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The year 2021 started with a bang, literally, for the citizens of America. On the evening of January 20th, the D.C. sky and Washington Monument was lit up with a beautiful display of fireworks in honour of Joe Biden becoming President. It was definitely a memorable day in more than one way. The inauguration of a new President is usually a day that follows decades of traditions, but not this time! Just like all other events these days, Inauguration day was also watched virtually by all. As the world continues to battle the deadly CoronaVirus, crowds gathering to watch and celebrate the swearing-in of the new President were banned from coming into DC. A field of illuminating flags replaced the millions of people who would have otherwise occupied that site. At noon, Joseph R. Biden Jr. became the 46th President of the United States of America. He defeated Donald Trump in the 2020 campaign and became the oldest President to serve the nation at 78 years old. It was a much awaited moment of his life, having tried out his luck running for President two times prior to this and serving as VP to Barack Obama previously. Despite many obstacles in his life, politics and the importance of bringing about change has always been an important part of his life. Biden's speech was a call for unity to heal the wounds that had become exacerbated in the election and had played out in the attempted insurrection on Capitol Hill at the start of the month. "With unity we can do great things, important things. We can right wrongs, we can put people to work in good jobs, we can teach our children in safe schools. We can overcome the deadly virus, we can rebuild work, we can rebuild the middle class and make work secure, we can secure racial justice and we can make America once again the leading force for good in the world." Beside Joe Biden, donning purple and pearls, Kamala Harris was

making history and stealing the show as the first woman and woman of colour elected as the Vice President of the United States of America, a milestone for a nation in upheaval, grappling with a damaging history of racial injustice exposed, yet again, in a divisive election! "While I may be the first woman in this office, I will not be the last," said the daughter of a Jamaican father and Indian mother. The other shining star on the steps of Capitol Hill that day was Amanda Gorman, who at 22 years of age became the youngest ever inaugural poet in the history of the US. With her poem "The Hill we climb," she captivated audiences worldwide through her powerful and poignant rhythmic words:

"The new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it. Making history is only the first step for the President and Vice President, they are now yet to face the monumental task of repairing a fractured America. The fact that it was such a close election and Trump supporters are still manifold shows that the task at hand is not easy and we are yet to discover whether or not the new President will be able to bring a real change while in office. With a divided cabinet, how much will he be able to achieve legislatively? Biden was however eager to revoke many of Trump's laws on his first day in office, the most welcome one being the ban of immigrants from some Muslim majority countries and rejoining the Paris climate agreement. As for Donald Trump, it is unlikely that he will fade away quietly, having enjoyed his 4 years in the limelight. His parting words were that he 'will be back in some form'. Only time will tell how this will play out. As a man of great entrances and theatrics, one thing is certain, the Trump chapter of American history is far from over.



# China to 'gift' 0.5m doses of Covid-19 vaccine

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Thursday announced that China has promised to provide 500,000 doses of a coronavirus vaccine to Pakistan by January 31.

In a video message after a phone call with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, Qureshi said

China offered Islamabad to send an airplane and airlift the vaccines. The minister said he held a detailed conversation with the Chinese foreign minister in which he "discussed Pakistan's requirements", after Prime Minister Imran Khan had directed him to increase interaction with Beijing "considering the sensitivity of the situation".

"I want to give the nation the good news that China has promised to immediately provide 500,000 doses of vaccine to Pakistan by January 31," he said. "They (China) have said you can send your airplane and immediately airlift this drug," he added, saying the development would "help save many lives" in Pakistan. In a tweet, Qureshi suggested the doses to be provided to Pakistan will be of the Sino-pharm vaccine, which the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) had approved for emergency use in the country earlier this week. "With encouraging results of Chinese vaccine and our historic relationship, Pakistan has approved emergency use authorisation of Sino-Pharm [vaccine]. Indeed Pakistan greatly appreciates the 500,000 doses of the vaccine gifted by China," he wrote. The vaccine was developed by the Beijing Institute of Biological Products, a subsidiary of state-owned conglomerate Sinopharm. The company announced last month that preliminary data

from last-stage trials had shown it to be 79.3 per cent effective. But Qureshi said he informed his Chinese counterpart that Pakistan's requirement for vaccines is "more than this", and that it will need 1.1 million doses in the near future.



Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

"At this, [the Chinese foreign minister] said 'we plan to fulfil this requirement of yours as well by the end of February and the 1.1m doses will be made available to you,'" he revealed in the video message. China had decided to work for the "global public good" in the context of Covid-19, Qureshi said, adding that Foreign Minister Wang told him the first country they thought of to assist was Pakistan keeping in view "the all-weather strategic relationship" between the two countries. "We want to assure Pakistan that our cooperation with you will continue," the minister quoted Wang as saying. Qureshi also said he and Foreign Minister Wang had discussed that trials of Chinese firm CanSino's vaccine in Pakistan were successfully moving forward and their results had been "quite encouraging". "Pakistan has a huge population [...] in order to fulfil its needs, we also discussed whether we can move forward

together for this (CanSino) vaccine's production and manufacturing in Pakistan after the completion of the new trials," he said, adding that his Chinese counterpart had agreed to the proposal. The minister said the first batch arriving in Pakistan would be "grant assistance" for which the country would not have to pay anything. "This is a hand of goodwill and friendship that China has extended towards us and I am grateful to them," he added.

Pakistan's vaccine plans Pakistan has so far approved two vaccines for emergency use, the other being the Oxford-AstraZeneca jab.

On Wednesday, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr Faisal Sultan had expressed confidence in the government's ability to procure at least 1m doses of coronavirus vaccines by March, saying it ultimately aimed to inoculate 70pc of the country's population against the virus. In addition to bilateral arrangements, the SAPM said, the country will also receive vaccines through Covax, an international alliance that has pledged free vaccines for 20pc population of around 190 countries, including Pakistan.

An official of the Ministry of National Health Services, requesting not to be named, had earlier told Dawn there was almost no chance of getting the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine as India had already purchased its research and was also manufacturing it. Besides, New Delhi has announced that it will give priority to its own population. "Our only chance to get the vaccine is through Covax," the official had said. Pakistan had already pre-booked 1.1m doses of Sinopharm's Covid-19 vaccine.

Drap chief executive officer Dr Asim Rauf had told Dawn that the National Institute of Health (NIH) had gotten the Sinopharm vaccine registered in its name. "The approval has been given for emergency use and it will pave the way for bringing the vaccine to Pakistan," he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1602757/china-to-gift-05m-doses-of-covid-19-vaccine-to-pakistan-by-jan-31-qureshi>

## France closes 9 Mosques under campaign against Islamic extremism



French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said out of 18 places of worship under special surveillance nine have been closed.(AFP) there are 2,500 mosques in France. France has closed nine places of worship under the nationwide campaign against Islamic extremism, the country's Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

"In line with the orders of the president of the Republic and the prime minister we are taking decisive steps against the Islamist separatism. Out of 18 places of worship under special surveillance nine have been closed upon my request," the minister wrote on his Twitter page on late Friday.

According to the Figaro newspaper, three of the closed facilities were located in the department of Seine-Saint-Denis near Paris.

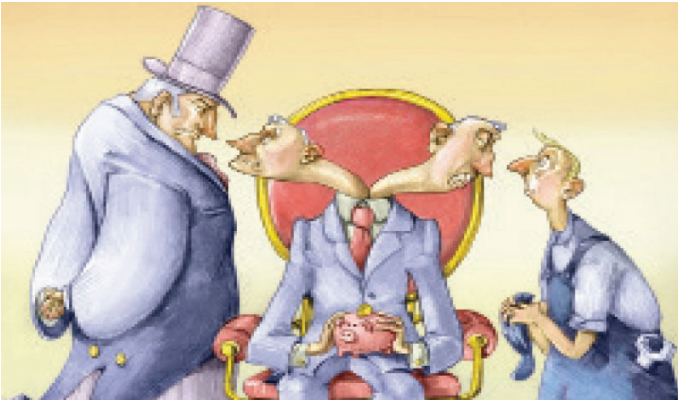
France has intensified its campaign against the Islamism after the October murder of Samuel Paty, a history teacher who showed cartoons with Prophet Mohammad to his students.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news>



# Why Corporate America Turned Against Trump after Capitol Storming

By: Afshan Subohi



The top tycoons of Pakistan find Corporate America's support to President-elect Joe Biden and open hostility towards President Trump perfectly logical as it aligned with shareholders' and customers' interest in defending democracy. Why the same wise men chose not to side with their shareholders and customer to defend democracy back in the 1980s when Gen Ziaul Haq was sowing seeds of militant extremism in Pakistan? "What shareholders? All board seats are occupied by siblings, spouses and children. No one cared about the customers' base till the arrival of social media. With limited choices and no easy recourse available, consumers were almost captive. Thanks to protection and collusion, companies can get away with next to anything. Nobody cared about the government and public sentiments as long profits were guaranteed?" commented a cynic. Corporate America knows the shareholder's interest overrides political preferences "Bhutto broke the back of the private sector of Pakistan through nationalisation in the 1970s that was already wounded by the secession of East Pakistan. It was not the love for Zia but the hate for Bhutto that decided the positioning of this class back then," a tycoon reasoned. "Based on their conduct four decades back (ignoring the background), it is unfair to characterise the business community of Pakistan anti-democratic," responded a seasoned tycoon who heads a major business empire. Discussing that period, he understated the rewards of supporting Zia and underplayed

the US role in nudging the country towards a path that proved to be disastrous. "Leave politics aside, the private sector of Pakistan is not good enough at its own game. Withdraw the government crutches and many will crumble. For me, their attitude towards competition and innovation is more troubling. The absence of competition has retarded them. They can't be supportive of moves that threaten the status quo and expose them to market risks."

As the world watches the Jan 6 storming of US Capitol by a violent mob and the events following the attack, the ranks of US companies ditching President Trump have multiplied. He was blocked on digital platforms and many long-term service providers announced that they'd sever commercial ties with him, his family, his supporters and his party. Till the filing of this report, 63 big US brands, including tech giants, hotels, automakers, accounting firms, retailers, textile-makers, banks, chemical giants and energy companies, have taken a clear position against President Trump. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Boeing, BP, Citibank, Coca-Cola, Deloitte, Deutsche Bank, Ernst & Young, ExxonMobil, Ford Motor, General Motors, Google, Hilton, KMPG, Marriott, Mastercard, McDonald's, Microsoft, Morgan Stanley, Nike and many others spoke publicly against Mr Trump to be counted on the right side of history.

Responding to Dawn's query, Pakistan Business Council CEO Ehsan Malik wrote: "Corporate America is motivated by the shareholder interest which, in turn, is secured by remaining close to their customers and consumers. Even in the United States where there is tradition for the corporate sector to support parties and politicians, it is the shareholder interest that overrides political preferences. "So it is not surprising that Corporate America, which benefitted from tax cuts and other stimuli under the Trump Administration, is now looking to safeguard its image by distancing itself from those

allegedly responsible for the storming of Capitol Hill. The capital market on the other hand is hopeful for normality and stability returning in politics as well as in the management of the pandemic with vaccines and SOPs,” he added. Prestige Communications Managing Director Jamal Mir, who is also a former president of the American Business Council (ABC), expressed his admiration for the biggest companies of the world for their commitment to democracy. He shared a detailed response with Dawn on the corporate positioning in the United States. Some extracts are reproduced below. “Big companies have unambiguously indicated that Americans are not interested in extreme politics by either party. They are looking for smart, stable and solution-oriented governance. “The support for President-elect Biden is based on his declaration that he stood for two things — workers who ‘built this country’ and values that can ‘bridge its divisions’. As the United States faces health and economic challenges, Mr Biden’s pitch is to create new economic opportunities, restore environment protections and healthcare rights and reboot international alliances.” Mr Mir also noted reactions of major business bodies like the US Chamber of Commerce and Business Roundtable. “They welcomed the president-elect without waiting for Mr Trump’s acceptance of the election outcome.” A leading light of the business community insists that the business community should be seen as a part and parcel of society. He said businesses often find government policies and actions flawed but the fear of reaction forces them to keep their opinion to themselves. Expecting a ruckus by Mr Trump’s supporters on the inauguration of Mr Biden, he said: “President Trump has created/infused a new life in white, armed rednecks not open to reason and dialogue and out to settle scores violently with anyone who dares to differ.” He hopes for peace and stability in the United States as the pandemic has already debased the world economy.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1602005/the-way-the-wind-blows?preview>

## Afghanistan: Two Supreme Court Judges killed in car ambush

Gunmen killed two female judges from Afghanistan's Supreme Court in an early morning ambush, which also saw their driver wounded. The attack happened as the two judges, who have not yet been named, were driving to their office in Kabul in a court vehicle on Sunday, a court official said. It was the latest attack in the Afghan capital during peace talks between Taliban and Afghan government officials in Doha, Qatar. No one has claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack. A spokesman for the Taliban said its fighters were not involved. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a statement on Sunday condemning attacks on civilians by the Taliban and other militant groups. Advertisement Mr Ghani said "terror, horror and crime" was not a solution to Afghanistan's problem and urged the Taliban to accept "a permanent ceasefire". Government officials, journalists, and activists have been targeted in recent months, stoking fear particularly in Kabul. The Taliban has denied involvement in some of the attacks, but has said its fighters would continue to "eliminate" important government figures, though not journalists or civil society members. Rising violence has complicated US-brokered peace talks taking place in Doha as Washington withdraws troops. Sources on both sides say negotiations are only likely to make substantive progress once US President-elect Joe Biden takes office and makes his Afghan policy known. The number of US troops in Afghanistan has been reduced to 2,500, the lowest level of American forces there since 2001.

