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Issue : March, 2020

Price : UK Pound 2, per copy

Annual Subscription : 24 UK Pound

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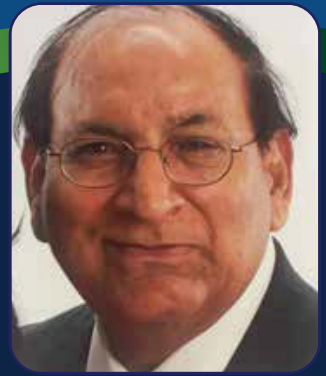
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Editorial

By: Zakaria Virk - Editor



Trials and tragedies in the lives of Abraham Lincoln and Joe Biden

There are few similarities in the lives of America's 16th President Abraham Lincoln (1809-65) and 46th President Joseph Biden (November 1942).

The trials, tragedies, and disappointments Lincoln faced in his life are gut wrenching. He was born in a log cabin to a very poor family. When he was 9 his mother Nancy passed away. When he was 19 his sister Sara passed away during child birth. When he was 26 he fell in love with a girl Ann, but she died due to typhoid fever. Lincoln was self-educated and became a lawyer. In 1862 he got married to Mary Todd who gave birth to four boys. First son Robert was born in 1863 and died in 1926 at age 82. He was an astute lawyer, businessman and politician. Edward was born in 1856 and died in 1860 at age 4. Willie was born in 1850 and died 1862 in the White House at age 12. The youngest Thomas was born in 1853 and died at age 18 in July 1871.

In March 1832 Lincoln lost his first election. Two years later he was successful and remained a four term member of state legislature. In 1843 he lost his election for Congress. In 1846 he succeeded and was Congressman from 1847-49. In 1860 he won the election and became US President. In 1864 he won again but was assassinated in 1865 in Ford Theatre while watching a play.

Joseph Biden's best personal trait is empathy

(the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person). A quality President Trump is accused of utterly lacking. Suffering is something Biden has been no stranger. In November 1972 he was elected youngest senator at age 30, A month later in December when he was setting up his office in Washington he was told his wife Neilia and one year old Naomi while out for Christmas shopping died when their vehicle was hit by a truck. Two little boys 4 year old Beau and 2 year old Hunter were admitted to hospital with serious injuries.

Biden, a devout Catholic keeps counting the beads on his rosary, has always been very religious. After the accident he used to wonder why he has been punished like this. He used travel three hours daily from Washington to Delaware to look after his children. He was known as Amtrack Biden. At times he was very depressed and thought of jumping out of the train. But then he would remember his two little adorable boys.

Biden was proud of his son Beau who was then Attorney General of Delaware. He was awarded Bronze Medal for serving in Iraq. On his return he was diagnosed with brain cancer, for some time it was remission but Beau died on May 3, 2015.

A brief look at the lives of Lincoln and Biden, shows how tragedies made them strong.



The academic rankings racket in Pakistan universities

By: Prof Pervez Hoodbhoy

OVER half a dozen international “well-reputed” universities ranking organizations annually publish their ratings. They tell you which university or department is better than which other, both within a country as well as between countries. Feel free to swallow their poisonous bait but do so at your own risk. These cunning ones easily take simpletons for a ride. At best, you will get questionable stuff. More likely, it will be meaningless nonsense or a fat bunch of lies.

An example: from the website of Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities — which ranks thousands of universities globally — the department of mechanical engineering at Quaid-e-Azam University was rated 76-100 in 2017. This placed it just below Tokyo University and just above Manchester University. Wow! Thereafter every year QAU improved its score and in 2020 it jumped into the 51-75 range putting it under McGill University but higher than Oxford University. The reader can google this and may discover other such gems too.

Better than Oxford? Having taught at QAU for the greater part of my life, I could jump for joy. But let the truth be told: QAU does not have a mechanical engineering department! In fact, it does not offer engineering of any kind and none is planned. A clerical mistake might explain a one-off report. But what software generated the precise numbers charting QAU’s progress year after year?

Laugh if you want but not too loudly. Save some breath for Times Higher Education Which declared Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan as Pakistan’s top university? Unknown for research or teaching, AWKUM is top-most for violent intolerance. In April



2017 a 23-year-old AWKUM student, Mashal Khan, was accused of blasphemy then beaten with sticks and bricks before finally being shot to death. Hundreds of students cheered as he was dragged naked across the campus. They video-recorded the murder with smart-phones, then posted it onto their FB pages.

A week later, yet another university ranking organization called QS put NuSt (Islamabad) at Pakistan’s number one and drove AWKUM off the scene. Such fatuous fabrications are galore. These commercial organizations never send inspectors to the thousands of overseas universities they rank. Instead, they simply email forms to university officials who fill them at will. The ranking criteria are adjusted to benefit the client. Everyone (except the student) makes a fast buck.

Across the world, ranking organizations have been exposed as inconsistent, changing metrics from year to year, and omitting critical pieces of information. Crooked university professors have also learned to game the system. This speeds up their promotions and brings in cash. In countries with strong

academic ethics, success is partial. But in Pakistan, where academic honesty has been in free fall since 2002, it has worked better and better.

Consider: three weeks ago, newspaper headlines across Pakistan blazed with soul-lifting news. Eighty-one Pakistani scientists had been chosen from 159,683 scientists in universities across the world, ranked by their number of research publications and how often they were cited. Stanford University reportedly declared these 81 luminaries in the world's top two per cent of scientists.

That's a total lie! Stanford University has not sanctioned any such report. This doctored news wrongly draws upon the enormous prestige of Stanford. Only one of the four authors, John P.A. Ioannidis, has a Stanford affiliation. He is a professor of medical statistics while the other three authors are from the private sector. Their published work inputs numbers from an existing database into a computer that crunches them into a list.

That list is meaningless for Pakistan. It does not represent scientific acumen or achievement. Here's why: generating scientific research papers without knowing any science or doing actual research has been honed into a fine art by academic crooks at home and abroad. At the second stage, the stuff produced has to be published, for which clever professors have developed 99 tricks. The third — and most difficult stage — is to generate citations after the paper is published. At this point, the crooked professor relies upon crooked friends to cite him and boost his ratings. Those friends have their friends in India, China, South Africa, or elsewhere. This international web of connections is known as a citation cartel. Cartel members generate reams of scientific gibberish that the world of mainstream science pays no heed to. But in Pakistan the rewards are handsome — you sohhon become chairman, dean, vice-chancel-

lor, or influence peddler. These gatekeepers shunt out all genuine academics lest they be challenged from below.

Knowing a few individuals who made it to the exalted 'Stanford scientist list', I would be surprised if they could pass a tough high-school-level exam for entering undergraduate studies in a decent university like Stanford. Others I cannot judge: some could certainly be genuine. But for one scientist to judge across fields has become harder in the age of super specialization. So how to tell?

Given what few genuine academics Pakistan has, no satisfactory answer exists. One can expect nothing from the present gatekeepers of academia because fraud is a way of life for most. To spot even 100 genuine academics from among thousands is hard. Pakistan's university system may well have crossed the point of no return and be beyond repair. But suppose one refuses to accept this pessimistic conclusion. How to separate the wheat from the chaff?

Simple: every university and HEC must demand that any professor claiming credit for a scientific paper must present that work before an informed audience and be appropriately questioned. Credible foreign specialists should be included. Technology allows this to be done remotely (Zoom, Skype, Webex, etc) and to preserve videos for later viewing. Each presentation must explain what that paper has contributed to knowledge production.

This has many pitfalls. Transparency is not a magic wand. Still, it will whittle down the so-called Stanford list by 80pc to 100pc. Self-congratulations, and official policies that encourage academic dishonesty, have inflicted massive damage upon Pakistan's higher education system. Without extreme measures, the rot will continue forever. We must begin now.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1595282>

Abdus Salam: The Muslim Science Genius Forgotten by History



(Dr Salam was born 94 years ago January 29, 1926)

In 1979, Pakistani scientist Abdus Salam won the Nobel Prize for physics. His life's work was key to defining a theory of particle physics still used today, and it laid the groundwork for the 2012 discovery of the Higgs boson – the particle responsible for giving all other particles mass.

Salam was the first Pakistani to win a Nobel, and his victory should have been a historic moment for the country. But instead, 40 years on, his story has largely been forgotten by the country in which he was born – in part because of the religious identity he held so dear. Now a new documentary on Netflix, *Salam, The First* ***** Nobel Laureate, is seeking to bring Salam and his achievements back into the spotlight.

"Salam was the first Muslim to win a Nobel science prize," Zakir Thaver, one of the film's producers, tells BBC Culture. "[He] was so committed to his roots and bettering the plight of his people that he wore a turban in

Stockholm to receive the prize from the King of Sweden." During his speech at the Nobel Banquet, Salam quoted the Koran.

The film portrays Salam's unwavering dedication, in the face of testing circumstances, to three things: his physics, his faith

and his nationality.

Salam stood out right from the moment he was born in 1926 in the city of Jhang, then part of British India. His father, a teacher, believed Salam's birth was the result of a vision from God he had received during Friday prayers, and so growing up, Salam was treated as a superior being to his siblings – made exempt from household chores like milking the cow and emptying the toilet area, and afforded time to work on his astounding skills in mathematics. Yet his childhood was not a particularly luxurious one. When he left his city to attend Government College University in Lahore, it was the first time he had seen an electric light.

There, Salam's skills in mathematics and physics set him apart from his classmates. He won a scholarship to attend Cambridge University, where he became one of the few South Asian faces at the time in St John's College. But the pull of home was strong: after completing a doctorate at Cambridge, he then moved to Lahore to work as a Professor

of Mathematics.

Reconciling science and religion

Throughout his life, Salam was a dedicated Muslim. He listened to the Koran on repeat while he worked in his office in his London home. He never saw his religion as a barrier to his science. In fact, he saw them working together, and claimed to colleagues that many of his ideas came to him from God. He was striving for a unified theory that would explain all of particle physics, which was in line with his religious beliefs. “We [theoretical physicists] would like to understand the entire complexity of inanimate matter in terms of as few fundamental concepts as possible,” he once said. But he accepted that there were areas of science that did not fit easily with his beliefs – like the Big Bang theory.

