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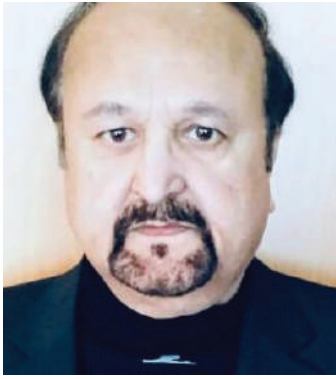


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Former UNDP Director Takes Aim at Pakistan's Elite in Scathing Final Interview

In a scathing criticism of the Pakistani elite, the former director of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for Pakistan Marc-André Franche, said the only way a critical change could happen in the country was when the influential, the politicians and the wealthy, would sacrifice short term, individual and family interests for the benefit of the nation. "You cannot have an elite that takes advantage of very cheap and uneducated labour when it comes to making money, and when it is time to party it is found in London, and when it's time to buy things it is in Dubai, and when it's time to buy property it invests in Dubai or Europe or New York. The elite needs to decide do they want a country or not," Franche said, according to the Business Recorder. The former director, who spent four years in Pakistan, was also critical of the landowners. "I have visited some very large landowners, who have exploited the land for centuries, paid nearly zero money for the water, and how they almost sometimes hold people in bondage. And then they come to the United Nations or other agencies and ask us to invest in water, sanitation, and education for the people in their district. I find that quite embarrassing." Having visited Karachi this month, Franche was appalled to see the condition of the city. "It's at a breaking point. If Karachi is at all to continue being the engine of growth in this country, something needs to be done about public utilities. You cannot live in Karachi and grow your business anymore with the state of disrepair of public institutions." Further, he expressed his frustration that Pakistan was not making more progress in terms of poverty reduction, inequality, modernising the state, and functioning institutions. "The fact that even in 2016, Pakistan has 38 per cent poverty; it has districts that live like sub-Saharan Africa: that the basic human rights of

minorities, women and the people of FATA are not respected; that this country has not been able to get its act together and hold a census; or that it has not been able to push for reforms in FATA, an area that is institutionally living in 17th century. It is extremely preoccupying." "Pakistan will not be able to survive with gated communities where you are completely isolated from the societies, where you are creating ghettos at one end and big huge malls for the rich at the other end. It is not the kind of society you want your kids to live in," he added. Franche shared that he was disappointed with the quality of local government laws that each province had developed. "Only KP has a decent law that gives real power and real money to the local government. Local government does not mean that you just elect them and deny them fiscal resources or power. We have been advocating for a review of those laws. In KP, because they put in place a decent local government law, we are currently finalising the agreement with the provincial government to support them in local governance, focusing first on seven districts, one per each division." The ex-director of UNDP Pakistan was also critical of the media, adding that there was a deficit of media literacy. "The media is one of the pillars of democracy and the media has to educate the public. Unfortunately, the level of dependence of the government on military authorities, and the degree by which a lot of media in this country is manipulated by powerful sources, are sources of erosion of democracy and erosion of the institutions that are the foundations of this country." He added that he was concerned about inequality of rights and opportunities in Pakistan. "The apartheid of opportunities in Pakistan is horrible, which is why so many young people are trying to leave the country. This is one of the issues that UNDP will continue to

work on in Pakistan for sure - investing in both improving the quality of data, and the quality of analysis of inequality.” Although, he didn’t think there was an imminent threat of a revolt by the poor, he did see it happening eventually. “I don’t see those circumstances emerging in Pakistan at the moment. But it will eventually happen in one way or the other. You cannot have a country, where nearly 40 per cent of the people live in poverty.” As he leaves Pakistan, he spoke about his love for the country. “When you spend four years in a country, you learn to appreciate its complexity. I do not even remember how many times I have been to Balochistan; I believe I have been to nearly every district in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa; I have gone to the northern areas a number of times; and I have, of course, travelled in Punjab and Sindh. So I am leaving with a lot of admiration for Pakistan and its people. When you read the history of Pakistan, it was not obvious that this country would survive. There was a lot of criticism and people doubting that it will. Yet it has, and it has come very far and achieved a lot in many ways.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1171773/former-undp-director-takes-aim-pakistans-elite-scathing-final-interview>

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Channel crossings: Six boats with 132 migrants on board picked up



Six small boats with 132 people crossed the English Channel on Tuesday, the Home Office has said. French authorities prevented 57 people on six boats from making the crossing. More than 1,732 people have made the crossing so far this year, with 371 crossing in small boats in April.

The Home Office said more than 2,000 people have been prevented from making the crossing this year and there have been more than 60 prosecutions relating to small boats since the start of 2020.

Seven boats with 113 people were picked up off the Kent coast on Monday. The government is planning to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to stay in the UK if they come illegally. Under the plans, people who enter the UK illegally to claim asylum will no longer have the same entitlements as those who arrive legally.