<https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-gunmen-kill-two-female-supreme-court-judges-in-kabul-car-ambush->



# Muslims and Technology

By: Prof Pervez Hoodbhoy



EXCEPT for some defiant holdouts, most Muslims have come to accept the printing press, loudspeaker, weather forecasts, cameras and television, blood transfusions, organ transplants, and in-vitro fertilisation. Earlier fears that technology will destroy their faith are disappearing. Although religious extremists have killed polio vaccine workers by the dozens, Pakistanis are likely to accept the Covid vaccine more easily than Americans. This is progress. Technology for religious rituals is also becoming popular. For example, you may buy a small gadget called the SalatCard which uses proximity sensors to count the number of rakats performed during prayers. Also available online is an environmentally friendly wuzu (ablution) machine using visual sensors. Responding to public complaints of muezzins with rasping voices or bad pronunciations, Egypt's government is carrying out an experimental airing in 113 mosques of Cairo where a computer will initiate the standardised azan at exact times. A few years ago multiple fatwas would have lambasted such innovations. But not anymore. What of science, the fount of technology? Consuming technology does not, of course, resolve conflicts between science and religion. Nor does it necessarily mean that science as a way of looking at the world is gaining ascendancy. The latter motivated the 2020 Task Force Report on Culture of Science in the Islamic World. Led by Prof Nidhal Guessoum (Sharjah) and Dr. Moneef Zou'bi (Jordan), with input from Dr Athar Osama (Pakistan), their online survey gives some hints. At one level the results are encouraging. Their survey of 3,500 respondents, chosen mostly from Arab countries and Pakistan, shows knowledge of basic scientific facts as slightly better than in developed countries. The authors concede that this surprising result is probably because relatively educated and internet-savvy respondents were chosen. Still, one hopes that this is not too inaccurate. Without a culture of science Muslims will

continue consuming technology without producing much. But even if true, knowing facts about science is unconnected with having a scientific mindset. The difference is like that between a USB memory stick (where you dump data) and a CPU chip (which is the decision-making brain of your laptop or smartphone). The first is passive, relatively simple and cheap. The second is active, extremely complex and costly. Correspondingly, the traditional mindset takes knowledge to be a corpus of eternal verities to be acquired, stockpiled, disseminated, understood and applied but not modified or transformed. The scientific mindset, on the other hand, involves ideas of forming, testing and, if necessary, abandoning hypotheses if they don't work. Analytical reasoning and creativity is important, simple memorisation is not. Going through the report, it is unclear to me whether the questions asked — and the answers received — have helped us understand whether Muslims are moving towards a scientific worldview. Perhaps the organisers thought that asking difficult questions upfront is too dangerous. But the strong emphasis they place upon freedom, openness and diversity as a condition for nurturing science is praiseworthy. Here's why science — and developing a scientific mindset — is so difficult and alien. Humans are never completely comfortable with science because it is not commonsense. In our daily lives one sometimes has to struggle against science. As children we learned that actually it's the earth that moves and yet we still speak of the sun rising and setting! Another example: heavier things fall faster, right? This is so obviously true that nobody tested it until Galileo showed 400 years ago that this is wrong. Wouldn't it be so much nicer if the laws of physics and biology lined up with our naïve intuition and religious beliefs? Or if Darwin was wrong and living things didn't evolve through random mutation? Unfortunately, science is chock-full of awkward facts.

Getting to the truth takes a lot of work. And so you have to be very thorough and very curious. Historically, lack of curiosity is why Muslim civilisations were ultimately defeated. After the Arab Golden Age petered out, the spirit of science also died. The 17th-century Ottoman sultans were rich enough to hire technologists from Europe to build ships and cannons (there were no Chinese then) but they could not produce their own experts from the ulema-dominated educational system. And when the British East India Company brought inventions and products from an England humming with new scientific ideas, the Mughals simply paid cash for them. They never asked what makes the gadgets work or even how they could be duplicated. Without a scientific culture, a country can only consume and trade. Pakistan functions as a nation of shopkeepers, property dealers, managers, hoteliers, accountants, bankers, soldiers, politicians and generals. There are even a few good poets and writers. But there is no Pakistani Covid vaccine. With so few genuine scientists and researchers it produces little new knowledge or products. That 81 Pakistanis were recently ranked in the world's top two per cent of scientists by Stanford University turned out to be fake news. Stanford University was not involved in this highly dubious ranking. This was confirmed to me over email last week by Prof John Ioannidis of Stanford University. He, together with three co-authors, had been cited as the source. What will it take to bring science back into Islam? The way may be similar to how music and Islam — which in principle are incompatible — are handled in Muslim countries today. It is perfectly usual for a Pakistani FM radio station that is blaring out Lady Gaga's songs to briefly pause, broadcast a pre-recorded azan in all its dignified solemnity, and then resume with Beyoncé until the next azan. Although the choice of music is quite abysmal, there is a clean separation of the worldly from the divine. Separation is the key! When Galileo famously said "the Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go", he was arguing the domains of science and belief do not overlap. This is how the West, China, and India devel-

oped modern scientific cultures. Centuries earlier, Muslim scholars had readily absorbed Greek learning while keeping their religious beliefs strictly personal. This made possible major discoveries and inventions. Whether one likes it or not, there is no other way to develop a culture of science. The writer is an Islamabad based physicist and writer.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1599215/muslims-and-technology>

## Chinese app TikTok cuts jobs in India following ban

Popular short-video Chinese app TikTok is cutting its workforce in India after hundreds of millions of its users dropped it to comply with a government ban on dozens of Chinese apps amid a military standoff between the two countries. "Given the lack of feedback from the government about how to resolve this issue in the subsequent seven months, it is with deep sadness that we have decided to reduce our workforce in India," a TikTok statement said Wednesday. The statement didn't give details, but media reports say the company has more than 2,000 employees in India. It expressed the hope it will get a chance to relaunch TikTok in India to support hundreds of millions of users, artists, storytellers, educators and performers. The Indian government announced a ban on 59 Chinese apps, including TikTok, which is operated by Chinese internet firm Bytedance, in June as its relations with China deteriorated. It said the apps were prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India. China says New Delhi has been using national security as an excuse to prohibit Chinese mobile apps. Chinese-owned apps have found a fast-growing market in India, with some companies creating India-specific apps that have exploded in popularity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has used the country's 500 million internet users — second only to China — as a lure to get tech giants including Twitter to localise Indians' data.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1604092>



# Pakistan attempts to prosecute Ahmadi US citizens for digital blasphemy

Pakistani authorities have asked leaders of the American Ahmadiyya Muslim community to take down its official website, claiming that the U.S.-based site violates Pakistan's strict blasphemy laws and new cybercrime regulations. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority said in a legal notice issued on Dec. 24 to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA's spokesmen, Amjad Mahmood Khan and Harris Zafar, that failure to remove the website TrueIslam.com would result in fines of up to \$3.14 million or criminal sanctions, including possible 10-year-prison sentences.

"This is a new frontier in persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in the digital space," said Khan, a lawyer in Los Angeles who has testified before Congress about blasphemy and religious freedom. "Pakistan wants to impose its abominable blasphemy laws on the whole world by targeting U.S. citizens and U.S. websites."

Brad Adams, who heads Human Rights Watch's Asia Division, said "censoring Ahmadis and using blasphemy laws to

airbrush them from Pakistani society" is part of the "widespread and rampant discrimination and social exclusion" Ahmadis face in Pakistan. In Pakistan, home to about 4 million Ahmadis, the constitution and penal code declare members of the Ahmadiyya sect non-Muslims and impose harsh penalties — including death — for those who call themselves Muslims or publicly engage in religious activities. Ahmadis accept the sect's 19th-century founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, as the messiah and as a subordinate prophet to the Prophet Muhammad, a belief many Muslims consider blasphemous. "This is a malicious attempt to chill free speech and expression by a Muslim American website," attorney Brett Williamson of O'Melveny & Myers, which is representing TrueIslam.com pro bono, wrote in a letter to PTA on Monday (Jan. 11).

He described the takedown notice as "legally infirm, but also patently absurd in its reach." The website is registered and hosted in the U.S. and is aimed at an American audience. Zafar and Khan are both U.S. citizens and the threat



Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA spokesmen Amjad Mahmood Khan, left, and Harris Zafar. Photos via Twitter

of extradition is virtually nil, but both have relatives in Pakistan and say penalties would make it impossible to travel there.

Law professor Arturo Carrillo, who directs George Washington University Law School's Global Internet Freedom Project, said this case shows that the Pakistan government is now using its controversial cybercrime laws in an effort "to repress online expression and content emanating from outside the country's borders because the government has deemed it to be undesirable and Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA spokesmen Amjad Mahmood Khan, left, and Harris Zafar. Photos via Twitter

PTA officials did not respond to requests for comment. In 2016, Pakistan enacted digital regulations that allowed authorities to block online content in the "interest of the glory of Islam." Last year, the government passed blanket censorship laws that would allow authorities to order tech companies to remove digital pornography, blasphemy and anti-state content, drawing ire from Google, Facebook, Twitter and other platforms.

But human rights experts say the takedown notices also come amid increased targeting of Ahmadi's online religious expression.

One day after issuing the takedown notice to TrueIslam.com, PTA also sent notices to Google and Wikipedia, threatening penalties and prosecution if the platforms failed to remove "sacrilegious content" associated with the Ahmadi sect's beliefs. PTA said it was responding to complaints regarding an "unauthentic" Ahmadi translation of the Quran on the Google Play Store; "misleading" search results that returned the Ahmadi leader Mirza Masroor Ahmad's name when the term "Khali-fa (caliph) of Islam" was searched; and "deceitful" Wikipedia articles that suggested that the Ahmadi caliph is Muslim. Officials also demanded that all internet service providers serving Pakistan block content from Ahmadi websites, including TrueIslam.com, the English-language magazine Al Hakam and the international satellite TV network MTA.

Five of Pakistan's top Ahmadi leaders have

also had cases filed against them in recent weeks over religious activity on WhatsApp, Khan told Religion News Service.

Earlier in December, Khan told a hearing of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom that extremists in Pakistan were intent on using the country's cyber crime statutes to initiate blasphemy cases against Ahmadi's. But this latest action, Khan told Religion News Service, is "a very slippery slope in terms of what this could mean for other minorities. We're the canaries in the coal mine. This would mean any potential website or digital content that is quote-unquote blasphemous can be the subject of criminal prosecution."