While his faith was deeply important to him, it was also a source of great pain, thanks to the way in which his particular sect of Islam, the Ahmadiyya Muslims, has been treated in Pakistan. The Ahmadiyya movement was formed in 1889 in Punjab, in British India. Ahmadi Muslims believe their founder, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, to be the expected Mahdi and Messiah. However other Muslims do not agree, and instead they believe they are still waiting for him. “The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a law-abiding, loving community,” says Adeel Shah, an Ahmadi Imam based in London. “However, it has been subject to various forms of persecution and discrimination especially in Pakistan.”

In 1953, the trouble really began for the Ahmadiyya Muslim community with a series of violent riots in Lahore against the movement. The Punjab government inquiry found the official death toll from these riots to be 20 people, but other estimates put it much higher, some in the thousands. A law passed in 1974 declared Ahmadis to be non-Mus-

lims, and deprived them of their rights. As recently as 2010, two Ahmadi mosques in Pakistan were attacked, with 94 people killed and more than 120 injured.

The first Muslim to win the Nobel Prize in science had the very word ‘Muslim’ whitened out from his gravestone – Zakir Thaver

“Even now, if an Ahmadi Muslim was to use an Islamic salutation [in Pakistan] he or she could be imprisoned for three years and this would be considered lawful,” says Shah. “Ahmadi Mosques are damaged, Ahmadi graves are desecrated, Ahmadi shops are looted and most of the time, the state turns a blind eye to what is happening.”

After the riots in 1953, Salam decided to leave Pakistan. He returned to Cambridge for a few years, before moving to Imperial College, London, where he helped set up the theoretical physics department. Despite the rejection from his home country he had suffered, he did not let Pakistan go, continuing to be involved in the country’s most prominent scientific projects. In 1961 he established Pakistan’s space programme while during the early 1970s, Salam was, controversially, involved in Pakistan’s efforts to build a nuclear weapon. But after the Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto passed the law against the Ahmadiyya Muslims in 1974, Salam’s involvement with the country’s administration finally diminished. He went on to be outspoken against nuclear weapons.

In 1979, just five years after the law had been passed in Pakistan declaring him non-Muslim, Abdus Salam became the first Pakistani to win a Nobel Prize. To the world, he was the first Muslim to win a Nobel Prize in Physics. But in the eyes of his own country, he was not.

On Salam’s gravestone, in the Pakistan town of Rabwah, he was described as the first

Muslim Nobel Laureate, until local authorities scrubbed out the word ‘Muslim’. Thaver says they decided to replicate this defacement in the title of their documentary “as therein lies the story as well as the irony, the tragedy,” says



Salam was the first Pakistani to win a Nobel Prize – here he is pictured at the ceremony in Stockholm (Credit: Getty Images)

Thaver. “The first Muslim to win the prize in science has the very word ‘Muslim’ whitened out. It’s the final affront to the most illustrious son of the soil.”

Unearthing a legend

Thaver says he and his co-producer Omar Vandal only learnt about Salam when, in the mid-’90s, they moved from Pakistan to the US to study at university. “We read Salam’s obituary in the New York Times. Back home his story had been buried.”

Reading more about Salam, the pair discovered his story was buried in part because of his religion. “We became aware of the amazing potential Salam’s story of humble beginnings had to inspire people to pursue science, and since have learnt of many who in fact have derived inspiration from his story,” says Thaver.

Salam’s contribution to physics was significant. He developed the theory of the neutrino, a subatomic particle first proposed by Pauli in 1930, and he worked on electroweak theory, for which he won the Nobel Prize.

Electroweak theory is fundamental to the Standard Model, which describes the smallest, most fundamental building blocks that make up all matter, called elementary parti-

cles, and how they interact through three different forces: electromagnetism, and what are known as weak and strong ‘interactions’. Salam worked on combining the theories of the electromagnetic and weak forces into one. Despite his persecution, Salam’s dedication to his country and the people of Pakistan did not waver. He was offered British and Italian citizenship, but remained a Pakistani citizen until he died. Imam Adeel, who was also born in Pakistan but moved to London because of discrimination, says this is because of the Ahmadi way of thinking. “Ahmadi Muslims, including myself, still hold great love for Pakistan and will always be at the forefront of serving their nation whenever it calls them,” he says.

Beyond supporting his country, meanwhile, he was also passionate about promoting scientists in the developing world. To that end, in 1964 he founded the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), in Trieste, Italy, specifically to provide a place for students from developing countries to connect with academics from around the world.

Salam was the first Pakistani to win a Nobel Prize – here he is pictured at the ceremony in Stockholm (Credit: Getty Images)

Piecing together the film detailing his life took Thaver and Vandal 14 years. “We were unknown, young, foolishly ambitious, aspiring filmmakers, and had set out to do something significant and hopefully historical,” he says.

The film features extensive archive footage, including of Salam, much of which has never been seen before. “It took a lot of time and effort to restore, catalogue and transcribe all our archives,” Thaver says. “We edited for almost two years.”

The pair filmed people who had never spoken on camera before, including Professor Salam’s secretary from the ICTP. “The family opened up their homes, so we could go through notebooks and hunt down old family pictures and video,” he says. “When you spend over a decade on a project, people want to be a part of your journey and help you out.”

Ahmad Salam, Salam’s eldest son, who appears in the film to talk about his father’s life, describes it as “a wonderful film made by two very dedicated, committed young men, who wanted to tell the unique story for the benefit of 200m fellow countrymen, most of whom have never heard of Abdus Salam,” he says.

Abdus Salam strived to make developing countries invest in education, science and technology – and that message is as relevant now as it was 50 years ago – Ahmad Salam

Footage in the film reveals a side of Salam never seen before. His old colleagues reveal the quirks of his research habits, explaining how he would come up with endless ideas – the majority of them eccentric but a vital few worthy of a Nobel Prize. His son Ahmad describes him as fiercely loyal. Once, he says, when Salam needed a suit tailored last-min-

ute, the shop he visited made special arrangements to have it ready for him in time. He continued to buy suits at that shop for the rest of his life.

However, Ahmad says, part of the story is missing. “It focuses on Pakistan, and sadly therefore it doesn’t have time to explain Abdus Salam’s passion and anger to help overcome the greed and arrogance of the developed countries towards the developing countries,” he says.

Since the idea for the film was born, the documentary has become more and more important, says Thaver.

“In the early days, we felt it was an important story to tell because of its power to inspire children back home and to educate about a Pakistani, Muslim Nobel Prize winner who was an unsung hero,” says Thaver. “Over the years the plight of religious minorities in Pakistan, as well as the sub-continent at large, has worsened, and that’s given greater present-day significance and relevance to the story.” On top of this, he says, rising Islamophobia in the West makes Salam’s story even more relevant by celebrating Muslim achievement, particularly in science, where the Islamic world’s contribution has been underappreciated.

“Inequality in every sense is higher now than ever in history,” says Ahmad. “Abdus Salam strived to make developing countries invest in education, science and technology to help their economic prospects, whereby they would grow faster and more sustainably with the support of the developed countries. That message is as relevant now as it was 50 years ago.”

Salam: The First ***** Nobel Laureate is available on Netflix now.

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191014-ab->

[dus-salam-the-muslim-science-genius-forgotten-by-history](https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20191014-ab-dus-salam-the-muslim-science-genius-forgotten-by-history)

Pakistan's Blasphemy Law is Used to Target the Christian Community with Impunity

By Khalid Ahmed



Pakistan's most humiliating moment is reached every time someone is accused of blasphemy and sentenced to death. Proof is not needed; the court is just too scared to let the accused go, as happened in the case of Junaid Hafeez, a "visiting" faculty member at the English department of Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan, who was sentenced to death by a court in Multan in 2019 after being arrested in 2013. He was a Fulbright scholar with a Master's from Jackson State University. It is easy to convict people for blasphemy because the law says an insult to the Prophet PBUH can take place even by innuendo.

Then, there are the clerics who can scare any judge if they think he is getting soft because of lack of evidence. One such "blasphemy" priest, Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi, died a natural death? recently after getting many innocent people in trouble over "rumours" of blasphemy. His fiery sermons caused police-guard Mumtaz Qadri to pump 27 bullets into Governor of Punjab Salmaan Taseer in 2011 for supporting a Christian woman accused of blasphemy.

Amnesty International in September

appealed to Pakistani authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Hafeez. "Junaid's lengthy trial has gravely affected his mental and physical health, endangered him and his family, and exemplifies the misuse of Pakistan's blasphemy laws," Amnesty International's regional researcher, Rabia Mehmood, stated.

Junaid's father tried to find a lawyer who would tell the scared judge why his son should be let off. He had to confess: "I found a lawyer willing to take the case but, on his first day, he was harassed by some 200 lawyers." He still thought the judge would be fearless. "The prosecution, the witnesses and trial could not prove any of the allegations," said the lawyer.

Before India's "love jihad", Pakistan found its way to getting rid of its Christians. Blasphemy was pinned on them with the confidence that no judge would let them off the hook, with pious crowds demanding death outside his court.

In August 2009, after a week of simmering Muslim-Christian dispute over the desecration of the Holy Quran in tehsil Gojra in Toba Tek Singh district in Punjab, violence broke out. As usual, a "banned organization", Sipah-e-Sahaba, came from outside town, took over and used acid and petrol bombs to destroy property and kill women and children, while the local government and police stood aside. The federal government took only "serious note".

Christians are the largest religious minority in Pakistan. The total number of Christians in Pakistan was at least 2 million in 2008 or 1.1 per cent of the population. An examination of birth records yields a total number of Chris-

tians at 2.8 million. More than 90 per cent of the country's Christians reside in Punjab. And 60 per cent live in villages, and in most cases are more indigenous to their areas than Muslims.

Blasphemy and desecration of the Quran are used against them, but the latter is used against them collectively, followed by organized destruction of property. In 1997, the twin villages of Shantinagar-Tibba Colony, 12 km east of Khanewal, Multan Division, were looted and burnt by 20,000 Muslim citizens and 500 policemen acting together after an incident of desecration of the Quran was reported. The police first evacuated the Christian population of 15,000, then helped the raiders use explosives to blow up their houses and property. Sipah-e-Sahaba was blamed by the Christians for the violence.