Campaigners say the proposals would create an unfair system and would not address people smuggling.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-56829480>

Pakistan's Prime Minister Links Rape to 'Vulgarity' and How Women Dress

By Salman Masood



Activists have accused Prime Minister Imran Khan of “baffling ignorance” and victim-blaming after he said rape cases had risen because of “vulgarity.”

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — An outcry has erupted in Pakistan after Prime Minister Imran Khan blamed a rise in rape cases on how women dressed, remarks that activists denounced as perpetuating a culture of victim blaming. Mr. Khan made the comments on a live television show this week when asked what the government was doing to curb an increase in sexual violence against women and children. Mr. Khan acknowledged the seriousness of the problem and pointed to the country’s strict laws against rape. But, he said, women had to do their part. “What is the concept of purdah?” he said, using a term that refers to the practice of seclusion, veiling or concealing dress for women in some South Asian communities. “It is to stop temptation. Not every man has willpower. If you keep on increasing vulgarity, it will have consequences”. The uproar was swift. The Human Rights

Commission of Pakistan, an independent group, demanded that Mr. Khan apologize for his remarks, which it called “unacceptable behavior on the part of a public leader”. “Not only does this betray a baffling ignorance of where, why, and how rape occurs, but it also lays the blame on rape survivors,” the group said. Seeking to tamp down the anger, Mr. Khan’s office

issued a statement on Wednesday saying that the prime minister’s remarks had been misrepresented. “The prime minister spoke about the societal responses and the need to put our efforts together to eliminate the menace of rape completely,” the office said in the statement. “Unfortunately, part of his comment, consciously or unconsciously, has been distorted to mean something that he never intended.” Mr. Khan’s government has faced immense pressure to speed up justice for rape survivors after a series of assaults sparked demands for the death penalty to be applied to such cases. In December, the government passed a measure that said men convicted of rape could be sentenced to chemical castration. There are few reliable statistics on rape in Pakistan, but rights activists say it is a severely underreported crime, in part because victims are often treated as criminals or blamed for the assaults. Thousands of protesters took to the streets last year after a top police official in the eastern city of Lahore

said that a woman who was raped on a deserted highway was partly to blame for the attack. To critics, Mr. Khan's comments this week reinforced misogynistic attitudes that made the problem worse for women. "Victim blaming and policing women's clothing choices both perpetuate rape culture," said Laaleen Sukhera, a Lahore-based author and public relations consultant. "Everyone and everything seems to be blamed except the actual perpetrators," she said. Even Mr. Khan's first wife, Jemima Goldsmith, a British heiress, weighed in on Twitter. "The problem is not how women dress!" she wrote in one post. In another, she said that she hoped that Mr. Khan had been misquoted because the man she knew had different opinions. Before he became prime minister, Mr. Khan was a cricket star and A-list celebrity who cut a glamorous figure and was known as a ladies' man. He married Ms. Goldsmith in 1995, and they divorced in 2004. But he became increasingly conservative in the mid-1990s after he entered politics, and has been accused of being overly sympathetic to the Taliban in recent years. To women's rights activists, Mr. Khan's comments this week were only the latest example of the challenge they face in finding support for their causes in the deeply conservative society. Organizers of women's rights marches on International Women's Day last month have said they have been accused of "vulgarity" for seeking equal rights. "It's already tremendously challenging for women of all ages in public spaces in Pakistan, whether on the streets or at work or in the digital space, even in their own homes," said Ms. Sukhera, the author in Lahore. "Regressive preaching prevents women from reclaiming what's rightfully theirs, and must be addressed".

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/08/world/asia/pakistan-rape.html>

Election in Germany Progressive Auslaender Union -PAU



Arshad Ahmad
Shahbaz

Dr. Parbha
Singh

Akbar Javed

In the German state of Hessen, the election for the foreign advisory council takes place every five years. This year's election took place on 14th of March 2021, where nine political parties participated in the election. Darmstadt, the city of science with an average population of 160,000 which includes 35,000 foreigners from different countries. Remarkably, many nationalities were representing this year's election including Poland, Italy, Portugal, Nigeria, Morocco, Kurdistan, Guinea, Turkey, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. The foreign advisory council is elected democratically as a reliable board for the foreign residents in Darmstadt. The council is an acting body representing the rights and affairs of foreigners. The members of the advisory council are connected with people personally as well as through diverse social media groups to promote integration and resolve the issues of immigrants without any barrier. This year's election was exceptional where a new candidate Dr. Prabha Singh, a researcher represented the party Progressive Auslaender Union (PAU) for the first time. The results of the election were in the favor of PAU party with very high numbers of votes (9,500) in total. PAU party won three seats, the party chairman Mr Arshad Ahmad Shahbaz (1,381 votes), Dr. Prabha Singh (1,263 votes) and Mr Akbar Javed (1,188 votes) were elected as the members of the Foreign Advisory Council. "We look forward to working together with the city parliament for the next five years with the aim of encouraging foreigners and immigrants to integrate in the German society more confidently, without any difference of race, skin color, language barrier, religion, political or other opinions. By being strictly against discrimination, the mission of PAU is to hoist the flag of peace and put an end to hatred", says the PAU chairman Mr. Arshad Ahmad Shahbaz.