USCIRF Commissioner Johnnie Moore described the takedown notices as "recklessly brazen" and said he expected fierce bipartisan condemnation from both the Trump and Biden administrations. "Surely, the Pakistani government doesn't intend on threatening American citizens within the United States?" Moore asked. "Surely, Prime Minister Imran Khan doesn't want this controversy, now?"

<https://religionnews.com/2021/01/13/pakistan-attempts-to-prosecute-ahmadi-us-citizens-for-digital-blasphemy-980-1000/>

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# Nearly 1,000 Pakistani girls 'forcibly converted to Islam' each year, rights group say

Neha loved the hymns that filled her church with music. But she lost the chance to sing them last year when, at the age of 14, she was forcibly converted from Christianity to Islam and married to a 45-year-old man with children twice her age. She tells her story in a voice so low it occasionally fades away. She all but disappears as she wraps a blue scarf tightly around her face and head. Neha's husband is in jail now facing charges of rape for the underage marriage, but she is in hiding, afraid after security guards confiscated a pistol from his brother in court. "He brought the gun to shoot me," said Neha, whose last name is not being published for her safety. Neha is one of nearly 1,000 girls from religious minorities who are forced to convert to Islam in Pakistan each year, largely to pave the way for marriages that are under the legal age and non-consensual. Human rights activists say the practice has accelerated during lockdowns against the coronavirus, when girls are out of school and more visible, bride traffickers are more active on the Internet and families are more in debt.

The US State Department this month declared Pakistan "a country of particular concern" for violations of religious freedoms – a designation the Pakistani government rejects. The declaration was based in part on an appraisal by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom that underage girls in the minority Hindu, Christian, and Sikh communities were "kidnapped for forced conversion to Islam. forcibly married an While most of the converted girls are impoverished Hindus from southern Sindh province, two new cases involving Christians, including Neha's, have roiled the country in recent months. The girls generally are kidnapped by complicit acquaintances and relatives or men looking for brides. Sometimes they are taken by powerful landlords as payment for outstanding debts by their farm-

hand parents, and police often look the other way. Once converted, the girls are quickly married off, often to older men or to their abductors, according to the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

One activist, Jibran Nasir, called the network a "mafia" that preys on non-Muslim girls because they are the most vulnerable and the easiest targets "for older men with pedophilia urges". The goal is to secure virginal brides rather than to seek new converts to Islam. Minorities make up just 3.6 per cent of Pakistan's 220 million people and often are the target of discrimination. Those who report forced conversions, for example, can be targeted with charges of blasphemy. In the feudal Kashmore region of southern Sindh province, 13-year-old Sonia Kumari was kidnapped, and a day later police told her parents she had converted from Hinduism to Islam. Her mother pleaded for her return in a video widely viewed on the internet: "For the sake of God, the Quran, whatever you believe, please return my daughter, she was forcibly taken from our home." But a Hindu activist, who didn't want to be identified for fear of repercussions from powerful landlords, said she received a letter that the family was forced to write. The letter claimed the 13-year-old had willingly converted and wed a 36-year-old who was already married with two children. The parents have given up. Arzoo Raja was 13 when she disappeared from her home in central Karachi, the largest city in Pakistan. The Christian girl's parents reported her missing and pleaded with police to find her. Two days later, officers reported back that she had been converted to Islam and was married to their 40-year-old Muslim neighbor. In Sindh province, the age of consent for marriage is 18 years old. Arzoo's marriage certificate said she was 19. The cleric who performed Arzoo's marriage, Qasi Ahmed

Mufti Jaan Raheemi, was later implicated in at least three other underage marriages. Despite facing an outstanding arrest warrant for solemnizing Arzoo's marriage, he continued his practice in his ramshackle office above a wholesale rice market in downtown Karachi.

When an Associated Press reporter arrived at his office, Raheemi fled down a side stair, according to a fellow cleric, Mullah Kaifati Ullah, one of a half-dozen clerics who also performs marriages in the complex. He said another cleric is already in jail for marrying children. While Ullah said he only marries girls 18 and above, he argued that "under Islamic law a girl's wedding at the age of 14 or 15 is fine." Arzoo's mother, Rita Raja, said police ignored the family's appeals until one day she was videotaped outside the court sobbing and pleading for her daughter to be returned. The video went viral, creating a social media storm in Pakistan and prompting the authorities to step in. "For 10 days, the parents were languishing between the police station and government authorities and different political parties," Nasir, the activist, said. "They were not being given any time. until it went viral. That is the real unfortunate thing over here."

Authorities have stepped in and arrested Arzoo's husband, but her mother said her daughter still refuses to come home. Raja said she is afraid of her husband's family. The girl who loved hymns, Neha, said she was tricked into the marriage by a favorite aunt, who told Neha to accompany her to the hospital to see her sick son. Her aunt, Sandas Baloch, had converted to Islam years before and lived with her husband in the same apartment building as Neha's family. "All Mama asked when we left was 'when will you be back?'" remembered Neha. Instead of going to the hospital, she was taken to the home of her aunt's in-laws and told she would marry her aunt's 45-year-old brother-in-law. "I told her I can't, I am too young and I don't want to. He is old," Neha said. "She slapped me and locked me up in a room."

Neha told of being taken before two men, one who was to be her husband and the other who

recorded her marriage. They said she was 19. She said she was too frightened to speak because her aunt threatened to harm her two-year-old brother if she refused to marry. She learned of her conversion only when she was told to sign the marriage certificate with her new name – Fatima. For a week she was locked in one room. Her new husband came to her on the first night. Tears stained her blue scarf as she remembered it: "I screamed and cried all night. I have images in my mind I can't scratch out," said Neha. "I hate him."

His elder daughter brought her food each day, and Neha begged for help to escape. Although the woman was frightened of her father, she relented a week after the marriage, bringing the underage bride a burqa – the all-covering garment worn by some Muslim women – and 500 rupees (about £2). Neha fled. But when she arrived home, Neha found her family had turned against her. "I went home and I cried to my Mama about my aunt, what she said and the threats. But she didn't want me anymore," said Neha. Her parents feared what her new husband might do to them, Neha said. Further, the prospects of marriage for a girl in conservative Pakistan who has been raped or married before are slim, and human rights activists say they often are seen as a burden.

Neha's family, including her aunt, all refused to talk to the AP. Her husband's lawyer, Mohammad Saleem, insisted that she married and converted voluntarily. Neha found protection at a Christian church in Karachi, living on the compound with the pastor's family, who say the girl still wakes screaming in the night. She hopes to go back to school one day but is still distraught. "At the beginning my nightmares were every night, but now it is just sometimes when I remember and inside I am shaking," she said. "Before I wanted to be a lawyer, but now I don't know what I will do. Even my mama doesn't want me now."

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/pakistan-girls-forced-conversion-islam-b1779492.html>



# Pakistan's anti rape Ordinance – chemical castration

By Shaikh Abdul Rashid



On December 15 last year (2019), President Arif Alvi approved the Anti-Rape Ordinance 2020 which is said to be in line with the constitution of Pakistan and also international treaties. The government says that the legislation will ensure expeditious trial of cases of rape against women and children and will also sanction punishment of chemical castration of convicted rapists.

Chemical castration requires the use of a drug to diminish testosterone levels and will be applied as a measure to reduce recidivism among sex offenders. It is believed that it would help decrease the risk of convicted sex offenders repeating their crimes. The castration procedure has been used in many of the American states to reduce deviant sexual drive, fantasies and behaviour.

First of all, California in 1996 and then other states including Florida, Louisiana and Wis-

consin made castration a provision in their laws. In 2019, Alabama included a chemical castration measure into law. Besides, Indonesia in 2016 amending its law allowed chemical castration. It should be learnt that punishment of chemical castration to repeat rapists does not solve the issue of rapes permanently. The castration procedure does not cause sterilization and is a very temporary thing.

When the chemical castration drug is discontinued, a man becomes normal after between three and five years. However, punishment of 10 to 25 years in prison for rape, and death penalty or life imprisonment for gang-rape awarded under Pakistan panel code is much better if effectively implemented. Under the ordinance, special courts are to be established all over the country for speedy trials of accused sexual assailants. The courts will finalize rape cases within four months. Inci-

dents of rape of children and women are alarmingly on the rise in the country.

Official statistics drawn from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, police, law and justice commission of Pakistan etc show that at least 11 rape cases are reported daily across the country. Of the overall 22,037 rape cases reported since 2015, only 77 offenders (0.3 percent) have yet been convicted and a huge number of 4,060 cases are still pending in the courts. The situation necessitates the establishment of a large network of special courts with a large number of judges to deal with newly reported and pending rape and sexual assault cases within a time-frame set by the law.

Moreover, Anti-Rape Crisis Cells are also to be set-up which would be empowered to conduct medico-legal examinations within six hours of the incident. The fact is that medical evidence occupies a pivotal role in making prosecution successful in cases of rape and other bodily attacks. A medical examination determines the very nature and extent of injuries and criminal charges in cases of numerous physical attacks rely on it. Unfortunately, Pakistan lacks an efficient and dependable medico-legal system. Except for a few specialized doctors in government hospitals in urban areas, mostly unqualified doctors are assigned the task of performing medical examinations – and they end up using inadequate methodologies and technologies. These doctors have very little comprehension of the evidentiary scope and judicial role of medical examinations in cases of rape and sexual attacks. As a result, unelaborated and unexplained medical reports are submitted in courts, which yield no fruitful results.

Moreover, there is a lack of female medico-legal doctors in government hospitals which leads to a number of barriers for women survivors/victims of rape and sexual attacks. All

these factors have a disturbing effect on survivors or victims who have been unable to secure convictions in their cases in the courts. To get productive medical reports within a set time frame, there is a desperate need to provide medico-legal doctors with specialized training in medical statutes and forensic sciences. According to the ordinance, any police and government authorities found negligent in investigating rape cases would be awarded imprisonment for three years along with fines.

Moreover, any police and government functionaries found providing inaccurate information would also be punished. The fact is that police performance in investigating reported rape cases has not been satisfactory. Because of lack of training, police personnel have been unprofessional with their investigative techniques. They have mainly failed to conduct all-inclusive and well-timed investigations. Moreover, in most cases the accused have even managed to bribe the police to tamper with witness accounts etc.

All these inconsistencies weaken cases and create complications for the courts. It is commendable that the ordinance bars revealing the identification of rape victims and declares it a punishable offence. In this regard, the media, police, forensic officials and social media users should show some empathy in protecting the identity of rape victims. It has been commonly observed that victims of sexual crimes are discriminated against and targeted by society after their identification is disclosed. There is an utmost need to respect rape survivors/victims' right to privacy and a dignity of life. They must not spend the rest of their lives under such social stigma.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/773238-the-anti-rape-ordinance>



# Donald Trump's impeachment trial is set to begin February 9 after Joe Biden backs DELAYING it saying 'the more time we have to get up and running the better'

- House and Senate leaders made 'good progress' on the outlines of a trial
- Nancy Pelosi is sending the article of impeachment accusing Donald Trump of 'incite ment of insurrection' to the Senate on Monday, she said
- Move means the formal start of Trump's trial must begin on Tuesday with N senators sworn in as jurors
- A delay would then allow for writing of legal briefs
- Democratic majority leader Chuck Schumer and Republican minority leader Mitch McConnell have also failed to secure 50-50 power-sharing deal
- Joe Biden endorsed idea as he signed orders for economic relief for COVID at the White House
- The more time we have to get up and running and meet these crises, the better, ' he said.

By: GEOFF EARLE

Senate Republican and Democratic leaders have reached agreement on the the calendar outlines for the second impeachment of former President Donald Trump – with the substance of the trial set to begin February 9th. The agreement, which Majority Leader Charles Schumer called 'good progress,' came after Minority Leader Mitch McConnell called for a delay in the trial, in a posture that got a boost from President Joe Biden, who is anxious to get his cabinet confirmed. Under the outlines of the plan, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will transmit an impeachment article Monday, leading senators to be sworn in Tuesday night. A week later, on Feb. 2, Trump's lawyers and impeachment managers must submit their answers to the impeachment article. The following week, Feb. 8, would be the deadline for the next round of trial briefs, according to McConnell's office. The trial could then begin on Feb. 9th. 'The January 6 insurrection at the Capitol incited by Donald J. Trump was a day none of us will ever forget,' Schumer said on the Senate floor Friday night.