In 2005, the Christian community of Sangla Hill in Nankana district in Punjab experienced a most hair-raising day of violence. After allegations of desecration of the Quran, a mob of 3,000 led by a local politician and the police burnt down three churches, a missionary-run school, two hostels and several houses belonging to Christians. Lahore's archbishop stated that the attackers had been brought there by buses from outside.

The great champion of the blasphemy law, Allama Khadim Husain Rizvi, would lead "life-sacrificing" followers to Islamabad and block all roads going to the capital city and condemn the government, harshly using the word *dalla* (pimp) for politicians. When coronaries finally took him in Lahore, there were more than a million "devotees" at his funeral.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/pakistan-blasphemy-laws-christians-7110471/>

Germany: Police handcuff Muslim woman for not wearing mask

Police in a Western German city handcuffed a woman in a Muslim headscarf in front of her toddler and put her on the ground for not wearing a mask, as seen in video that recently went viral. According to the video taken by eyewitnesses in the city of Wuppertal, there were seven police officers outside of the building the woman left after visiting the dentist. The video shows two police officers handcuffing the woman in front of her toddler, putting her on the ground, and pressing on her body while she screams for help.

When police tried to stop bystanders from filming, one said: "You have no right to stop me from shooting this video. The phone is mine. I can give my lawyer's number."

Police leave amid backlash

The video also shows a staffer from the dentist's office seeing the scene while leaving the office, saying that what the police are doing is a crime. As bystanders in the video make their opposition to the scene clear, the police remove the woman's handcuffs and release her and leave as if nothing happened.

German convert to Islam

According to information obtained by Anadolu Agency, the woman seen handcuffed in the video was born in Germany and converted to Islam. The woman, evidently shocked by the incident, is reportedly set to file a criminal complaint against the police.

*Writing by Büşra Nur Bilgic Cakmak

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/germany-police-cuff-muslim-woman-for-not-wearing-mask/2087838>

Second class citizenship in a theocratic state

By: Yasser Latif Hamdani



The biggest lie that we often tell ourselves is that religious minorities are equal citizens of this country. There is not even a pretense of equality beyond a single line in the Constitution's Article 25(1) more conspicuous by how much it is flouted than its implementation.

Our leaders say that minorities are better treated in Pakistan than in India. This is a joke that no one in the world is ready to buy. Then our leaders have the gall to refer to Jinnah's 11 August speech, which spoke of religious identity becoming immaterial and an end to the classifications of majority and minority i.e. "Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims ... as citizens of one state" and referring to the poignant period in British history that was marred by the Protestant and Roman Catholic conflict." Time and again Mr. Jinnah told people that Pakistan shall not be a theocratic state. Yet that is precisely what we are under this current constitution.

This constitution, which belongs to 1500s if not earlier, differentiates on the basis of religion. One has written enough times to repeat here. It seeps down to everyday life. For example every religious minority in Pakistan does not merely need to list his or her religion on the NIC application form but also give a negative declaration i.e. he or she is not a Muslim. On the face of it you might say that this splitting hair. However the matter is not merely psychological.

It means that Muslims are somehow the natural real citizens and proprietors of this country and Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Hindus and so on and so forth are merely squatters. This is kind of akin to Andrew Jackson's policy with regard to Cherokee Indians. Just like the

Cherokee Indians, Hindus and religious minorities have lived here for millennia.

Yet they are being treated like strangers in their own home. The only other example of this kind of plight is that of the Palestinians in Israel. It is not surprising that both states are theocratic in nature, though Israel less than Pakistan.

The only thing minorities can do is to look to international bodies like the UN to enforce the treaties and declarations Pakistan is bound by. Pakistan is a powder keg, which can blow up at any time and does so routinely. Even the so called educated ones are not exempt from it. For example in a WhatsApp group of highly educated legal professionals, I ventured forth the opinion that the now departed Khadim Hussain Rizvi was a foul-mouthed cleric, which no reasonable person can disagree with. I was chided and almost accused of blasphemy. So it is not just the religious minorities who are second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh class citizens (depending on which minority you are) but even us in the majority.

Apparently having a dim view of Khadim Rizvi is akin to outraging the feelings of the overwhelming majority in Pakistan. So we are all second class citizens if we don't fall on the right side of the hybrid military theocracy i.e. the Military Mullah Alliance. Give the devil his due, General Musharraf tried to break this alliance and end the theocracy but even he, supposedly an absolute dictator, was unable to do so. He was thwarted by the likes of Shujaat Hussain and others. There were other players involved but this is not the time to get into that. The hold of religious extremism is so severe that even the military, the progenitors of this extremism, cannot roll it

back. As for the religious minorities there is absolutely no hope. They can try and string together a political alliance or a political party i.e. minorities' league or congress or some such. However what good would that do? When the constitution is at the base theocratic, there is no chance of progress from within. The only thing minorities can do is to look to international bodies like the UN to enforce the treaties and declarations Pakistan is bound by. However Pakistan is notorious when it comes to flouting international covenants. To begin with Pakistan puts in so many reservations on the treaty clauses that entire treaty becomes useless. In the international law circles Pakistan is a joke and a pariah state. When Pakistan gets elected to UN's Human Rights Council, it is seen as a joke and an example of how countries that trample human rights can become members of the UN Human Rights Council.

In the long run it will only hurt Pakistan. The posterity, especially that in the distant future will look back and laugh. If you listen hard enough you can hear it even now across space time continuum. Others will wonder how it was possible that such a medieval state could exist in 21st Century.

A future Shakespeare like playwright will write a tragedy called "Jinnah's blunder" with Jinnah as a tragic hero who in the last act would cry out "Pakistan was the biggest blunder of my life". A strangely apt ending given that Jinnah was a thespian himself versed in Shakespeare. Pakistan will likely remain on the wrong side of history and each government after the other would be worse till Pakistan will become a Kafkaesque dystopia. There would be no first class citizens, only multitudes of poor hapless and fearful masses who will cannibalize each other. Such will be the fate of the theocracy we call Pakistan. The luckier ones would have escaped it by then.

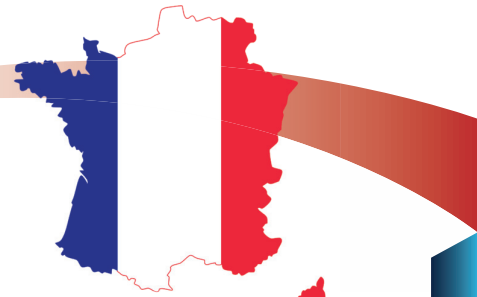
<https://dailytimes.com.pk/698447/second-class-citizenship-in-a-theocratic-state/>

Zainab Jameel quits showbiz reverts to Islam

Pakistani actress, model and host Zainab Jameel has quit showbiz to learn more about the teaching of Islam. The 31-year-old charming actress, who was famous in Pakistan's drama industry, broke the news on her official Instagram account. She said, "I am proud to announce that I have quit acting and modeling. I will now live my life according to Islamic teaching and get more knowledge about the religion of Islam. Allah has chosen me to become a student of the Quran and Hadith and learn more about our religion," she added. Zainab worked in many Pakistani dramas like "Susral Meri Bahen Ka" and "Manchali." She got popular after she co-hosted the highly acclaimed TV show "Khabarnaak." She also worked in a feature film "Jawani Phir Nahi Aani." Some of her fans appeared heartbroken as they shared their feelings about missing her work. She also thanked her fans and said, "I'm overwhelmed with emotion after the response you people have shown. I can't explain in words how thankful I am after reading your messages. The love and support from you mean a lot. Need prayers to keep following this path." Zainab joins the list of many Pakistani celebrities who have left showbiz for Islam, including singer Junaid Jamshed, singer and actor Rabi Pirzada, actor Ali Afzal, actor and host Noor Bukhari, singer Shazia Khuskh, actor Urooj Nasir and famous TV star Ajab Gul.

<https://www.gulftoday.ae/culture/2020/12/08/pakistani-actress-zainab-jameel-quits-showbiz-for-islam>

France cracks down on 76 mosques suspected of 'separatism'



France's interior minister has announced a crackdown on 76 mosques that the government suspects of "separatism" and encouraging extremism. Gérald Darmanin said the mosques would be inspected and any found to be "breeding grounds of terrorism" would be shut. The move is part of the French government's ongoing campaign to combat Islamist extremism after a series of terrorist attacks – including the recent beheading of a teacher and the killing of three people in a church in Nice – but has led to accusations it is unjustly targeting the wider Muslim community. The president, Emmanuel Macron, has strenuously denied that new legislation to reinforce secularism that he outlined at the beginning of October was targeting Muslims. He said the law, under which France would train imams and impose a wider ban on home schooling and controls on religious, sporting and cultural associations, was aimed at tackling radical "Islamist separatism".

Opponents say the government is pandering to the country's far right, and the law has prompted angry protests in Muslim countries and from commentators in Britain and the US who have accused the French authorities of intolerance.

On Wednesday Darmanin, who raised hackles by questioning why supermarkets had separate halal and kosher food aisles, said the swoop on the mosques was "a massive and unprecedented action against separatism".

"In the coming days, these places of worship suspected of separatism will be inspected. Those that should be closed, will be," he said. According to an interior ministry document leaked to Le Figaro newspaper, the 76 targeted mosques include 18 of particular concern, eight of which are in the greater

Paris area. Two of these, in the Seine-Saint-Denis banlieue, home to a large number of France's north African community, have already been ordered to close and a third has been flagged up by the country's security commission. "Until now, the state has focused on radicalisation and terrorism. Now we're also going to attack the breeding grounds of terrorism, where people create the intellectual and cultural space for secession and imposing their values," Darmanin told Le Figaro. France has the largest Muslim population in western Europe. It is illegal in France to draw up statistics based on race or religion, but the Islamic community is estimated to number about 6 million people. Darmanin officially announced the dissolving of the high-profile Muslim organisation the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), which the government accuses of spreading Islamist propaganda. The CCIF accused the minister of having "given in to the calls of the far right". In October, after a Chechen terrorist beheaded the schoolteacher Samuel Paty, who had shown controversial caricatures from the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo to a class of pupils, Darmanin ordered the closing of a mosque in Pantin, north-east of Paris, for six months, accusing it of whipping up a campaign against the teacher. At the time, William Bourdon, a lawyer who lodged an unsuccessful challenge to the closure order, said shutting the mosque was "a very serious error" that risked "marginalising thousands and thousands of worshippers".

