umar told them that the data was publicly available on the NCOC forums, including Twitter and YouTube, and the UK authorities could have accessed it,” the report said. It also quoted one of the British lawmakers as saying: “It’s clear looking at these sheets that Pakistan has up to date data but I feel Pakistani authorities should have shared the same with the UK government and run effective lobbying.” After the meeting, the planning minister had tweeted that data regarding Covid surveillance and Pakistan’s Covid response strategy had been shared with the group. “Will engage with the UK government to try and ensure that red list decisions are based on science [and] not politics,” he had said. She further defended her stance, saying British authorities never asked for the data as the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has “the most centralised & daily updated data bases anywhere & data shared with UK HC”. She criticised the UK government for ‘shifting goalposts’, noting that it had earlier said Pakistan had been placed on the Red List because more passengers

from Pakistan compared to India were testing positive for coronavirus. Earlier, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had said that the country was looking into Pakistan’s placement on the Red List. The PM’s remarks indicated that there was a chance that Pakistan may be moved to the Amber List in a few weeks. The Pakistani delegation included top envoy Moazzam Ali Khan and three other diplomats. Geo News reported that PM Johnson’s remarks were in response to the Pakistani delegation raising the issue of the “red list” and how inconvenient it was for thousands of Pakistanis. Johnson had assured the delegation that his government was looking at the data and “considering possibilities” based on scientific advice. PM Johnson had said that he is looking forward to Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to the United Kingdom soon. The Pakistani delegation told the UK premier that the South Asian country, too, is looking forward to the visit. Last week, British lawmakers had criticised their government’s move to keep Pakistan on its ‘red list’ while promoting India to amber despite the latter’s Covid-19 situation being more serious.

Contractors who powered US war in Afghanistan stuck in Dubai

DUBAI
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some of the foreign contractors who powered the logistics of America’s “forever war” in Afghanistan now find themselves stranded on an unending layover in Dubai without a way to get home. After nearly two decades, the rapid US withdrawal from Afghanistan has upended the lives of thousands of private security contractors from some of the world’s poorest countries — not the hired guns but the hired hands who serviced the American war effort. For years, they toiled in the shadows as cleaners, cooks, construction workers, servers and technicians on sprawling American bases. In the rushed evacuation, scores of these foreign workers trying to get home to the Philippines and other countries that restricted international travel because of the pandemic have become stuck in limbo at hotels across Dubai. As the US brings home its remaining troops and abandons its bases, experts say the chaotic departure of the Pentagon’s logistics army lays bare an uncomfortable truth about a privatized system long susceptible to mismanagement — one largely funded by American taxpayers but outside the purview of American law. “It’s the same situation that affects foreign contractors all over the world, people who have little understanding of where they’re going and very uncertain relationships once they arrive determining their legal status and movements,” said Anthony Cordesman, a national security analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

LYNCHING THREATS TO MUSLIMS

India books ‘unidentified’ people even as footage shows participant

NEWS DESK

The police in New Delhi on Monday filed a first information report against unidentified persons, a day after inflammatory slogans calling for lynchings against Muslims were shouted at a rally in Jantar Mantar, an observatory in the Indian capital, less than two kilometres from the Parliament. The FIR did not name any specific person even though several videos from the rally clearly showed the identities of the par-

ticipants, Scroll.in reported. A local Bharatiya Janata Party leader, Ashwini Upadhyay, posted several tweets asking people to join the event. Another BJP leader, Gajendra Chauhan, was also among the participants in the rally. The unknown persons have been booked under Sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 51 of the Delhi Disaster Management

Authority Act for violating Covid-19 protocol. Upadhyay had called for the march at Jantar Mantar as part of his “Bharat Jor”ro [Unite India] movement” on Sunday evening. The organisers demanded an end to “colonial-era laws” by setting up a uniform civil code in the country. They had not taken permission for the event, the Delhi Police told The Indian Express. Videos from the event showed a group of people shouting slogans such as: “Jab mullah kaate jayenge, Ram Ram chillayenge

Muslims will chant Ram Ram when they will be slaughtered.” Those who attended the rally also flouted Covid-19 guidelines as they neither wore masks nor maintained physical distancing norms. A journalist present at Jantar Mantar was also assaulted and asked to chant “Jai Shri Ram”. “We refused permission after informing them about DDMA [Delhi Disaster Management Authority] guidelines [about Covid protocols],” an unidentified Delhi Police of-

ficer told The Indian Express. “Police arrangements were in place and we thought around 50 people would come, but suddenly many people in small groups started gathering. They were protesting peacefully, but started raising slogans when they were dispersing.” However, an officer from the Intelligence Wing said Delhi Police’s Special Branch had informed New Delhi district police that a large crowd was expected, the newspaper reported.