'We all want to put this awful chapter in our nation's history behind us. But healing and unity will only come if there is truth and

accountability, and that is what this trial will provide,' he said. He said the delay after Monday's article will provide 'a period of time to draft their legal briefs just as they did in previous trials.' The breakthrough came hours after President Biden expressed support for the idea of delaying a Senate impeachment trial of his predecessor – expressing at least general support for a proposal put forward by McConnell. However, Schumer did not say who would preside over the trial, how long it might take, or whether witnesses would provide testimony. McConnell said he would have preferred his original proposal to have the House hold up the article until next Thursday. 'We need a full and fair process where the former president can mount a defense and the Senate can properly consider the factual, legal and constitutional questions at stake,' McConnell said. 'Leader McConnell is glad that Leader Schumer agreed to Republicans' request for additional time during the pre-trial phase. Especially given the fast and minimal process in the House, Republicans set out to ensure the Senate's next steps will respect former President Trump's rights and due process, the institution of the Senate, and the

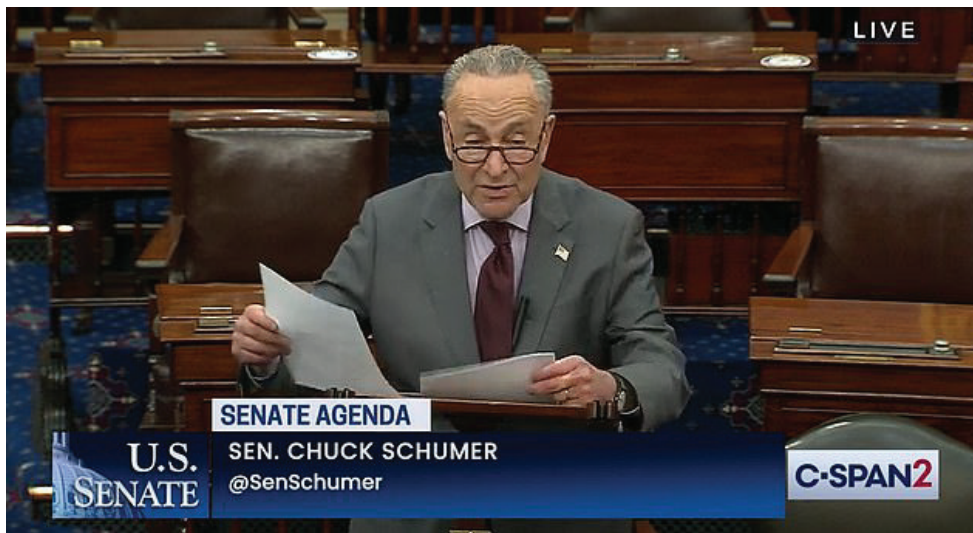
office of the presidency,' said McConnell spokesman Doug Andres. He called the deal 'a win for due process and fairness.'

He endorsed the idea after rolling out more of his economic plan Friday afternoon, hours after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she will send over an impeachment article Monday which will kick off a Senate trial of Biden's predecessor. The legislative part of his plan, a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, would get caught up in the chaos. 'I haven't heard the detail of it but I do think that having some time to get our administration up and running, the more time we have to get up and running and meet these crises, the better,' he said when

Senate Monday. The following day, the trial has to formally begin. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer announced Pelosi's move on the Senate floor Friday at the start of the day's session. But he and Mitch McConnell, the Republican Minority Leader, have not struck a deal on how the trial will be run or on how to share power in the 50-50 Senate.

That leaves undecided the details of how the trial will actually unfold, and even who will preside, with Chief Justice John Roberts said to be reluctant, which would mean Kamala Harris could preside as vice-president, or Patrick Leahy as the longest-serving Democratic senator. Both voted to convict Trump at

his first impeachment trial. Democrats have their own reasons to want to delay a trial – but absent an agreement, it will begin directly. 'I have spoken to Speaker Pelosi who informed me that the articles will be delivered to the Senate on Monday,' Schumer said. He listed impeachment along with other pressing business as priorities, as President Joe



asked about McConnell's offer. 'I want to thank the Senate for passing out our Secretary of Defense. Looks like our Secretary of Treasury, looks like our Secretary of State's in place.

'So the more time we have to get up and running to meet these crises the better,' he said, mentioning one cabinet nomination that had cleared the Senate - that of Austin Lloyd to lead the Pentagon - and two that had not.

His comment came after White House press secretary Jen Psaki, said Biden 'believes that it's up to the Senate and Congress to determine how they will hold the former president accountable and what the mechanics and timeline of that process will be.'

But how the trial will actually happen is in chaos, after Pelosi said she would deliver a House-passed impeachment article to the

Biden seeks to get a cabinet confirmed and move his agenda. Word of when the article will make its way to the Senate provides some certainty about the start of the trial. But after that there is no certainty. Complicating the picture is leverage Republicans appear to hold over the terms. If senators don't unanimously agree on a procedure, the Senate will proceed to the trial on a full-time basis, muddying the start of the Biden presidency.

It all ties together with the failure so far to reach a power sharing agreement for control of the 50-50 Senate – with Democrats holding the technical majority but still not controlling committees until a new agreement is reached. 'The Senate must and will do all three: COVID relief, confirmation of nominees, and impeachment trial,' Schumer said from the floor.



'The Senate will conduct a trial on the impeachment of Donald Trump, said Schumer said. 'It will be a fair trial. But make no mistake, there will be a trial.' On Tuesday, another step would occur with the swearing in of the presiding officer.

The Constitution states that the chief justice shall preside over presidential impeachments, but a trial for a former president is a gray area. The trial itself could begin Wednesday – although an entirely different schedule could occur if Schumer and McConnell are able to reach agreement or if something could gain consent of all 100 senators.

Senate impeachment rules begin the trial at 1 pm the day after the articles are received. Senators meet six days a week at the same time each day until the trial is concluded. But senators could impose a different schedule if an impeachment resolution is agreed to. Schumer said on the floor he has been speaking with Sen. Mitch McConnell about the 'timing and duration' of the trial. Trump will be the first U.S. president to be impeached twice, and the first to face an impeachment trial after leaving office. Pelosi's move means the Senate will at least ceremonially begin the trial Tuesday, when senators are sworn in to be essentially jurors and the Senate formally accepts the article to form a court of impeachment.

A series of prominent lawyers who have worked with Trump in the past have said they will not be taking part in the impeachment trial. He no longer has the benefit of having a White House counsel to defend him as he did when he was in office. Trump will be represented by South Carolina attorney Karl 'Butch' Bowers, who was identified by Trump ally Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who will serve as a juror weighing Trump's fate in the trial and who was with Trump on one of his last trips aboard Air Force One. Bowers has previously represented former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and former Gov. Mark Sanford.

Graham was already digging in Friday against a quick trial. 'If the trial starts right away, that would be an affront to everything every Ameri-



can claims to hold near and dear is that you get a chance to defend yourself. 'Senator McConnell's plan is a good plan. And we'll see what the Democrats want to do,' he said. Schumer and McConnell have already begun negotiations for how a trial might proceed – amid Democratic concerns that the trial could sap momentum for Biden's early moves. To date he has just two cabinet members confirmed – Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who got confirmed by the Senate after Schumer spoke. And with leaders also negotiating on a power-sharing agreement for the 50-50 Senate amid McConnell's procedural demands, Democrats don't yet have the authority to quickly push through nominations either. Pelosi's decision comes a day after she was coy when asked about when she might send over an article. There are already signs that the end of Trump's tenure could be having an impact on Republican fury at Trump after a MAGA mob ransacked the Capitol.

The Hill reported at most five or six Republicans might vote for impeachment, based on some lawmakers' assessments. Republicans have seen the political blowback at House GOP Conference Chair Rep. Liz Cheney, who voted for impeachment and issued a blistering statement, only to see a challenge forming to her own leadership post. Two-thirds of senators would have to vote for Trump to be convicted. After that happened, a majority vote could prevent him from ever holding public office – at a time when he has main-

tained a grip over the Republican Party.

McConnell had been seeking a delay of the articles until next week, in a plan he released Thursday. Senate Republicans are strongly united behind the principle that the institution of the Senate, the office of the presidency, and former President Trump himself all deserve a full and fair process that respects his rights and the serious factual, legal, and constitutional questions at stake,' he said.

The House impeached Trump for 'incitement of insurrection' following his remarks to supporters who later trashed the Capitol. Trump had told them to 'fight like hell,' after spending two months calling the election 'rigged' and claiming he won. More than 100 House Republicans voted to overturn election results even after members of the mob stormed the House floor. It was later revealed members of the mob chanted to 'hang Mike Pence' and smashed windows. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) told reporters in the Capitol that 'We can do anything after the articles come over, that we can all live we can agree to.' But absent such unanimous consent, he said: 'If we can't agree, as I understand it, the next day at one o'clock, we start the trial and we stay within six days a week until we're done. 'I believe there's a desire to agree to a different structure than that but that would all be between Schumer and McConnell.' Pelosi said in a statement Friday: 'The article of impeachment for incitement of insurrection by Donald Trump will be delivered to the Senate on Monday, January 25 ... 'We are respectful of the Senate's constitutional power over the trial and always attentive to the fairness of the process, noting that the former president will have had the same amount of time to prepare for trial as our Managers. Our Managers are ready to begin to make their case to 100 Senate jurors through the trial process.'

House impeachment managers will argue the case to convict. 'Exactly one week after the attack on the Capitol to undermine the integrity of our democracy, a bipartisan vote of the House of Representatives passed the article of

impeachment, which is our solemn duty to deliver to the Senate,' she said. With a trial on a fast track, more than 150 legal and constitutional scholars – including a co-founder of the conservative Federalist Society – have joined in a letter arguing that Trump can be impeached despite being out of office. They point to the text of the Constitution, precedents, as well as the intentions of the Founders in providing a remedy to stop a 'demagogue' who might seek to overthrow the U.S. government. Among the signers of the letter is Northwestern University Law Professor Steven Calabresi, a cofounder of the conservative Federalist Society, a group that generated lists of many of the conservative judicial nominees Trump installed in the courts.

'More broadly, a singular concern of the Framers in devising our constitutional system was the danger of a power-seeking populist of the type they referred to as a 'demagogue' rising to the highest office and overthrowing republican government,' they write. 'The Framers further understood that the source of such a person's power does not expire if he or she is expelled from office; so long as such a person retains the loyalty of his or her supporters, he or she might return to power. The Framers devised the disqualification power to guard against that possibility, and would surely disagree that a person who sought to overthrow our democracy could not be disqualified from holding a future office of the United States because the plot reached its crescendo too close to the end of his or her term. Another key part of the argument is that the Constitution provides not just for removal but for denying future office.

It states that impeachment 'shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9176769/Chuck-Schumer-says-Nancy-Pelosi-send-Senate-Donald-Trumps-impeachment-article-Monday.html>



# Christian prison chaplain who revealed his Bible meetings were hijacked by Islamic extremists is taking legal action after being punished for whistleblowing

- Pastor Paul Song, 51, was banned indefinitely from working in London jails
- He exposed the influence of Muslim gangs at HMP Brixton in The Mail on Sunday
- He described one chilling incident when a small group stormed chapel gathering

A Christian prison chaplain who revealed his Bible meetings were hijacked by Islamic extremists is taking legal action after being punished for whistleblowing.

Pastor Paul Song was banned indefinitely from working in London jails after exposing the influence of Muslim gangs at HMP Brixton in The Mail on Sunday. Lawyers will seek a judicial review of the decision at the High Court hearing. They will claim it, among other things, breached his right to freedom of expression under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Pastor Song, 51, said : ‘After 20 years of service supporting vulnerable inmates at HMP Brixton, I have been severely punished for exposing the truth.

‘What has happened to me has set a dangerous precedent for anyone else who dares to tell the public about the growing domination of Islamic extremism in our prisons. I am determined to fight for justice.’