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020-dec/03/france-crack-down-76-mosques-suspected-separatism>

UNGA adopts Pak-sponsored resolution calling for respecting sacred religious symbols



UNITED NATIONS: Despite vehement opposition from the European Union and other

western nations as well as India, the UN General Assembly on Wednesday adopted a Pakistan-Philippines sponsored resolution on promoting inter-religious and intercultural

dialogue that underscored the need for respecting sacred religious symbols.

The resolution received a majority of 90 votes, none against, with 52 abstentions.

This year, the sponsors amended the resolution to reflect new trends, such as the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, the rise in religious intolerance, xenophobia, hate speech and the upsurge in denigration of religious symbols.

Facing strong opposition from the powerful western bloc mainly based on freedom of expression, the Pakistan Mission worked hard to rally the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other developing countries to garner support for inclusion of new elements in the resolution....

Introducing the draft, Pakistan's Ambassador Munir Akram referred to Prime Minister Imran Khan's repeated calls to the international community and the United Nations to counter Islamophobia and promote respect

for religious sensitivities. In his address to the 75th session of the General Assembly, the

prime minister had highlighted the incidents of Islamophobia and other provocations. He also called on the United Nations to declare an "International Day to Combat

Islamophobia".

Ambassador Akram also emphasized on the deliberate "vilification and negative stereotyping of adherents of one of the largest religions in the world – Islam – only perpetuates dangerous self-fulfilling prophecies such as the 'clash of civilizations', and must be addressed on an urgent basis"....

After some intensive lobbying, the resolution acknowledges — for the first time — the significance and respect for religious symbols.

In this regard, it also stressed that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities, and must therefore be subjected to legitimate restrictions.

The resolution further appreciates the recent "Call for Mutual Respect" issued by the High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations which stresses that insulting religions and sacred religious symbols provokes hatred



and violent extremism leading to polarization and fragmentation of society.

While reaffirming that violence can and should never be justifiable or acceptable response to acts of intolerance, the resolution underscores “that such violence should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.”...

The adoption of Wednesday’s resolution by the General Assembly is part of the concerted efforts led by Prime Minister Imran Khan, calling for universal prohibition on willful provocation and incitement to violence, according to the diplomatic sources.

It is also part of Pakistan’s diplomatic campaign to raise awareness about rising Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hatred, as well as defamation of sacred religious personalities and symbols.

Under other terms of the resolution, the assembly reaffirmed the solemn commitment of all states to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The resolution condemned any advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to violence or discrimination; and underlines the importance of inter-religious [sic] and intercultural dialogue as a valuable tool for promoting social cohesion, and peace and development in the world.

The assembly encouraged member states to consider, as and where appropriate, initiatives that identify areas for practical action in all sectors and levels of society for the promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance, understanding and cooperation.....

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2274482/unga-adopts-pak-sponsored-resolution-calling-for-respecting-sacred-religious-symbols>



Important Notice

We have been publishing monthly magazine namely... **Lahore International both English and Urdu, and Aabgeene a woman’s digest.** For the last many years through our own limited financial resources. We are grateful to our esteemed readers for their overwhelming response to the contents of above magazine. The main object of these periodicals is to create a better awareness and understanding among the different section of the society through educative, informative and reformative articles, essays and other write-ups. We also try to promote and foster Islamic culture and civilization through different articles. Apart from that we stand for true and unbiased journalism.

As our reader are well aware of the fact for publishing such magazine, the support of a organization or advertisement is needed. But unfortunately, we don’t have any these.

We, therefore, humbly request our valuable readers to lend their financial support to these magazines on monthly basis. Even a small amount will be of great help to us and it will be duly appreciated. All contributions may please be remitted to the following account:

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

May Allah be with you - Amen

Where I find Hope?

By Al Gore, former US vice-president



Al Gore at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015. Credit... Francois Mori/Associated Press

This weekend marks two anniversaries that, for me, point a way forward through the accumulated wreckage of the past year.

The first is personal. Twenty years ago, I ended my presidential campaign after the Supreme Court abruptly decided the 2000 election. As the incumbent vice president, my duty then turned to presiding over the tallying of Electoral College votes in Congress to elect my opponent. This process will unfold again on Dec. 14, 2020 as the college's electors ratify America's choice of Joe Biden as the next president, ending a long and fraught campaign and reaffirming the continuity of our democracy.

The second anniversary is universal and hopeful. This weekend also marks the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Paris

Agreement. One of President Trump's first orders of business nearly four years ago was to pull the United States out of the accord, signed by 194 other nations to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases threatening the planet. With Trump heading for the exit, President-elect Biden plans to rejoin the agreement on his Inauguration Day, Jan. 20. Now, with Mr. Biden about to take up residence in the White House, the United States has the chance to reclaim America's leadership position in the world after four years in the back seat.

Mr. Biden's challenges will be monumental. Most immediately, he assumes office in the midst of the chaos from the colossal failure to respond effectively to the coronavirus pandemic and the economic devastation that has

resulted.

And though the pandemic fills our field of vision at the moment, it is only the most urgent of the multiple crises facing the country and planet, including 40 years of economic stagnation for middle-income families; hyper-inequality of incomes and wealth, with high levels of poverty; horrific structural racism; toxic partisanship; the impending collapse of nuclear arms control agreements; an epistemological crisis undermining the authority of knowledge; recklessly unprincipled behavior by social media companies; and, most dangerous of all, the climate crisis. What lies before us is the opportunity to build a more just and equitable way of life for all humankind. This potential new beginning comes at a rare moment when it may be possible to break the stranglehold of the past over the future, when the trajectory of history might be altered by what we choose to do with a new vision.

With the coronavirus death toll rising rapidly, the battle against the pandemic is desperate, but it will be won. Yet we will still be in the midst of an even more life-threatening battle — to protect the Earth's climate balance — with consequences measured not only in months and years, but also in centuries and millennia. Winning will require us to re-establish our compact with nature and our place within the planet's ecological systems, for the sake not only of civilization's survival but also of the preservation of the rich web of biodiversity on which human life depends.

The daunting prospect of successfully confronting such large challenges at a time after bitter divisions were exposed and weaponized in the presidential campaign has caused many people to despair. Yet these problems, however profound, are all solvable.

Look at the pandemic. Despite the policy failures and human tragedies, at least one success now burns bright: Scientists have harnessed

incredible breakthroughs in biotechnology to produce several vaccines in record time. With medical trials demonstrating their safety and efficacy, these new vaccines prefigure an end to the pandemic in the new year. This triumph alone should put an end to the concerted challenges to facts and science that have threatened to undermine reason as the basis for decision-making.

Similarly, even as the climate crisis rapidly worsens, scientists, engineers and business leaders are making use of stunning advances in technology to end the world's dependence on fossil fuels far sooner than was hoped possible.

Mr. Biden will take office at a time when humankind faces the choice of life over death. Two years ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned of severe consequences — coastal inundations and worsening droughts, among other catastrophes — if greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced by 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050.

Slowing the rapid warming of the planet will require a unified global effort. Mr. Biden can lead by strengthening the country's commitment to reduce emissions under the Paris Agreement — something the country is poised to do thanks to the work of cities, states, businesses and investors, which have continued to make progress despite resistance from the Trump administration.

Solar energy is one example. The cost of solar panels has fallen 89 percent in the past decade, and the cost of wind turbines has dropped 59 percent. The International Energy Agency projects that 90 percent of all new electricity capacity worldwide in 2020 will be from clean energy — up from 80 percent in 2019, when total global investment in wind and solar was already more than three times as large as investments in gas and coal.

Over the next five years, the I.E.A. projects

that clean energy will constitute 95 percent of all new power generation globally. The agency recently called solar power “the new king” in global energy markets and “the cheapest source of electricity in history.”

As renewable energy costs continue to drop, many utilities are speeding up the retirement of existing fossil fuel plants well before their projected lifetimes expire and replacing them with solar and wind, plus batteries. In a study this summer, the Rocky Mountain Institute, the Carbon Tracker Initiative and the Sierra Club reported that clean energy is now cheaper than 79 percent of U.S. coal plants and 39 percent of coal plants in the rest of the world — a number projected to increase rapidly. Other analyses show that clean energy combined with batteries is already cheaper than most new natural gas plants.

As a former oil minister in Saudi Arabia put it 20 years ago, “the Stone Age came to an end, not because we had a lack of stones, and the oil age will come to an end not because we have a lack of oil.” Many global investors have reached the same conclusion and are beginning to shift capital away from climate-destroying businesses to sustainable solutions. The pressure is no longer coming from only a small group of pioneers, endowments, family foundations and church-based pension funds; some of the world’s largest investment firms are now joining this movement, too, having belatedly recognized that fossil fuels have been extremely poor investments for a long while. Thirty asset managers overseeing \$9 trillion announced on Friday an agreement to align their portfolios with net-zero emissions by 2050.

Exxon Mobil, long a major source of funding for grossly unethical climate denial propaganda, just wrote down the value of its fossil fuel reserves by as much as \$20 billion, adding to the unbelievable \$170 billion in oil and gas assets written down by the industry in

just the first half of this year. Last year, a BP executive said that some of the company’s reserves “won’t see the light of day,” and this summer it committed to a 10-fold increase in low-carbon investments this decade as part of its commitment to net-zero emissions.

The world has finally begun to cross a political tipping point, too. Grass-roots climate activists, often led by young people of Greta Thunberg’s generation, are marching every week now (even virtually during the pandemic). In the United States, this movement crosses party lines. More than 50 college conservative and Republican organizations have petitioned the Republican National Committee to change its position on climate, lest the party lose younger voters.

Significantly, in just the past three months, several of the world’s most important political leaders have introduced important initiatives. Thanks to the leadership of Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, the E.U. just announced that it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55 percent in the next nine years. President Xi Jinping has pledged that China will achieve net-zero carbon emissions in 2060. Leaders in Japan and South Korea said a few weeks ago said that their countries will reach net-zero emissions in 2050.

Denmark, the E.U.’s largest producer of gas and oil, has announced a ban on further exploration for fossil fuels. Britain has pledged a 68 percent reduction by 2030, along with a ban on sales of vehicles equipped with only gasoline-powered internal-combustion engines.

The cost of batteries for electric vehicles has dropped by 89 percent over the past decade, and according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, these vehicles will reach price parity with internal-combustion vehicles within two years in key segments of vehicle markets in the United States, Europe and Australia,

followed quickly by China and much of the rest of the world. Sales of internal-combustion passenger vehicles worldwide peaked in 2017.

It is in this new global context that President-elect Biden has made the decarbonization of the U.S. electricity grid by 2035 a centerpiece of his economic plan. Coupled with an accelerated conversion to electric vehicles and an end to government subsidies for fossil fuels, among other initiatives, these efforts can help put the nation on a path toward net-zero emissions by 2050.

As the United States moves forward, it must put frontline communities — often poor, Black, brown or Indigenous — at the center of the climate agenda. They have suffered disproportionate harm from climate pollution. This is reinforced by recent evidence that air pollution from the burning of fossil fuels — to which these communities bear outsize exposure — makes them more vulnerable to Covid-19.

With millions of new jobs needed to recover from the economic ravages of the pandemic, sustainable businesses are among the best bets. A recent study in the Oxford Review of Economic Policy noted that investments in those enterprises result in three times as many new jobs as investments in fossil fuels. Between 2014 and 2019, solar jobs grew five times as fast in the United States as average job growth.

Still, all of these positive developments fall far short of the emissions reductions required. The climate crisis is getting worse faster than we are deploying solutions.

In November of next year, all of the signatories to the Paris Agreement will meet in Glasgow with a mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions much faster than they pledged to do in 2015. What will be new in Glasgow is transparency: By the time the delegates arrive, a new monitoring effort made

possible by an array of advanced technologies will have precisely measured the emissions from every major source of greenhouse gases in the world, with most of that data updated every six hours.

With this radical transparency, a result of efforts of a broad coalition of corporations and nonprofits I helped to start called Climate Trace (for tracking real-time atmospheric carbon emissions), countries will have no place to hide when failing to meet their emissions commitments. This precision tracking will replace the erratic, self-reported and often inaccurate data on which past climate agreements were based.

Even then, a speedy phaseout of carbon pollution will require functional democracies. With the casting of a majority of the Electoral College votes on Monday for Mr. Biden, and then his inauguration, we will make a start in restoring America as the country best positioned to lead the world's struggle to solve the climate crisis.

To do that, we need to deal forthrightly with our shortcomings instead of touting our strengths. That, and that alone, can position the United States to recover the respect of other nations and restore their confidence in America as a reliable partner in the great challenges humankind faces. As in the pandemic, knowledge will be our salvation, but to succeed, we must learn to work together, lest we perish together.

Al Gore shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for his work to slow global warming.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/12/opinion/sunday/biden-climate-change-al-gore.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

Waldemar Haffkine:

The vaccine pioneer the world forgot



In the spring of 1894, Waldemar Haffkine travelled to Calcutta in the Indian state of Bengal in search of cholera. Spring was cholera season in the city, and Haffkine was hopeful. He had arrived in India the previous March armed with what he believed was a vaccine for the disease, but he struggled all year to make progress testing his creation. From the moment of his arrival, Haffkine was met with scepticism and resistance from some of the British medical establishment and the Indian public. He was not a doctor but a zoologist. And he was a Russian Jew who had trained in Odessa and developed his skills in Paris, at a time when the world of international bacteriology was factional and prone to suspicion.

Haffkine, who was 33 when he landed in

India, also struggled with the practical side of testing his vaccine. His first iteration required two injections, separated by a week, and his team sometimes struggled to locate test subjects for the second prick. And despite the wide spread of cholera in India, finding it in sufficient concentration wasn't straightforward.

Haffkine inoculated about 23,000 people that year in northern India, according to his own records, "but no cholera appeared in their midst to show whether the vaccine was of value or not".

Then in March 1894, Haffkine got a break. He was invited to Calcutta by the medical officer there to help identify cholera bacilli in a water tank in one of the city's bustees - isolated villages on the outskirts of the city

consisting of mud huts clustered around ponds or tanks and inhabited by the city's poor. The families living in these bustees drank collectively from the shared water sources, making them vulnerable to periodic outbreaks of cholera.

To Haffkine, the bustees were an ideal proving ground for his nascent vaccine. In each household, he had a group of people living in identical conditions, equally exposed to cholera. If he could inoculate some of each family and leave some untreated, with enough participants he might finally produce some meaningful results.

At the end of March, two people died of cholera in the Kattal Bagan bustee, signalling a new outbreak. Haffkine travelled to the bustee and inoculated 116 of the 200 or so inhabitants. Afterwards, his small team observed 10 further cases there, seven fatal - all among the uninoculated.

The results were encouraging enough for the Calcutta health officer to fund a wider trial, but convincing people to be vaccinated was easier said than done. Years of top-down medical programs by the British government had sowed distrust among the population, and to many the very concept of vaccination was still alien.

Haffkine's solution was to work with a team of Indian doctors and assistants, rather than the British - Drs Chowdry, Ghose, Chatterjee, and Dutt, among others. And he had a new trick up his sleeve in the world of vaccinology: publicly injecting himself to prove he thought his preparation was safe.

"What is remarkable, and is often lost in the story, is that after the initial resistance people began to queue in the slums in Calcutta for Haffkine's cholera vaccine, they queued for the whole day," said Professor Pratik Chakrabarti, the Chair in History of Science and Medicine at the University of Manchester. "He would spend hours and whole days in

those slums working with Indian doctors. He would start vaccinating in the morning before people went to work, and continue after they came back in the evenings, sitting by an oil lamp in the slum."

Haffkine's work in the Calcutta slums placed him among a select group of scientists who pioneered a profound and global shift in the way disease was understood and treated. But unlike Edward Jenner before him and Jonas Salk after, Haffkine's name never really entered the public imagination, either in India or in Europe.

"Haffkine was the first person who brought that kind of laboratory medicine into a tropical country like India," Prof Chakrabarti said. "He was a Paris scientist who came to the slums of Calcutta. He has a very dramatic story."

When Haffkine graduated in zoology from the University of Odessa in 1884, his reward was to be barred from taking up a professorship there because he was a Jew. He had already run into political trouble five years earlier, amid pogroms, when as a member of a local defence league he fought to stop Russian army cadets destroying a Jewish man's home. Haffkine was beaten and arrested but eventually released.

In 1888, Haffkine left his home country and found his way first to a short-lived teaching job in Geneva and then to Paris, where he took a position as an assistant librarian at the Louis Pasteur institute - then the world's leading centre of bacteriology research. In his free time from the library, Haffkine either played the violin or experimented in the bacteriology lab. Building on the work of Pasteur and Jenner, Haffkine discovered that by passing cholera bacilli through the peritoneal cavity of guinea pigs - 39 passes in total - he could produce a strengthened, or "exalted" cholera culture, which he could then attenuate using heat. An injection of the attenuated bacteria,

followed later by an injection of the exalted bacteria, appeared to immunize guinea pigs against a lethal attack of the disease.

Up until that point, diseases like cholera had been thought of in miasmatic terms - that they travelled in bad air - and tackled with what Prof Chakrabarti called "broad spectrum treatments". ("You put someone in a bath and steam them until they are half dead, or spray carbolic acid everywhere.") But the work of Haffkine and others was giving disease management a focal point - a virus or bacterium that could be cultivated and attenuated, targeted precisely in the body.

A week after his success with guinea pigs in Paris, Haffkine replicated the results with rabbits and then pigeons. He was ready for a human.

On 18 July 1892, Haffkine risked his life by injecting himself with attenuated cholera. He suffered a fever for several days but recovered fully, and went on to inoculate three Russian friends and then several other volunteers. When each suffered no worse reaction, Haffkine was convinced he had a viable vaccine for wider testing.

But he needed somewhere rife with cholera to conduct large human trials. In 1893, Lord Frederick Dufferin, then the British ambassador in Paris and a former Viceroy of India, heard of Haffkine's situation and suggested he go to Bengal.

After Haffkine's experiments in the bustees of Calcutta the following year yielded promising results, he was invited by the owners of tea plantations in Assam to vaccinate their workers. Haffkine conducted large scale trials there on thousands of plantation coolies, but in the autumn of 1895 he contracted malaria and was forced to return to England to recuperate. According to his records, he had by that point inoculated nearly 42,000 people against cholera.

Haffkine noted later that while his vaccine

appeared to reduce cases, it did not appear to reduce mortality in those who were infected. When he returned to India in 1896, he planned to address this deficiency by testing a new two-pronged formula he had developed. But there was a more pressing problem in Bombay that would take Haffkine away from cholera for good.

The world's third plague pandemic began in Yunnan, China in 1894. It spread down to British Hong Kong and from there by merchant ship to the bustling coastal metropolis of Bombay in what was then British India, where the first case was discovered in September 1896 at a grain merchant's quarters at the city's docks.

At first, the British government underplayed the severity of the outbreak, keen to keep a key port city open for business. But the disease tore through Bombay's tightly-packed slums - its mortality rate nearly twice that of cholera - and the number of dead soared. The governor turned to Haffkine for help. Haffkine travelled to Bombay, where he was set up in one small room and a corridor, with one clerk and three untrained assistants, and tasked with coming up with the world's first plague vaccine from scratch.

"He didn't have a lot in terms of space, manpower or facilities, but it was the first time he was working independently and had his own lab," said Chandrakant Lahariya, an epidemiologist in Delhi. "He knew that developing a plague vaccine at record pace would make him a leading scientist of his time."

Haffkine worked tirelessly through that winter. He discovered that if he placed plague bacilli in a nutrient broth to which he had added a small quantity of clarified butter or coconut oil, the bacilli formed into a signature stalactite growth, creating microbes and toxic products on the side. He was using the same approach he had devised for the new treatment of cholera; combining the microbes

with the toxic products they produced to form a single-injection vaccine.