Mr Song told The Mail on Sunday in a 2018 interview that he was left in a state of near-constant fear after Muslim gangs came to dominate the South London jail.

He described one chilling incident when a small group stormed his gathering in the chapel and began loudly praising the jihadis who hacked soldier Lee Rigby to death in the street.



The interlopers insisted that hacking to death the 25-year-old soldier in 2013 was justified as it avenged the killing of Muslims by British Armed Forces.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9130499/Prison-chaplain-takes-legal-action-punished-whistleblowing.html>

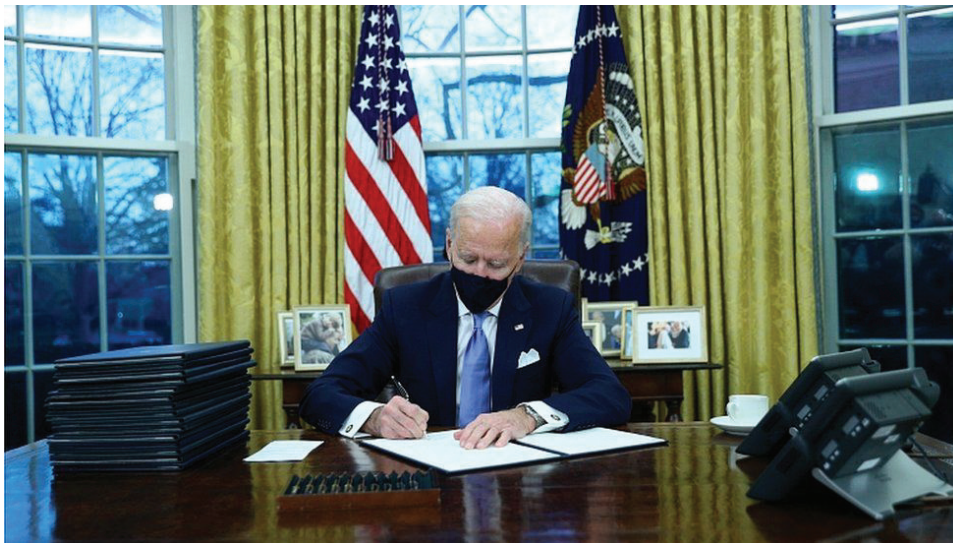
# Biden sets to work on reversing Trump policies with executive orders

US President Joe Biden has begun to undo some of Donald Trump's key policies, hours after being sworn in. In his initial acts as the 46th US president, he signed 15 executive orders - the first to boost the federal response

enacted to tackle the pandemic which has claimed more than 400,000 lives in the US. There will be a mandate to wear masks and practise social distancing on all federal government property. A new office will be set up to

co-ordinate the response to the pandemic and the US will halt the process - begun by the Trump administration - of withdrawing from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The move to re-engage with the WHO was welcomed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who said it was "absolutely critical" for a more co-ordinated global response, his spokesman



to the coronavirus crisis. Other orders reversed the Trump administration's stance on climate change and immigration. President Biden set to work at the Oval Office having been sworn in earlier on Wednesday at the US Capitol. The inauguration was unlike any other due to coronavirus restrictions, with few present to witness the oaths and ceremonies. Donald Trump - who has still not formally conceded the presidency to Mr Biden - snubbed the event in a departure from longstanding precedent.

## What orders has Biden signed?

"There is no time to waste when it comes to tackling the crises we face," President Biden tweeted as he headed to the White House following his inauguration.

President Biden "will take action - not just to reverse the gravest damages of the Trump administration - but also to start moving our country forward," a statement detailing his executive orders said.

On coronavirus, a series of measures will be

Stéphane Dujarric said. Mr Biden has also pledged to make the fight against climate change a top priority of his administration. He signed an executive order beginning the process of rejoining the 2015 Paris climate agreement, from which Mr Trump formally withdrew the US last year. Mr Biden's climate envoy, former US Secretary of State John Kerry, tweeted that the commitment set "a floor, not a ceiling" for America's climate leadership and urged international co-operation ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in November.

Mr Biden has also revoked the presidential permit granted to the controversial Keystone XL Pipeline, which environmentalists and Native American groups have fought for more than a decade. The move will be discussed when Mr Biden makes his first phone call to a foreign leader - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau - on Friday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said.



The privately financed pipeline - estimated to cost about \$8bn (£5.8bn) - would carry about 830,000 barrels of heavy crude a day from the oil sands of Alberta, in Canada, to Nebraska. Barack Obama vetoed a bill approving construction of the pipeline in 2015 but the decision was overturned by President Trump. On immigration Mr Biden has revoked the Trump administration's emergency declaration that helped fund the building of a wall along the Mexican border and also ended a travel ban on some majority-Muslim countries. Other orders cover race and gender equality.

### **This is the (relatively) easy part**

Joe Biden and his presidential team have had nearly three months to plan out his first actions upon taking the oath of office. Donald Trump had used his executive authority broadly, to advance large swaths of his political agenda, so how - and when - Biden would begin undoing those actions would have particular importance. It didn't take long for the newly inaugurated president to show his hand. He targeted, in particular, some of the most controversial portions of Trump's agenda. The Biden administration also will freeze all of Trump's last-minute regulations pending further review.

Executive action is the (relatively) easy part, however. For Biden to make lasting change - policies that can't be undone by future presidents - he will have to work with Congress to pass legislation on issues like pandemic relief, citizenship for undocumented migrants, health-care reform and voting-rights protections.

He also declined, for now, to take other executive actions, like cancelling student loan debt, lifting Mr Trump's trade restrictions or enacting new criminal justice measures. With Democrats in control in the House of Representatives and Senate, Biden has a window for accomplishments, although it will require surmounting Republican procedural obstacles and keeping his party in line. The president's decades of experience as a legislator could come in useful. At the first news conference of the Biden presidency, press secretary Jen Psaki

was asked if her priority was to promote the interests of President Biden, or provide "the unvarnished truth". She said she had "deep respect for the role of a free independent press" and that she would join the president in bringing "transparency and truth back to government". President Trump - and his press secretaries - often had a combative relationship with the media.

### **What happened at the inauguration?**

"Democracy has prevailed," President Biden said after taking the oath of office with Chief Justice John Roberts on stage in front of the US Capitol. Delivering a message of unity after the turbulent Trump years, he promised to be a president "for all Americans" - including those who voted against him.

Three of his predecessors attended the ceremony: Barack Obama - under whom Mr Biden served for eight years as vice-president - Bill Clinton and George W Bush, as well as Mr Trump's vice-president, Mike Pence.

Kamala Harris was sworn in as vice-president ahead of Mr Biden. She is the first woman - and the first black and Asian-American person - to serve in the role. There was extra-tight security for the ceremony after the US Capitol was stormed by violent pro-Trump protesters on 6 January. Mr Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, together with Ms Harris and her husband Doug Emhoff, then walked down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, greeting friends and supporters. The inauguration ceremony included musical performances by Lady Gaga - who sang the national anthem - as well as Jennifer Lopez and Garth Brooks.

Amanda Gorman, America's first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate, recited her work *The Hill We Climb*. A 90-minute televised evening concert entitled "Celebrating America" was staged at the Lincoln Memorial in the city. Hosted by Tom Hanks, it featured Bruce Springsteen, John Legend, Jon Bon Jovi, Justin Timberlake, and Demi Lovato and culminated in a spectacular fireworks display.

### **What about Donald Trump?**

Mr Trump was the first president not to attend his successor's inauguration since 1869. He left the White House early on Wednesday, and flew to the nearby Andrews Air Force base. In his farewell address at the base, he highlighted what he regarded as the successes of his presidency. "What we've done has been amazing by any standard," Mr Trump said.

The 74-year-old then left for his Mar-a-Lago golf club in Florida, where he arrived later in the morning. In his last hours as president, Mr Trump granted clemency to more than 140 people, including his former adviser Steve Bannon, who had been facing fraud charges. The political drama surrounding Mr Trump is far from over. The US Senate is expected to put him on trial soon, following his record second impeachment by the House of Representatives for allegedly inciting the Capitol riot. On Tuesday, the Senate's Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, said the mob had been provoked by Mr Trump and fed lies.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-55738746>

### **Washington: Street in Front of Saudi Embassy renamed 'Jamal Khashoggi Way'**

Washington, DC – Ward 2 Councilmember Brooke Pinto introduced legislation to symbolically designate three roads in the District of Columbia in the memory of the late journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the honorable Congressman John Lewis, and the honorable Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

"In light of the recent deadly riot on Capitol Hill, which included assaults on journalists, and the President's lack of regard for justice, equality, and our free and fair election process, it is fitting that today we take this symbolic, but important action to acknowledge and honor three individuals

who sacrificed so much to fight for our democracy and whose examples continue to inspire the kind of action this moment requires," stated Councilmember Pinto.

The "Jamal Khashoggi Way Designation Act of 2021" will be introduced in honor of the late Washington Post journalist and District resident, Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered by agents of the Government of Saudi Arabia in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, on October 2, 2018. Through his journalism, Jamal Khashoggi was a fierce advocate for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. This designation of "Jamal Khashoggi Way" is located in front of the Saudi Embassy in Washington, DC, on New Hampshire Avenue, between Virginia Avenue and F Street in Northwest. This designation will memorialize Mr. Khashoggi's life and further serve as a tribute to a fallen neighbor. This action is also an expression of support by District residents for the indispensable values of a free and independent press.

"Jamal Khashoggi knew that by shining a light on Saudi Arabia and seeking truth, he risked his freedom and, indeed, his life. Journalists around the world and here in America face similar dangers every day, and we must never let those who seek to intimidate them succeed, because when journalism is under assault, our freedom and democracy are under assault. Freedom of the press is fundamental to our democracy and safeguarding human rights where democracy does not exist. We must stand shoulder to shoulder with journalists," said Councilmember Pinto. "Everyone who visits the Saudi embassy will be reminded of Mr. Khashoggi's courage."

<https://www.brookepintodc.com/newsroom/councilmember-pinto-street-designations>



# Austria calls for European register of Muslim imams



Austria has already adopted an obligatory imam registry among other measures aimed at reducing terrorism after a November terror attack in Vienna. Since the start of 2021, Austria has required the registration of all imams in the country. The mandate was one of several new measures Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's government adopted after a November 2 terror attack in Vienna. Four civilians were killed and 23 injured after a 20-year-old gunman opened fire in the center of the Austrian capital. Now Austria is calling for the European Union to adopt the registration of imams, the worship leaders of Mosques in Muslim communities

Why is Austria calling for EU imam registration?

In an interview with the German newspaper Die Welt published Saturday, Austria's Minister for European Affairs Karoline Edtstädler said Imam registration was key for "the fight against political Islam."

"Most imams move through many EU countries, so the security authorities need to know who is preaching what in which mosque at any given time," Edtstädler, a member of Kurz's conservative Austrian People's Party, told the newspaper. She also believes EU funds should be "so strictly controlled in the future that they do not go to organizations and associations that advocate Islamist and anti-Semitic positions." A ban on foreign financing for mosques, which is already in place in Austria, is also conceivable, she said. To fight terrorism, Edtstädler would like to see "further improvements in cooperation and data exchange between the judicial and security authorities of the [EU] member states."

EU interior ministers have declared a new "war on terrorism" after the Vienna attack and simi-

lar atrocities in Paris and Nice in France.

Austria's new anti-terror measures The registration of Imams, which the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (IGGÖ) has been tasked with maintaining, is one of a host of measures Austria has adopted in the wake of the Vienna attack.

- The government has expanded a ban on symbols associated with extremist organizations to include the far-right nationalist Austrian Identitarian Movement as well as Islamist groups.

- Criminal law has been changed to include a "religiously motivated extremist association" offense. This includes anyone who threatens "democratic constitutional order ... with a social and state order based exclusively on religion in an unlawful manner."

- Release conferences have been created to be held before the conditional release of imprisoned terrorism offenders. The sessions are intended to provide courts with the necessary information so they can impose appropriate conditions on released offenders.

- A registry of terrorism offenders has been established. The list is designed to impose a lifelong ban on weapons purchases and prevent previous offenders from being employed in security-critical areas.