In December, Haffkine successfully inoculated rabbits against an attack of plague, and by January 1897 he was ready once again to test a fresh vaccine for a deadly disease on a human. On 10 January 1897, Haffkine injected himself with 10cc of his preparation - a significantly higher dose than the 3cc he planned to use in wider testing. He experienced a severe fever but recovered after several days.

At the end of that month, a plague outbreak occurred at Bombay's Byculla House of Correction - a jail housing hundreds of inmates - and Haffkine went there to carry out controlled tests. He inoculated 147 prisoners and left 172 untreated. There were 12 cases and six deaths among the untreated and just two cases and no deaths among the treated.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-55050012>



many Committees. Mansoor has been serving as a co-opted member for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel under Merton Council. He has currently been serving as a Governor of Ricards Lodge Secondary School and St. John Fisher School, and is dynamically involved with various school committees. Mansoor Ahmad was also awarded at the British Community Honours Award (BCHA) Ceremony in 2019, held in Parliament in October 2019, for his immense support towards British Society, having been presented with the British Citizen Award (BCA) in January 2019 for exceptional contributions to society, and for being an inspirational to other British citizens.

Mansoor is a qualified accountant currently serving as Manager of Accounts & Finance with Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah, one of the largest Charities in the UK. He is also a member of the Commonwealth Journalists Association UK, having authored numerous articles published in prestigious national and international journals, magazines and newspapers. He is a life dedicated member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK. Mansoor Ahmad served as Finance Manager with Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) for over 11 years.

<http://banglamirrornews.com/2020/12/15/british-bangladeshi-mansoor-ahmad-received-mayor-of-london-borough-of-mertons-covid-19-award/>

British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad received Mayor of London Borough of Merton's Covid- 19 Award

British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad has been awarded the Mayor of Merton borough's Covid-19 Award. Councillor Sally Kenny, Mayor of the London Borough of Merton, handed the Covid-19 Award to Mansoor Ahmad on Monday the 14th December 2020 at the award recipient's residence. The Mayor's Covid Award was awarded to Mansoor for his outstanding local contributions, and for the significant differences which he made in people's lives during the challenging period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mansoor has voluntarily been involved with various primary schools, secondary schools and in community works. He actively served as Parent Governor, Chairman & as a member of



Stockholm, did not see one hour of sunlight in December 2020

SWEDEN



Winter days are typically short in Scandinavia, but Stockholm has been unusually dark this December, yet to log a single hour of sunlight thus far, Sweden's meteorological institute said Thursday.

At this time of year the sun only rises above the horizon for about six hours a day in the Swedish capital, but this month -- already bleak as the country battles a sharp surge of COVID-19 infections -- has been especially gloomy.

"You almost don't wake up this time of year because it's dark all the time and gray," 67-year-old Isabella Sandstrom told AFP on the streets of Stockholm.

On Thursday, the sun rose in the capital at 8:33am and set again at 2:48pm, though it was hidden

behind cloud cover all day.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/variety/2020/12/10/Stockholm-Sweden-yet-to-see-one-hour-of-sunlight-in-December>



WELCOME TO TOMORROW

It Actually Arrived a Few Years Ago

1. Auto repair shops will disappear.
2. A petrol/diesel engine has 20,000 individual parts. An electrical motor has 20. Electric cars are sold with lifetime guarantees and are only repaired by dealers. It takes only 10 minutes to remove and replace an electric motor.
3. Faulty electric motors are not repaired in the dealership but are sent to a regional repair shop that repairs them with robots.
4. Your electric motor malfunction light goes on, so you drive up to what looks like a car wash, and your car is towed through while you have a cup of coffee and out comes your car with a new electric motor!
5. Petrol pumps (gas stations) will go away.
6. Street corners will have meters that dispense electricity. Companies will install electrical recharging stations; in fact, they've already started in the developed world.
7. Smart major auto manufacturers have already designated money to start building new plants that only build electric cars.
8. Coal industries will go away. Gasoline/oil companies will go away. Drilling for oil will stop. So say goodbye to OPEC! The middle-east is in trouble.
9. Homes will produce and store more electrical energy during the day and then they use and will sell it back to the grid. The grid stores it and dispenses it to industries that are high electricity users. Has anybody seen the Tesla roof?
10. A baby of today will only see personal cars in museums. The FUTURE is approaching faster than most of us can handle.
11. In 1998, Kodak had 170,000 employees and sold 85% of all photo paper worldwide. Within just a few years, their business model disappeared and they went bankrupt. Who would have thought of that ever happening?
12. What happened to Kodak and Polaroid will happen in a lot of industries in the next 5-10 years ... and most people don't see it coming.
13. Did you think in 1998 that 3 years later, you would never take pictures on film again? With today's smart phones, who even has a camera these days?
14. Yet digital cameras were invented in 1975. The first ones only had 10,000 pixels, but followed Moore's law. So as with all exponential technologies, it was a disappointment for a time, before it became way superior and became mainstream in only a few short years.
15. It will now happen again (but much faster) with Artificial Intelligence, health, autonomous and electric cars, education, 3D printing, agriculture and jobs.
16. Forget the book, "Future Shock", welcome to the 4th Industrial Revolution.
17. Software has disrupted and will continue to disrupt most traditional industries in the next 5-10 years.
18. UBER is just a software tool, they don't own any cars, and are now the biggest taxi company in the world! Ask any taxi driver if they saw that coming.
19. Airbnb is now the biggest hotel company in the world, although they don't own any properties. Ask Hilton Hotels if they saw that coming.
20. Artificial Intelligence: Computers become exponentially better in understanding the world. This year, a computer beat the best Go-player in the world, 10 years earlier than expected.
21. In the USA, young lawyers already don't

get jobs. Because of IBM's Watson, you can get legal advice (so far for right now, the basic stuff) within seconds, with 90% accuracy compared with 70% accuracy when done by humans. So, if you study law, stop immediately. There will be 90% fewer lawyers in the future, (what a thought!) only omniscient specialists will remain.

22. Watson already helps nurses diagnosing cancer, its 4 times more accurate than human nurses.

23. Facebook now has a pattern recognition software that can recognize faces better than humans. In 2030, computers will become more intelligent than humans.

24. Autonomous cars: In 2018 the first self-driving cars are already here. In the next 2 years, the entire industry will start to be disrupted. You won't want to own a car anymore as you will call a car with your phone, it will show up at your location and drive you to your destination.

25. You will not need to park it you will only pay for the driven distance and you can be productive while driving. The very young children of today will never get a driver's license and will never own a car.

26. This will change our cities, because we will need 90-95% fewer cars. We can transform former parking spaces into green parks.

27. About 1.2 million people die each year in car accidents worldwide including distracted or drunk driving. We now have one accident every 60,000 miles; with autonomous driving that will drop to 1 accident in 6 million miles. That will save a million lives plus worldwide each year.

28. Most traditional car companies will doubtless become bankrupt. They will try the evolutionary approach and just build a better car, while tech companies (Tesla, Apple, Google) will do the revolutionary approach and build a computer on wheels.

29. Look at what Volvo is doing right now; no

more internal combustion engines in their vehicles starting this year with the 2019 models, using all electric or hybrid only, with the intent of phasing out hybrid models.

30. Many engineers from Volkswagen and Audi; are completely terrified of Tesla and they should be. Look at all the companies offering all electric vehicles. That was unheard of, only a few years ago.

31. Insurance companies will have massive trouble because, without accidents, the costs will become cheaper. Their car insurance business model will disappear.

32. Real estate will change. Because if you can work while you commute, people will abandon their towers to move far away to more beautiful affordable neighborhoods.

33. Electric cars will become mainstream about 2030. Cities will be less noisy because all new cars will run on electricity.

34. Cities will have much cleaner air as well.

35. Electricity will become incredibly cheap and clean.

36. Solar production has been on an exponential curve for 30 years, but you can now see the burgeoning impact. And it's just getting ramped up.

37. Fossil energy companies are desperately trying to limit access to the grid to prevent competition from home solar installations, but that simply cannot continue - technology will take care of that strategy.

38. Health: The Tricorder X price will be announced this year. There are companies who will build a medical device (called the "Tricorder" from Star Trek) that works with your phone, which takes your retina scan, your blood sample and you breath into it. It then analyses 54 bio-markers that will identify nearly any Disease. There are dozens of phone apps out there right now for health purposes.

WELCOME TO TOMORROW – it actually arrived a few years ago

Hijabi Bikers on wheels, but barriers remain in South Punjab

The trend of women riding motorcycles in South Punjab's cities is on rise.

Officials from the Traffic Police Licence Branch say that 64 driving licences were issued to female applicants during October. Society as well as parents should encourage girls to drive motorcycles, they added.

Transport is one of the main problems for working women as well as school, college or university going girls in the culturally rich yet socially backward region of South Punjab. The women of this region reportedly have to depend on their family members, usually their fathers, brothers, or husbands, for most of their outdoor movement.

Sometimes, the working women have to hire vehicles for their routine outdoor work.

However, they have to pay much more in case of using rented vehicles. For the last few years, a positive development was being observed in South Punjab as women and girls were seen using motorcycles independently.

The motorcycle ride was one of the cheapest sources of transportation. Similarly, women on motorcycles do not depend on other members of their family.

Sana Hussain, a 24-year-old student pursuing her Masters in Mass Communication from Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, told APP that she was using a motorcycle for many years.

She stated that in her family they were three sisters only. "I am the eldest and my father not only allowed but also facilitated me to buy a motorcycle."

She revealed that she did not learn motorcycle riding from anyone but she tried herself after observing other people practicing it.

"I used to visit the bazaar on a motorcycle



independently and without any hesitation," Sana claimed. Patrolling Police SP Huma Naseeb said that women drivers were more careful while using roads. "Women were more law-abiding citizens as compared to men. The women drivers keep complete documents with them," she claimed.

Social Welfare Department District Officer Muhammad Ahmed Chishti stated, "In the past, motorcycles were given to women on subsidised prices under an initiative of Punjab government.

Punjab Bank, Traffic Police, Punjab Social Welfare Department and a private motorcycle company facilitated the motorcycle delivery and drive training process among women."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2274934/women-on-wheels-but-barriers-remain-in-south-punjab>

ALI ZAIDI

DEPUTY NATIONAL CLIMATE ADVISOR

- Assisted in drafting and implementing the groundbreaking Climate Action Plan and helped negotiate the Paris Climate Agreement
- Former Office of Management and Budget and White House Domestic Policy Council official during the Obama-Biden Administration
- Currently serves as New York's Deputy Secretary for Energy and Environment



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US: Ali Zaidi appointed in Biden climate team



US President-elect Joe Biden has announced appointments of key members of his climate team, which includes Pakistan born Ali Zaidi who will serve as deputy White House Climate Coordinator.

Zaidi, 33, currently New York's deputy secretary for energy and environment, is the highest ranking Pakistani-American in the Biden administration. "We need a whole-of-government approach to take on the climate crisis — in a way that spurs jobs and advances justice," tweeted Zaidi.

"I was floored when President-elect Joe Biden called. I still am — profoundly humbled, deeply honored, and so ready to get to work!" He will work under Gina McCarthy, who ran the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under former President Barack Obama and now leads a major advocacy group, to coordinate the new administration's domestic climate agenda.

"This brilliant, tested, trailblazing team will be ready on day one to confront the existential threat of climate change with a unified nation-

al response rooted in science and equity. They share my belief that we have no time to waste to confront the climate crisis, protect our air and drinking water, and deliver justice to communities that have long shouldered the burdens of environmental harms," Biden said in a statement.

A press release issued by Biden's transition team described Zaidi as "a leading climate expert and longtime advisor to the president-elect", noting that he helped draft and implement the Obama-Biden Administration's Climate Action Plan and negotiate the Paris Climate Agreement.

Zaidi, who emigrated from Pakistan, grew up in the Rust Belt outside Erie, Pennsylvania. He studied at Harvard and Georgetown Universities. "Zaidi brings the cross-sector and multi-disciplinary experience needed to deliver a whole-of-government response to the climate crisis," the press release said.

<https://images.dawn.com/news/1186221>

What I Learned From My Brush With Trump

By Jorge Ramos, NY Times

MIAMI — I had the honor once of being kicked out of a Donald Trump news conference. I asked him a question he didn't want to answer and a security guard threw me out. It happened on Aug. 25, 2015, in Dubuque, Iowa, during Mr. Trump's first presidential campaign.

The news conference revealed with astonishing clarity who Mr. Trump really was: a dan-

dental campaign a couple of months earlier, when he rode down an escalator in Trump Tower and then made a speech in which he called Mexican immigrants criminals and "rapists." Those racist comments were simply unacceptable.

So, like any sensible journalist, I wrote to the new candidate and asked him for an interview. However, instead of answering my



gerous populist, an anti-immigrant bully, and a threat to democracy and the free press.

Some were paying attention. But as Mr. Trump's base of support grew, journalists and politicians began paving his way to the White House. Ignoring that early warning sign in Iowa cost the United States dearly.

My tussle with the president in Iowa can be traced back to the announcement of his presi-

letter, he posted it on Instagram along with my phone number. As a result, I received hundreds of hateful calls and texts and I had to change my number.

What I didn't change was my determination to challenge his views on immigration, which led to our clash at the news conference.

Here's how it all went down in Dubuque. I waited for a pause in Mr. Trump's comments,

raised my hand, said I had a question about immigration and stood up to start speaking. Mr. Trump pretended he didn't see me and pointed to another journalist. But I kept talking.

"Sit down!" he ordered me four times. I ignored him. "You haven't been called," Mr. Trump said. "Go back to Univision." It was the Trumpian version of the racial slur: "Go back to your country."

He then gestured at a nearby security guard, who started pushing me back from Mr. Trump, and eventually I was forced out of the room. As the guard pushed me out, I told him not to touch me and that I had the right to ask a question. Outside the conference room, one of Mr. Trump's supporters told me to "get out of my country," not knowing that I was a United States citizen. Hate is contagious.

Of all the reporters who were there, only MSNBC's Kasie Hunt and ABC News's Tom Llamas defended me against Mr. Trump. I was soon allowed to return to the room, where I was finally able to ask Mr. Trump some questions. David Gergen, a longtime presidential adviser, told *The New York Times* soon after the news conference that my exchange with Mr. Trump was going to be "one of the lasting memories of this campaign."

After my confrontation with Mr. Trump, several journalists expressed their solidarity with me. And yet, strangely and dangerously, the incident failed to shift the media's obsessive coverage of Mr. Trump, which over time normalized his rude, abusive and xenophobic behavior. Some members of the press seemed fascinated by the Trump phenomenon; others wrongly thought that he would soon change his ways. The prevailing attitude was something along the lines of "That's just the way Trump is, and we have to cover him no matter what he says."

Unfortunately, the things that Mr. Trump kept

saying were fundamentally against the idea of equality enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. He insisted that he would build a border wall between Mexico and the United States — and that Mexico would pay for it. He said he would consider closing mosques in the United States as a way of fighting the Islamic State.

None of these odious comments, and many others like them, should have been surprising given that the same candidate, back in 2011, falsely claimed on a radio program that President Barack Obama "doesn't have a birth certificate."

Despite that behavior, journalists sought constant access to Mr. Trump during the campaign, and the media aired — sometimes without any criticism or context — many of his most mind-boggling comments.

All of which contributed to Mr. Trump's surprise, poll-defying victory in the 2016 election. And yet the attitudes and behaviors that came to define Mr. Trump as president were already visible in 2015. Several journalists — especially those of us who had worked in Latin America and covered strongmen there — saw this dynamic clearly and denounced Mr. Trump. But it wasn't enough.

At the time, I believed, as I still do, that the new normal established by Mr. Trump was great for ratings, but not for civility or democracy — and I made this clear publicly. If Mr. Trump could attack me, he could attack other journalists. And that's exactly what he did as president, by calling certain media organizations "the enemy of the people."

In Mr. Trump's convulsive, chaotic four years in the White House, he separated thousands of children from their parents at the border while failing to condemn white supremacy. At the same time, he was able to fill three vacant seats on the Supreme Court with conservative justices, extending his influence over America's judicial system for many

years to come.

But ultimately his presidency was overshadowed by a terrible tragedy: more than 270,000 people dead in the United States and roughly 14 million infected, partly as a result of his irresponsible and erratic handling of the coronavirus.

The United States will never fall prey to tyranny. The nation's balance of powers has survived quite well for nearly two and a half centuries. And yet the celebrations I saw in the streets of Washington and other American cities after President Trump's defeat last month reminded me so much of what I experienced in Nicaragua in the 1990s after the fall of Sandinismo and in Mexico in the 2000s after the fall of the Institutional Revolutionary Party's "perfect dictatorship," which had lasted 71 years.

All were celebrations of unburdening, of something close to revenge — the bully who had dominated public life for so long had finally been forced out. A huge weight had suddenly been lifted from everyone's shoulders.

We journalists should have been tougher on Mr. Trump, questioning his every lie and insult. We should not have let him get away with his racism and xenophobia. We should never again allow someone to create an alternative reality in order to seize the presidency. Perhaps it was the pandemic that was most responsible for putting an end to Mr. Trump's presidency. But the entire debacle might have been avoided if we had simply paid greater attention — and offered more resistance — to the words and gestures of the undeserving man who descended the golden escalator of Trump Tower in 2015.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/international-world/trump-ramos-authoritarianism-media.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

Afghanistan: Women's Rights Activist Freshta Kohistani Assassinated

KABUL: An Afghan women's rights activist was shot and killed by unknown gunmen in northern Kapisa province Thursday, an Interior Ministry official said. Tariq Arian, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said Freshta Kohistani was assassinated by unknown gunmen in the Kohistan district of Kapisa. Kohistani's brother was wounded in the attack, he said. Kohistani, a former provincial council member, organized protests and raised awareness on social media about violence against women in Afghanistan. The attack was the latest amid relentless violence in Afghanistan even as Taliban and Afghan government negotiators hold talks in Qatar, trying to hammer out a peace deal that could put an end to decades of war. No one immediately claimed responsibility for Thursday's attack, but the Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in Kabul in recent months, including on educational institutions that killed 50 people, most of them students.

Violence in Afghanistan has spiked even during Taliban and Afghan government peace negotiations, which began in September. The talks, after some recent procedural progress, have been suspended until early January and there is speculation the resumption could be further delayed.

At the same time, Taliban militants have waged bitter battles against IS fighters, particularly in eastern Afghanistan, while continuing their insurgency against government forces and keeping their promise not to attack U.S. and NATO troops.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2020/dec/25/afghan-womens-rights-activist-freshta-kohistani-shot-dead-2240786.html>

Why does the Gulf lack female leaders? Data has the answers



effectiveness, and selecting the best mix requires a refined understanding of the underlying causes of female underrepresentation.

For example, women might be underrepresented as senior executives because they are discrimi-

In the Middle East, women are heavily underrepresented in leadership positions. Women account for less than 10 percent of parliamentary seats in several Gulf states, and Kuwait's 2020 elections resulted in all 50 seats going to men. The private sector paints an even grimmer picture: only three of the 83 Gulf firms listed in the Forbes Top 100 Arab Family Businesses had a female chairperson.

Underlying this imbalance is a chronic lack of scientific data on its causes. If the Gulf countries are serious about supporting female leadership, they must remedy this deficiency. The easiest way of trying to correct gender imbalance is to simply affirm that there is rampant discrimination, and to demand greater representation for women.

A more difficult – but potentially more productive – approach is to use scientific methods to infer the reasons for the underrepresentation of women. This is because policies that seek to empower women vary in cost and

nated against at the selection phase despite having the same years of managerial experience as men; or it could be because they are less likely than men to have the requisite years of managerial experience. In the former case, government-mandated affirmative action is likely to be effective in reversing discrimination.

In contrast, in the latter case, affirmative action could be counterproductive as it might lead to companies being forced to appoint underqualified women, reinforcing prevailing stereotypes. Under these circumstances, the more effective policy would address why women are less likely to have the requisite managerial experience – for example they might be discriminated against at lower levels, in educational institutions, or by the legal system. Rectifying that might lead to women organically securing equal representation at the senior executive level without the need for affirmative action.