The Austrian government did stop short of an explicit ban on "political Islam," or religiously motivated political extremism. Kurz's administration also wants to revoke the Austrian passports of convicted terrorists if they possess other citizenships, but a draft law to that end is not expected until later this year.

<https://www.dw.com/en/austria-calls-for-european-register-of-muslim-imams/a-56114597>

# President Biden inducts another Pakistani American into his team – Salman Ahmad



WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden has inducted a second Pakistani American, Salman Ahmed, into his foreign policy team, said a statement issued on Friday. Mr Ahmed, who served as head of strategic planning in the Obama National Security Council, is joining the US State Department as director policy planning. Last month, Mr Biden announced that another Pakistani American, Ali Zaidi, will join his team as Deputy National Climate Adviser. Mr Ahmed was chief of staff of the US Mission to the United Nations and senior policy adviser to the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Before joining the Department of State in 2009, Mr Ahmed served as a visiting professor and research scholar at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and worked for almost fifteen years at the United Nations, including posts as chief of staff for the Head of UN Peacekeeping Operations. Mr Ahmed holds a master's degree in international relations from the University of Cambridge, and a Bachelor of Science in economics from New York University's Stern School of Business. Mr Zaidi will work directly under former Secretary of State John Kerry who has been appointed Mr Biden's special envoy for climate. Mr Zaidi played a key role in drafting and implementing the Obama administration's climate action plan and helped negotiate the Paris Climate Agreement. Mr Biden has also inducted two women from the Indian-occupied Kashmir into his team. Sameera Fazili, an American of Kashmiri origin, has been appointed the deputy director of the National Economic Council (NEC). In December 2020, another Kashmir-born



woman, Aisha Shah, was inducted into Biden's team as partnership manager of the White House Digital Strategy team. Uzra Zeya, another Indian Muslim, has been appointed Undersecretary of State for arms control, democracy and human rights.

The US media pointed out that Mr Biden has "filled out his State Department team with former career diplomats and veterans of the Obama administration, signaling his desire to return to a more traditional foreign policy after four years of uncertainty and unpredictability under President Donald Trump."

"This diverse and accomplished team ... embodies my core belief that America is strongest when it works with our allies," Mr Biden said in a statement. "Collectively, they have secured some of the most defining national security and diplomatic achievements in recent memory — and I am confident that they will use their diplomatic experience and skill to restore America's global moral leadership."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1601966/biden-inducts-another-pakistani-american-into-his-team>



# French Muslim Body Agree On 'Republican Values' Rules - Restructuring Islam In Compatibility With Republican Values

The French Council of Muslim Worship (CFCM) reached an agreement Saturday on a "charter of principles" that rejects political Islam, foreign interference and reaffirms the compatibility "of Islam with the Republic." A statement by the national body formed in

The charter evolves out of President Emmanuel Macron's plan to combat radical Islam and strongly uphold the nation's Republican values. In October, he criticized Islamist separatism laying the foundation for a strategy to make Islam compatible with the secular

Republic. A knife attack in the former offices of the Charlie Hebdo magazine, the assassination of school teacher Samuel Patty who showed offensive caricatures of Prophet Muhammad during a class discussion with elementary school children and killings inside a



2003 to manage faith and places of worship said the agreement is particularly "on the compatibility of the Muslim faith with the principles of the Republic, on the rejection of the instrumentalization of Islam for political ends, on the non-interference of States in the exercise of Muslim worship in France, on the principle of equality between men and women and on the rejection of certain customary practices allegedly Muslim."

It will pave the way to form the National Council of Imams which will have the power to authorize or revoke the accreditation of foreign-born imams. Interior Minister Gérard Darmanin, who met CFCM leaders, hailed the agreement "as a significant step for all French Muslims and therefore for France."

cathedral in Nice, strengthened the resolve of the Macron administration to draft new laws targeting Islamist separatism.

Macron met Muslim leaders in November and appealed for them to approve the charter, which will lead to the restructuring of Islam in France. The leaders felt pressured to sign the charter and Chems-Eddine Hafiz, vice-president of the CFCM and Rector of the Paris Grand Mosque said: "We do not all agree on what this charter of values is, and what it will contain," but, "we are at a historic turning point for Islam in France [and] we Muslims are facing our responsibilities."

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/french-muslim-body-agree-on-republican-values-rules/2112635>

# Pakistani Girl Wins Global Memory Competition

**Emma Alam and Syeda Kisa Zehra break multiple world records during the championship**

A young girl from Pakistan has won the 29th World Memory Championships global finals, beating more than 300 competitors from all over the world.

Emma Alam competed in over 10 disciplines in three-day competition which included participants from China, Canada, United Kingdom, South Korea, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Algeria, United States, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Libya, Qatar and Iraq.

Emma Alam and Syeda Kisa Zehra from Team Pakistan also broke multiple world records in this year's championship.

The World Memory Championships was

founded in 1991 by world-renowned Tony Buzan and Raymond Keene with the aim to shine a global spotlight on the incredible power of human memory.

The late Tony Buzan was the world's top five speakers reported by Forbes Magazine. He was the one who popularised the idea of mental literacy as well as being the author/co-author of more than 80 books. Raymond Keene is Grandmaster of Chess and an appointed officer of the order of the British Empire by her majesty Queen Elizabeth.

Since 1991, the championship has travelled to various high profile international venues,



Emma Alam is a dedicated young girl from Pakistan and has competed in various memory championships. PHOTO: EXPRESS



including The Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University, Imperial College London, The Royal Festival Hall, Olympia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hainan and Wuhan (in 2019).

With the efforts of World Memory Sports Council, Asia Pacific Memory Sports Council, National Memory Sports Council of Pakistan and the Global Chief Arbiter Lester, the World Memory Championships 2020 had adopted online and synchronous mode, where the global memory athlete community competed synchronously in 16 countries and regions. The candidates with the best, fastest and sharpest memory skills competed to demonstrate their intellectual power and to set new heights of what the human memory can truly achieve. "The one shining exception was the 29th World Memory Championship, which by a miracle of organisation and global coordination, was successfully put together by our dedicated team, with the Chinese City of SANYA as its base," Raymond Keene, global president of the World Memory Sports Council, said in his official statement.

He added that the field consisted of an impressive 300 competitors from 16 countries and from this extensive field the winner, world champion from the 29th World Memory Championship, emerged from the Pakistan team, so excellently and expertly trained by Sania Alam.

Raymond Keene congratulated Emma Alam and said that she is "one of the great sporting achievers for Pakistan, a unique heroine in pandemic stricken 2020, and supreme grand world memory champion for 2020".

Emma Alam was thrilled to win the prestigious global event. "I had aimed to give my best in WMC 2020, backed by a lot of daily practice for the past two years with my coach and the institute. It still astonishes me how powerful the mechanism of human memory is and the brain's infinite information storage system."

She said that she planned on competing again next year with even better performance. "I congratulate all those amazing competitors who competed from across the globe."

Emma is a dedicated young girl from Pakistan and has competed in various memory championships including the 3rd Asia Pacific Memory Championship in Malaysia, and the 28th World Memory Championship in China, having won countless medals and trophies through her splendid performance. She is currently completing her studies through homeschooling.

Abeerah Ather, who is another member of Team Pakistan, achieved 7th position in the 2020 global rankings.

Emma and Team Pakistan were trained under the Institute of Human Memory Development International (IHMD).

The World Memory Championships is an esteemed tournament of mind sports, where skills of intellectual ability are measured as opposed to physical sports.

Mind Sports are a unique form of games compared to the Olympic Games where one celebrates excellence in athletic performance and the other celebrates the fittest brains on earth. Mind Sports are some of the most elite and prestigious sports being practised around the world today.

Only WMSC organised championships are recognised and accepted by the Guinness World Records. Emma Alam and Syeda Kisa Zehra from Team Pakistan also broke multiple world records in this year's championship. Last year's 28th World Memory Championship took place in China and the overall champion was Ryu Song, a young girl from North Korea.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2278165/pakistani-girl-wins-global-memory-competition>

# ‘Safe Haven’ for White Terrorists?

By Professor Rafia Zakaria, Karachi



THEY didn't understand terrorism until it was too late. Ever since 9/11, and arguably even in the years prior to that, Americans believed that terrorism was a Muslim problem. Such was this belief that in the post-9/11 years the Department of Homeland Security was created to protect the US from Islamist militancy. And as everyone in South Asia and the Middle East experienced, that was hardly all of it. In Afghanistan, where the erstwhile 9/11 terrorists had hidden, a military campaign (still ongoing) killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. In Iraq, a functioning infrastructure of governance was dismantled, nearly a million innocent Iraqis were killed and several millions more rendered refugees. The weight of the cumulative carnage spanned decades and its true measure is still not known. When it became too costly to send soldiers, the Americans used drones, killing even young children with their approximate marksmanship and their penchant for mistaking funerals and wedding parties for terrorist convoys. At home in the US, every Muslim became a terror suspect, and mosques were filled with undercover FBI agents trying to find terrorists. Those days lasted until Jan 6, 2021. Until then, and despite the rising number of home-grown white supremacist terror attacks, Americans still soundly believed that terrorism was a Muslim problem, inextricably tied to something about the faith. If anyone, particularly a Muslim, interjected, the retort would always be something like, 'Yes, maybe not all terrorists are Muslim, but so many are'. It would be the beginning of a circular and pointless argument, whose only value was how it exposed the extent of American Islamophobia. So deep was this denial that on Christmas Day 2020, when a member of the conspiracy group QAnon parked a camper truck full of explo-

sives outside a building that housed a good bit of the 5G infrastructure belonging to the communications giant AT&T, US counterterrorism officials and media outlets refused to refer to the attack — which reduced two downtown streets in Nashville, Tennessee, to rubble — as a terrorist attack. "There was no political motive," one such terrorism analyst held on CNN. It was a statement that was misguided at best and a downright lie at worst. The helplessness the Americans feel is the helplessness that Pakistani citizens felt — wanting to do something but not knowing what to do as extremists attacked the country.

The QAnon conspiracy group believes, in summary, that Democrats run an undercover paedophilia ring and that Donald Trump is fighting this ring. All other sorts of nonsense, such as secret signs and clues, are wrapped up in the mix, and even the president, who has refused to condemn the group, regurgitated some of its beliefs in a criminal telephone call to the secretary of state of Georgia a little over a week ago. Before the election, the planned kidnapping and execution of the governor of the state of Michigan and the storming of the Michigan State Capitol were all rationalised away and given none of the seriousness that would have been allotted to the issue had the assailants been Black Lives Matter protesters or American Muslims. On Jan 6, Americans had to confront the fact that terrorism is not a 'Muslim' or even a poverty problem but a tactic that can attach itself to any ideology. The white nationalists who stormed the US Capitol were people they knew and never suspected, as demonstrated by the easy access that the thousands of gathered protesters had to the steps of the Capitol (several videos even appeared to show police officers assisting the protestors). What happened next has been seen

by people all around the world. The crowd was in a state of frenzy thanks to the president, who was the one to tell them to march to the Capitol in the first place. Trump's son Don Jr warned lawmakers that "we're coming after you" if they certified the election results, and his lawyer Rudy Giuliani declared it was time for "trial by combat" just that morning. And so the crowd stormed the Capitol. Lawmakers had to take refuge in 'safe and undisclosed' locations, windows were broken, the speaker's office was vandalised, the Senate and House chambers were overrun by the rioters who looted and stole and damaged with abandon, making sure to capture it all in selfies and live-streams on Facebook and many other platforms. Five people died and scores were injured; crowds were heard chanting "Hang Mike Pence" in response to his refusal to stop the certification process of Electoral College votes. Based on the events, and the precedent set by the US itself, Canada or Mexico would be well within their rights to attack and take over their neighbour owing to its poor management of its home-grown terrorists. Like Pakistan routinely was, the US too can be labelled a 'safe haven' for white supremacist terrorists who can then carry out attacks in the wider world, given that they can gather, plot and roam free in the US, which does not keep track of its home-grown terrorists. There is nothing good about an incident that takes innocent lives and causes such damage to people and property, but perhaps Americans who are watching in disbelief can use this time to consider the position of Pakistanis who watched their own country slip into chaos and carnage for the entire duration of America's so-called war on terror. The helplessness they feel is the helplessness that Pakistanis felt — wanting to do something but not knowing what to do, also knowing that the intoxications of extremist ideology are such that those who have been affected by them cannot be converted to reason and rationality so easily. The challenge before the US has only just begun; its failure to evaluate the dangers of the snake pit within means too

many snakes are lying in wait for their moment to attack the machinery of the state. The rioters were not able to stop the certification process; Twitter kicked Trump off its platform and Amazon webhosting has denied platforms to right-wing talk shows. Even with this, the fight has only just begun.

The writer is an attorney teaching constitutional law and political philosophy.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1601203/safe-haven-for-white-terrorists>

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# Talaq (Divorce) given by man on Internet is valid only after verification: Theologians

Hyderabad: Woman theologians attending a workshop of Jamiat-ul-Mominath, the Deeni Madrasa for women, opined that divorce given by a husband over the mobile phone or WhatsApp or through email is valid only after verification. If the husband denies it, such divorce is invalid. They said that the wife has the right to seek dissolution of nikah in case the husband contracts a dangerous disease like AIDS. In case the wife is suffering from such a disease, the husband can marry another woman but he should not discontinue paying maintenance to his first wife. It is better that he refrains from divorcing the stricken wife, the scholars said. More than 200 female Muftis and Aalim participated in the deliberations over 150 theological issues in the light of Sharia. The Jamiat-ul-Mominath holds workshops every year to discuss contemporary issues confronted by the community in which female scholars participate.

Dr Rizwana Zarreen, principal, said one of the purposes of the nikah is the fulfillment of natural sexual desires. In cases where dangerous diseases can be transmitted to the partner,

the wife can ask for a separation. However, it is not fair for a husband to divorce the wife for the same reason, as a husband can fulfill his sexual urge by marrying another woman. In Islam, men are caretakers of women. The scholars opined that gender transitioning is prohibited (haram) for women and men as per the Sharia as it is interference in the creation of the Almighty. However, there is an exemption for transgender. A transgender can choose the gender based on dominated sexual traits.

They also opined that depositing breast milk in mother milk banks for Muslim women and feeding children with milk procured from such banks is not permissible in Islam as it impacts fosterage and terms of nikah. Nikah is prohibited among the children who are fed on milk of the same woman.

The scholars said that there is no disadvantage for Muslims in taking the Coronavirus vaccine even if it contains a few ingredients which are haram as the character of these ingredients has been changed. As per the Sharia, injecting any ingredient which is not

permitted but used in changed form is permissible to save human life.

<https://www.deccan-chronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/160121/talaq-given-by-man-on-internet-is-valid-only-after-verification-theol.html>



# What is Jihadi-Salafism

By G.G. Siddiqui, India



Jihadi-Salafism, a term coined as a result of the present-day phenomenal terror activities perpetrated in the name of “Jihad or the pattern of al-Salaf al-Salihin (pious predecessors)”. A Jihadi-Salafist is merely a pretender to be “Islamic revivalist” that is smart enough to fool the naïve and gullible Muslims by repeatedly displaying in public the virtues, piety, and leadership that characterized the formative period of Islam from 610 CE, when the last Prophet, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) began his mission of bringing the people close to the only Lord of the Worlds (Rabbul Aalamin) until 661 CE, when the fourth rightly guided successor, Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib, was martyred.

The tag of Jihad with it is something, unacceptable to mainstream Muslims because its Jihad is so-called and does not match in any form with the Prophet’s Jihad that benefitted the Muslim community in terms of security, freedom of religion, peace, safety, spiritual and intellectual progress, justice, peace for civilians, truthfulness etc. That Jihad by fighting was defensive and was meant for curbing religious persecution. Moreover, the greatest Jihad as per one of the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), is the spiritual Jihad that is waged to avoid the evil attitudes in order to attain gnosis (marifat) of God Almighty.

Jihad by Nafs (Jihad al-Nafs) or spiritual Jihad which renders inner spiritual struggle against personal evil desires, ideas, lust, anger, lies, cunning, deceit, fraudulent behaviour, prejudice, growing extremism and desire of retaliation. The Jihad by Nafs gives a person spiritual power to retain peace of mind and enables him to have patience and perseverance when facing the unwanted consequences of political, religious or worldly clashes. This is the greatest Jihad but unfortunately missing today. No casual observer of Jihadi-Salafism around the world can deny the fact that the Jihadi-Salafism has brought the Muslim community into lurch to face humiliation from non-Muslims. Moreover they are killing Muslims in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan declaring them “apostates”. Comparatively speaking, the Jihadi-Salafists have harmed Muslims more than they have done others. The Muslim civilians in the affected countries have now been wandering as homeless, orphans, widows or the ones living the life of refugees at the mercy of the foreign countries. Their acts of worship, which they were freely doing before getting affected by the Jihadists have now been under disturbing circumstances or specs of doubt and suspicion. The Jihad as claimed by the Jihadi-Salafists is nothing but an act of transgression, as can be seen in the column titled as; Terror Attacks in a Nuclear Age – Jihad or Transgression? Global Muslim Community Should Introspect The Jihadi-Salafists’ claim of being on the pattern of al-Salaf al-Salihin is nothing but another form of deception. This deception is simply meant for attracting or entrapping the gullible individuals into the web of terror activities—the definitely forbidden acts in the eyes of Islam. They know that once a believer



is ensured that they (the Jihadi-Salafists) are acting in accordance with the version of Islam followed by al-Salaf al-Salihin, he will rush to kill or being killed with “the emotion of martyrdom and fighting in the cause of Allah on the pattern of al-Salaf al-Salihin”. To say it painfully, they are using the terms “martyrdom” or “fighting in the cause of God” to defame the approximately unarmed-efforts of the companions of the Prophet, who, in the face of brutality and persecution, had no option left except for migrating from Makka to Madina, and then for fighting in defines in Madina when the enemies chased them away to eliminate their existence.

It is undeniable truth that the people embraced Islam by realizing its beauty and nature. This is known as the fastest growing religion in the world but its growth has now been facing a difficult obstacle in the form of Jihadi-Salafism that can't be thrown away easily, as it has put on “Islamic titles and appearances”. If the acceptance of Islam among civilians of the world has halted, it is because of Jihadi-Salafism. The reason being is that Islam is a faith by heart before Allah and by tongue to be identified as a believer before other Muslims. A faith by heart is possible only when a person believes in it on his own will and freedom. By tongue, even a so-called or hypocrite (munafiq) can express his acceptance of Islam—a form of deception that can be rejected by any principally rationalized bent of mind and is already a disliked act before Allah Almighty, as witnessed by the several verses of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

To sum up, the term ‘Jihadi-Salafism’ is one of the distorted forms of Jihad and Salaf in combination.

<https://www.newageislam.com/islamic-q-and-a/ghulam-ghaus-sid-diqi-new-age-islam/what-is-jihadi-salafism/d/123852>

## Lets in I–SIS Bride - says kids killed in Manchester Bombing are ‘Victims of War’

A BRIT ISIS bride who was allowed to return to the UK calls children murdered in the Manchester Arena attack "victims of war." Samia Hussein, 25, who joined the Islamic State in 2015, was smuggled out of Syria earlier this year and was allowed to fly into Heathrow via Turkey in February. She was detained on suspicion of membership of a banned organisation, under Section 11 of the Terrorism Act 2000. But when asked by The Sun whether Samia had been charged for joining a terror group, the Home Office said they could “not confirm or deny” the extremist's status for “national security” reasons. Alan Duncan, 53, an ex-British soldier who interviewed the jihadi bride last year, slammed the Government's lack of transparency after she told him on camera that she HAD joined ISIS after seeing their sick propaganda videos online.

In her interview with Alan, Samia refused to condemn the sadistic bombing of a pop concert at Manchester Arena in 2017 which claimed the lives of 22 innocent people - including ten youngsters aged under 20. When asked if she had a message to families of the victims, the twisted extremist compared the terror attack and the beheading of foreign aid workers to coalition attacks on the evil caliphate. She said: “It was really a vicious cycle, everyone was killing everyone, ok. “Like I told you, you will find that the coalition air strike will come here and bomb the women and children. "Everyone has a part of being a victim of war. You understand?" She added: "I am not in favour that the coaliti

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8487471/British-ISIS-bride-Samia-Hussein-says-arm-one-breasts-blown-Syria.html>



# Ending harmful practice of child marriages

By: Sara Malkano

ENDING the harmful practice of child marriage has been a priority for human rights advocates in Pakistan for many years. The global Sustainable Development Goals that aim to eliminate child marriage by 2030 have also led to increased efforts to address the issue. Implementation of child marriage laws, however, remains fraught for many reasons. Some of the causes behind poor enforcement are widely recognised, including traditional norms, low rates of birth and marriage registration, weaknesses

culturally acceptable means for adolescents to explore romantic relationships.



in the police and judicial system. A significant challenge that has not been widely discussed, however, is posed by early marriages that are not forced by parents but are in fact initiated by the minors themselves. Such cases, which appear to be coming before courts in increasing numbers, challenge policy approaches that emphasise criminal regulation of early marriages. It is not difficult to see why adolescents could choose to marry in our social contexts. Sexual activity outside marriage in Pakistan is not only a social taboo but is also illegal and subject to criminal penalties. This means that adolescents have no legal means of engaging in consensual sexual activity. And the only social and culturally acceptable way for them to explore romantic relationships is through marriage. This poses a real dilemma for child rights activists – and one that cannot be easily brushed aside in light of prevailing social realities: in advocating for the enforcement of laws prohibiting child marriage, we are effectively proscribing legal and

**A significant if not widely discussed challenge is posed by self-arranged early marriages.**

Due to emerging trends in South Asian countries, child rights advocates and feminists have stressed that a distinction should be drawn between forced child marriages and self-arranged early marriages. While forced child marriages involve a clear element of coercion, self-arranged early marriages are usually the result of young persons, especially adolescent girls, exercising their agency to pursue romantic relationships, often in the face of opposition by family and community members and sometimes to escape a forced marriage. While there are good reasons for penalising parents or adult males who coerce a girl under 18 into marriage, criminalising self-arranged marriages would expose the girl to greater risks, making her more vulnerable to harm by family or community members. The denial of a distinction between forced and

self-arranged early marriages is based on the assumption that persons under the age of 18 lack maturity and are therefore incapable of consenting to relationships. This assumption is not only inconsistent with child and adolescent psychology, but also with international human rights principles that recognise the evolving capacities of children as they grow older, particularly during their adolescent years. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Pakistan is a party, requires state parties to ensure that laws and policies protect the best interests of the child while keeping in mind that “children progressively acquire competencies, understanding and increasing levels of agency”. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, comprising human rights experts with the authority to interpret the convention and monitor its compliance, has also emphasised that minimum legal age limits must recognise the rights of any child “below that minimum age and able to demonstrate sufficient understanding to be entitled to give or refuse consent”.

While we do not have clear data regarding the numbers of self-arranged early marriages in Pakistan, we do see many instances of courts grappling with the dilemmas posed in these cases. We see courts validating marriages where girls claim to have chosen their marriage by appealing to Muslim personal law, which is interpreted to permit marriages where a boy or girl under the age of 18 has reached puberty.