In Western countries, there is a large body of scientific work on why women are underrepresented in leadership positions. Economists have contributed by demonstrating that, in addition to being discriminated against, women are more likely than men to be risk averse, to be reluctant to start negotiations, to avoid competitive environments, to seek jobs with flexible working hours, and to spend time on low promotability tasks.

However, our understanding is far from complete, as illustrated in a new research paper by Alleghany College economist Professor Priyanka Chakraborty and Texas A&M University economist Professor Danila Serra. They used a series of experiments to study interactions between managers and subordinates when managers had to decide which employees to promote.

Professors Chakraborty and Serra found that women were less likely to seek managerial positions than men in situations where subordinates could express their anger at being overlooked for a promotion by the manager. Moreover, they found that female managers were more likely than their male counterparts to receive angry messages from subordinates, and that these subordinates were more likely to question the decisions of female managers than those of male managers.

Within the confines of the experiment, however, they detected no overall gender difference in managerial performance, though male and female managers chose to communicate promotion decisions to their subordinates using different language, with women systematically preferring more cordial expressions.

Since this is cutting-edge research that isn't being applied to a narrow problem, it is too early to determine the paper's implications for broader issues of gender imbalances in leadership positions. However, it opens the door for important follow-up research into

why women are treated less fairly by subordinates who are overlooked for promotion, and what role this might play in making it harder for women to climb corporate ladders.

In the Gulf countries, unfortunately, the volume of research on these issues is very limited, despite the arguably more pressing need for it be conducted. Gross expenditure on research is considerably lower, and funding for research on women's issues available from civil society organizations is modest because these entities themselves are limited in size. In contrast, in countries like the US, private non-profit organizations that have sizeable endowments offer grants for the study of a wide range of women's issues.

While Gulf-based policymakers can certainly make use of the research conducted by Western-based researchers such as Professors Chakraborty and Serra, there are many legal and cultural differences between Western and Gulf countries, meaning that there is no substitute for research conducted by Gulf-based scholars on populations in the Gulf.

For example, in the context of the above study, organizations tend to be much more hierarchical in the Gulf, meaning that there are fewer opportunities for subordinates to express their dissatisfaction with a manager's decision, and so this may affect the attractiveness of managerial positions to women.

Fortunately, encouraging more local research on gender differences is straightforward: provide grants and other forms of support for those who wish to study the topic. It would also help to raise the profile of those researchers who make successful intellectual contributions by giving them media coverage and prestigious prizes.

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2020/12/16/Why-does-the-Gulf-lack-female-leaders-Data-has-the-answers>

Detention of former Saudi Crown Prince risks security of West



The detention of the former crown prince of Saudi Arabia in breach of international law is weakening the security of both the kingdom and the west, a cross-party investigatory panel of British MPs has found.

Mohammed bin Nayef was arrested in March 2020 as part of a consolidation of power ordered by the current crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. They claim it is in the interests of the international community and Saudi Arabia itself that it urgently addresses its human rights record so it “can defend and explain its actions in a way that will not leave it wholly pilloried in the wider court of global public opinion”. They also say the Saudi failure to live up to international human rights standards weakens the kingdom and the security of the west. Saudi Arabia refused to cooperate with the work of the panel, although the Saudi ambassador to the UK did hold an informal off the record meeting with the panel chairman about the panel’s purpose. The lack of cooperation is described as deeply disappointing by the panel. The Saudi authorities are likely to dismiss the report as a preconceived self-appointed attempt to discredit the kingdom and its rulers. But Crispin Blunt, the former chair of the foreign affairs select committee, who led the panel, is generally seen as an ally of the Gulf States, and fought hard to defend Saudi Arabia’s right to receive UK arms to fight the war in

Yemen. The cross-party panel has been given legal advice on human rights law by Bindmans, the law firm and secretary to the inquiry. In the absence of cooperation from Saudi authorities, the panel held an evidence session with mainly Saudi dissidents, spoke to senior UK government officials, human rights groups and, it appears, allies of Bin Nayef. The report claims detention of political opposition is endemic in the country, and is one reason it failed this year in its bid to be elected to the executive of the UN human rights council. There is growing speculation that Bin Nayef, a former interior minister and onetime close ally of western intelligence, may be charged. He was arrested along with the king’s older brother, Prince Ahmed, in what was seen as an attempt by Bin Salman to remove all threats to his accession to the throne. The MPs also recommended that any attempt by Saudi Arabia to use Interpol to request assistance in relation to its own citizens living abroad “should be examined with pre-emptive skepticism until it has ratified the basic legal instruments of international human rights and the pattern of oppressive behavior towards its own citizens has ceased”. They also proposed that the G7 member states should suspend prisoner transfer agreements and extradition treaties with Saudi Arabia and review all criminal justice agreements in light of the evidence being presented about Saudi Arabia’s unwillingness to meet its basic international legal obligations towards its own citizens. They also urged social media firms to resist campaigns of public intimidation by state actors or unaccountable other groups or individuals who appear to be coordinated by state actors.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/17/detention-for-mer-saudi-crown-prince-security-west-say-mps>

Pakistan: Surge in Targeted Killings of Ahmadis

Pakistani authorities should urgently and impartially investigate a surge in violent attacks on members of the Ahmadiyya religious community, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said today. The authorities should take appropriate legal



Dr. Tariq Mahmood

action against those responsible for threats and violence against Ahmadis. Since July 2020, there have been at least five apparently targeted killings of members of the Ahmadiyya community. In only two of the cases have the police taken a suspect into custody. Pakistani authorities have long downplayed, and at times even encouraged, violence against Ahmadis, whose rights to freedom of religion and belief are not respected under Pakistani law. “There are few communities in Pakistan

who have suffered as much as the Ahmadis,” said Omar Waraich, head of South Asia at Amnesty International. “The recent wave of killings tragically underscores not just the seriousness of the threats they face, but also the callous indifference of the authorities, who have failed to protect the community or punish the perpetrators.” On November 20, a teenage assailant is alleged to have fatally shot Dr. Tahir Mahmood, 31, as he answered the door of his house in Nankana Sahib district, Punjab. Mahmood’s father and two uncles were injured in the attack. The police reported that the suspect “confessed to having attacked the family over religious differences.” Several recent attacks have occurred in the city of Peshawar, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. On November 9, Mahmood Khan, 82, was fatally shot while waiting at a bus station. On October 6, two men on a motorcycle stopped the car of Dr. Naeemuddin Khat-tak, 57, a professor at the Government Superior Science College, and fired five shots, killing him. His family said he had a “heated argument over a religious issue” with a colleague a day before. Jamaat-i-Ahmadiyya, a community organization, issued a statement saying Khattak had previously received threats and was targeted because of his faith. On August 12, Meraj Ahmed, 61, was fatally shot as he was closing his shop in Peshawar. On July 29, an alleged 19-year-old assailant killed Tahir Ahmad Naseem, 57, inside a high-security courtroom. Naseem was facing trial for blasphemy accusations. In a video that circulated on social media, the suspect states that Naseem was a “blasphemer.” Successive Pakistani governments have failed to protect the human rights and security

of the Ahmadiyya community. The penal code explicitly discriminates against religious minorities and targets Ahmadis by prohibiting them from “indirectly or directly posing as a Muslim.” Ahmadis are banned from declaring or propagating their faith publicly, building mosques, or making the Muslim call for prayer. The authorities arbitrarily arrest, detain, and charge Ahmadis for blasphemy and other offenses because of their religious beliefs. The police have often been complicit in harassment and bringing fabricated charges against Ahmadis or have not intervened to stop anti-Ahmadi violence. The government’s failure to address religious persecution of Ahmadis has facilitated violence against them in the name of religion.

“Pakistan was part of the consensus at the UN General Assembly that required that states take active measures to ensure that persons belonging to religious minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law,” said Ian Seiderman, legal and policy director at the International Commission of Jurists. “The Pakistani government has completely failed to do so in the case of the Ahmadis.”

The Pakistani government also promotes discriminatory practices against Ahmadis. For example, all Pakistani Muslim citizens applying for passports are obliged to sign a statement explicitly stating that they consider the founder of the Ahmadi community an “imposter,” and consider Ahmadis to be non-Muslims.

Pakistani laws against the Ahmadiyya community violate Pakistan’s international legal obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Pakistan ratified in 2010, including the rights to freedom of conscience, religion, expression, and association, and to profess and prac-

tice one’s own religion.

Independent experts of the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the special rapporteurs on the freedom of religion or belief and the UN special rapporteur on minority issues, and the special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, have previously expressed concern at the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan.

“Pakistan’s federal and provincial governments should take immediate legal and policy measures to eliminate widespread and rampant discrimination and social exclusion faced by the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan,” said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “The government should repeal the blasphemy law and all anti-Ahmadiyya provisions.”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/pakistan-surge-in-targeted-killings-of-ahmadis/>



Afghanistan:

Female Bikers Smash Stereotypes



An all-female motorcycle show was held Wednesday in Nili, the capital of Daykundi province, on the occasion of the 16-day campaign to end violence against women.

At least 10 Female motor bikers from Shahrستان, Miramor, and Nili districts participated the show. Marzia Hamdard, head of provincial gender department, told the press, “this play was organized by the provincial administration in cooperation with Oxfam in support of girls who ride motorcycles.”

“By doing this, women in Daikundi said no to the negative customs and traditions of the society and showed that they have the best capacities.”

“Women have the right to access a better, safer, and more open space and to participate in all matters”, Marzia added.

Meanwhile, female bikers welcomed the program and called for motorcycling competitions.”

The girls also asked other families to allow their daughters to join motorcycling sports. Mohammad Dad, father to one of the female

participants, said that girls’ motorcycling is not a disgrace, families should leave their daughters to ride a motorcycle like boys.

In recent years, women have been able to achieve relative freedom through their ongoing struggles, but they still face unsavory customs and traditional beliefs. Experts believe that in order to improve the liveli-

hood of women and reduce violence, the government should undertake programs to improve the economic situation and self-sufficiency of women and increase the level of awareness in families.

<https://www.khaama.com/female-bikers-smashed-stereotypes-in-dykundi-88687686>

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