Counter-intuitively for some, it is Muslim personal law that is used to uphold the free will of the adolescent girl. It is also invoked, however, in cases of forced child marriages and is therefore used to legitimise coercion. Pakistani actress granted permanent residency in Saudi Arabia

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1600526/child-marriage-complexities>

## Pakistani teams secure top positions in Huawei's ICT competition

ISLAMABAD: During the regional finals of Huawei's Middle East ICT Competition 2020, two Pakistani teams won, acquiring first and second positions. “This year marked the fifth iteration of the Huawei ICT Competition, which included the practice competition and newly included innovation track of the competition ... the innovation competition came to a close yesterday with Pakistan teams from Ghulam Ishaq Khan (GIK) Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology and University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore winning the ‘Best Application Project Award’ and the ‘Excellence in Health and Wellbeing Award’ respectively,” read a press release. It said GIK's team supervised by Dr Ghulam Abbas included Mohammad Inam, Uzair Ahmed and Gulfam Hussain. They designed a cloud based AI-application called ‘Wear-tificially’ which will enable users to virtually try on clothes. The application aims to make people's experience of shopping from home easier during the pandemic. The team from UET, mentored by Dr Mohammad Usman Ghani Khan with Shoaib Shabbir, Arooj Zaib and Umer Lodhi as members created a robot for analysing and improving social interaction of autistic individuals. By automating the process of speech therapy for autistic children, they designed a syllabus of words that the robot was taught so it could evaluate the child's response.

Published in Dawn, January 21st, 2021

<http://https://www.dawn.com/news/1602648/pakistani-teams-secure-top-positions-in-huaweis-ict-competition>



# Why Is Iran Kidnapping and executing its dissidents

By Arash Azizi - NYTimes

Abductions and executions of Iranian journalists and activists seem to be aimed at complicating the resumption of talks under the Biden administration.

He has been dead for a month. On Dec. 12 Iranians woke up to bleak news: Their government had executed Ruhollah Zam, a 42-year-old journalist. The sentencing judge described Mr. Zam as a spy, as someone who incited violence and had “sown corruption on earth,” a vague charge which is often used to describe attempts to overthrow the Iranian government. Mr. Zam, who had been imprisoned in Iran after the disputed presidential election in 2009, fled to France in 2011, where he was granted political asylum. From Paris, he started Amad News, a popular

by protests against unemployment and the high cost of living in December 2017 and January 2018. Mr. Zam’s Amad News helped coordinate disparate protests across the country. A manual for making Molotov cocktails was published on Amad News’ Telegram channel, but Telegram shut it down after Tehran argued that it was inciting violence.

In October 2019, an anonymous contact promised Mr. Zam a meeting in Najaf, Iraq with Grand Ayatollah Ali Siستاني, the supreme Shiite spiritual leader, whose religious authority surpasses that of Iran’s supreme leader. The Grand Ayatollah has lent his support to electoral democracy in Iraq and opposed rule by clerics. Mr. Zam, who was planning to establish a television channel, was hoping to discuss financing for his project. Instead, he was arrested on his arrival in Iraq by government officials and was handed over to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps’ operatives who transferred him to Iran. Mr. Zam faced 17 criminal charges, including spying for France and Israel. Very little evidence was presented in court to substantiate the allegations against him. In September, a few months before Mr. Zam’s execution, Navid Afkari, an Iranian



Ruhollah Zam during his trial in Tehran in December.  
Getty Images

anti-government website, which also operated on the encrypted messaging app Telegram and other social media platforms. His father, Muhammad Ali Zam, a cleric, was once a high-ranking regime official and the family was well-connected in Iranian power circles. Mr. Zam used his connections to garner critical information and published revelatory accounts of insider corruption. Iran was roiled

wrestler who supported the 2017-18 protests, was hanged in Shiraz. The kidnapping, the conviction and the execution of Mr. Zam is reminiscent of tactics widely used by the Islamic Republic in its first two decades. Since its foundation in 1979, the Islamic Republic has assassinated up to 360 people around the world. In August 1991, three Iranian operatives murdered Shapur Bakhtiar, who served as the last prime minister of Iran

before the 1979 revolution deposed the monarch Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. Mr. Bakhtiar and his secretary were killed in his home in the Paris suburb of Suresnes. One of the killers was eventually arrested and confessed to receiving orders from the Iranian government. From Cyprus to the Philippines, from Romania to the United States, Iranian operatives assassinated anyone they deemed a threat. Those men and women included people from relatives of the deposed shah to Marxist political activists to religious figures from Iran's Sunni minority. The assassins often returned to Tehran to a hero's welcome. Dawud Salahuddin (born David Theodore Belfield), an African-American convert to Islam, was hired by Iran in 1980 to kill Ali Akbar Tabatabai, a former Iranian diplomat turned outspoken opponent of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's first Supreme Leader. After killing Mr. Tabatabai at his home in Maryland, the assassin fled to Iran, where he later worked as a journalist, rising to be the editor of the website of Press TV, Iran's English-language broadcaster. And then in 1988, six leading public figures and dissident intellectuals were murdered in Tehran. Many more killings were revealed over time and the murders came to be remembered as "the chain murders."

Tehran's nasty habit of assassinating critics and opponents at home and abroad seemed to have been reined in around 1997 after Iran faced international blowback for the killings and the subsequent election of a reformist president. In 1992 Iranian agents killed Sadeq Sharafkandi, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, at a Greek restaurant in Berlin, where he was meeting Ingvar Carlsson, the former prime minister of Sweden, and Mona Sahlin, the leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The Swedish leaders had to cancel at the last minute, which may have saved their lives. Germans vigorously investigated and prosecuted the

case, which led to a landmark ruling by a German court in April 1997, and international arrest warrants were issued against top Iranian regime officials including Ayatollah Khomeini. A few months later, in August 1997, Mohammad Khatami, a reformist cleric, was elected president with a large popular backing and a mandate for change. Tehran sought to present a new face to the world; the assassination program was reined in. Iran's energized reformists and reinvigorated press pressured the regime to investigate the assassinations. Eighteen intelligence operatives, who were described by Tehran as "rogue agents," responsible for the murders, were put on trial. Three operatives were sentenced to death.

In the following years, dozens of opposition media outlets opened outside Iran, and exiled dissidents like myself didn't fear for our lives in Europe and North America anymore. Mr. Zam's abduction and execution is among several recent incidents that is forcing Iranian dissidents living overseas to reconsider the threat to their lives. On Dec. 17, Turkey released video footage and documents exposing how Iranian authorities collaborated with drug gangs to kidnap Habib Chabi, an Iranian-Swedish activist for Iran's Arab minority. Mr. Chabi was lured to Istanbul for a rendezvous with a female agent posing as a potential lover. He was kidnapped from Istanbul, smuggled across the border to Iran and put on trial there. He faces execution. A California-based member of an Iranian militant opposition group-in-exile, Jamshid Sharmahd, was abducted from Dubai in July.

Tehran seems to have revived its old tactics, and the timing of Mr. Zam's execution within weeks of President-elect Joe Biden's win and his desire to rejoin the 2015 Iran nuclear deal raises questions about the motives.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/opinion/iran-kidnap-execute-dissidents.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>



# Two Saudi female scientists win awards from L'Oreal UNESCO

Saudi women are earning global recognition for their achievements in medical science and research. Two of them recently won awards from the L'Oreal-UNESCO for Women in Science Middle East Regional Young Talents Program for their work. One of the women, Asrar Damdam, 27, was honored in the Ph.D. students' category for her role in the development of a pump meant to revolutionize the way a healthy heartbeat is regulated — combining medicine, electrical engineering and electro-physics. “There are some diseases and heart-related behavioral activities, like heart failure, that can happen suddenly, and researchers are developing new solutions to this problem,” Damdam told Arab News. “We were investigating the possibility of building a soft-sleeve device with a built-in actuator to support the heart muscle and aid the pumping functionality.” The project was not without its challenges. The only platform available on the market was rectangular, which did not conform to the heart's natural shape. When Damdam began her research, she turned to nature's geometries for inspiration, from spirals to spiderwebs, before settling on the honeycomb. “The beehive structure, which is an array of honeycombs, is the nearest to the heart shape,” she said. “Building a flexible and stretchable array of honeycombs was a very interesting idea to me, although it included lots of challenges. I liked it and presented it to my professor, who liked it too and approved it.” Damdam then had to consider materials. Silicon was her first choice, owing to its favorable electrical properties, its abundance and cheapness. However, with her initial design, it was found to be too delicate. After graduating from the King Abdullah

University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in August 2018, it took Damdam a year to make her breakthrough, following countless experiments at a highly sophisticated nano-facility. “The structure must withstand the heart's expansion and contraction behavior without breakage,” she said. “To overcome the silicon fragility issue, I used the regular honeycomb shape with serpentine sides. I designed the platform with a serpentine-shaped interconnect to form the sides of every honeycomb cell and also to connect the cells with circular islands, which are located in the middle of each cell, to be used as a host for electronic components,” she said. “The serpentine interconnects introduced the stretchability feature, so when the heart expands, the platform doesn't break”. Damdam says all bio-compatible devices must be flexible so that they can adapt to the natural movement of the body and skin. “To achieve this, I made it very thin — around 15 micrometres,” or 0.015 millimeters. Although her project marks only the first step, aimed at proving the viability of the concept, its reconfigurability means the wider scientific community can build on the idea and explore the tremendous technological possibilities it opens up. “The successful demonstration of the reconfigurability concept using silicon also enables a lot of applications in bio-medical electronics,” she said. “This was my main motivation. If this research is improved, then it can really help in the early detection of cardiovascular diseases, in multi-sensory platforms and in the development of artificial hearts for transplantation.”

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1790446/saudi-arabia>

# Why China invested more in US?

## Debt is over \$5 trillion



Japanese save a lot. They do not spend much. Also, Japan exports far more than it imports. Has an annual trade surplus of over 100 billion. Yet Japanese economy is considered weak, even collapsing. Americans spend, save little. Also US imports more than it exports. Has an annual trade deficit of over \$400 billion. Yet, the American economy is considered strong and trusted to get stronger. But where do Americans get money to spend? They borrow from Japan, China and even India. Virtually others save for the Americans to spend. Global savings are mostly invested in US, in dollars. India itself keeps its foreign currency assets of over \$50 billion in US securities. China has sunk over \$160 billion in US securities. Japan's stakes in US securities is in trillions.

Result:

The US has taken over \$5 trillion from the world. So, as the world saves for the US - It's The Americans who spend freely. Today, to keep the US consumption going, that is for the US economy to work, other countries have to remit \$180 billion every quarter, which is \$2 billion a day, to the US! A Chinese economist asked a neat question. Who has invested more, US in China, or China in US? The US has invested in China less than half of what China has invested in US. The same is the case with India. It have invested in US over \$50 billion. But the US has invested less than \$20 billion in India.

Why the world is after US?

The secret lies in the American spending, that they hardly save. In fact they use their credit cards to spend their future income. That the US spends is what makes it attractive to export to the US. So US imports more than what it exports year after year.

The result:

The world is dependent on US consumption for its growth. By its deepening culture of consumption, the US has habituated the world to feed on US consumption. But as the US needs money to finance its consumption, the world provides the money. It's like a shopkeeper providing the money to a customer so that the customer keeps buying from the shop. If the customer will not buy, the shop won't have business, unless the shopkeeper funds him. The US is like the lucky customer. And the world is like the helpless shopkeeper financier. Who is America's biggest shopkeeper financier? Japan of course. Yet it's Japan which is regarded as weak. Modern economists complain that Japanese do not spend, so they do not grow. To force the Japanese to spend, the Japanese government exerted itself, reduced the savings rates, even charged the savers. Even then the Japanese did not spend (habits don't change, even with taxes, do they?). Their traditional postal savings alone is over \$1.2 trillion. Thus, savings, far from being the strength of Japan, has become its pain. Hence, what is the lesson?

That is, a nation cannot grow unless the people spend, not save. Not just spend, but borrow and spend. Dr. Jagdish Bhagwati, the famous Indian-born economist in the US, told Manmohan Singh that Indians wastefully save. Ask them to spend, on imported cars and, seriously, even on cosmetics! This will put India on a growth curve. This is one of the reason for MNC's coming down to India, seeing the consumer spending. 'Saving is sin, and spending is virtue.' But before you follow this Neo Economics, get some fools to save so that you can borrow from them and spend !!!

The world is in a economical mess - interest-



ing read Interesting article written by an Indian Economist about world economy. Amazing logic indeed. This is a crazy world! How valid is it? I leave it to you! Japanese save a lot. They do not spend much. Also, Japan exports far more than it imports. Has an annual trade surplus of over 100 billion. Yet Japanese economy is considered weak, even collapsing.

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The world is in a economical mess - interesting read

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