Perils of being a journalist in Pakistan

By: Rafia Zakaria



BEING a journalist in Pakistan is a dangerous proposition. A noose is put around your neck when you begin and it is tightened gradually as journalists you know are 'disappeared' or harassed or murdered outright. Many of those who manage to stay afloat are targets. The tiniest act of rebellion or upsetting someone powerful can constitute a real threat for the journalists of the country. Ajay Laalwani, who worked for a newspaper, was in a barber-shop in Sukkur on the evening of March 18. Suddenly two motorcycles and a car with four passengers drove up. They began to spray Laalwani with bullets and then sped away. Laalwani was taken to hospital but he did not survive the brutal attack. Ashiq Jatoi, the editor of the newspaper, said he believes that Laalwani's writing and reporting could have motivated the killing. Once again, whether this was actually true will remain mired in mystery. Past tensions between the reporter and law enforcement were mentioned and the fear that investigations might not be carried out the way they should was expressed.

In the days before the incident, Laalwani had received threats and was being harassed. Those sharing the news on social media attributed the killing to well-known "unknown culprits". In an effort to show that the case was being taken seriously and investigated, the police announced that a special team had been created to investigate the killing. This in itself is ironic because prior to Laalwani's killing, the police had been harassing journalists, threatening them with consequences. On March 15, the police had arrested a number of journalists and political activists and registered cases against them under the Anti-Terrorism Act while they were protesting the killing of a Sindh University student named Irfan Jatoi in an alleged 'police

encounter'. Of course, it seems fair to say that this case, along with so many others in which journalists have been killed, will not be solved. There are so many cases that require answers. One of them is the killing of Qais Javed who worked for the newspaper Ehadnama. He had also started his own web channel. He was shot dead in D.I. Khan in December 2020. But like so many others, he is just a number. One fine day, "unknown gunmen" appeared, sprayed him with bullets and absconded without being caught. Despite the passage of three months since the killing, there is no sign of the case being solved.

The latest death is of a young man named Waseem Alam who was shot dead in Karak when he was returning home on his motorcycle on Saturday. Alam was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival. An FIR has been registered. In Alam's case, family enmity has been cited as a motive. Police strongly suspect the involvement of Alam's father in the deed. His family reportedly said that Alam had not conveyed to them that he had received threats. But unless such cases are pursued and investigated and the murderer convicted in a court of law, one will never know the truth. And journalists like him will continue to become yet another statistic.

One can go on and on enumerating the killing and intimidation of Pakistani journalists. One can go on and on about how the cases are never solved. All of it is pointless for the simple reason that everyone knows that those who do not toe the line or are outspoken are targeted and made an example of. This then is the primitive state of public discourse in Pakistan. Instead of tolerating differing points of view, instead of creating forums where divergent views can be expressed and discussed and a culture of tolerance fostered, the voices

of those who disagree are muffled in various ways by various actors, state or non-state. This is not very different from what primitive man faced when he did not agree with his tribe. He would be made an example of to warn the rest of the clan. Those tribes that did this accrued a survival disadvantage. While unity, whether it is tribal or national is important, survival requires the existence of divergent ideas. Killing or intimidating journalists in this sense does not simply wreak havoc on the present, it condemns the possibility of the future. Evolution after all is based on adaptability and the existence of diversity of thought and it is impossible without the truth tellers that present the reality of the situation. Without them, only one version of the truth thrives and difference of opinion is exterminated. The people in this environment never develop the skills to tolerate words or ideas that are different. Moreover, they risk being duped, as there is no guarantee that the version of truth that they have been believing and reading is not actually what was happening in the country. Pakistan's legacy of authoritarianism means that no one pays much attention to the growing roster of threats to journalists. With everyone eking out a marginal and precarious existence, few have sympathy to spare for the brave men and women who die or are picked up or face extreme threats because they were not willing to give up on a principle. To those who target journalists, principles such as the belief in the freedom of speech is an indulgence. An attitude such as this is the consequence of decades of devaluation of speech, denigration of the bravest in the nation and a low regard for the truth. In the meantime, the bodies keep piling up, the 'unknown' gunmen appearing again and again to kill or kidnap those who have the courage to tell the truth and to believe in a principle.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1618139/the-perils-of-being-a-journalist>

Pakistan: 1,000 Indian Sikh pilgrims take part in Baisakhi festival

KARACHI, Pakistan (AA): Around a thousand Sikh pilgrims arrived in Pakistan on Monday to participate in the annual Baisakhi celebrations, officials said. The pilgrims entered northeastern Lahore city through the Wagah border crossing, where they were welcomed by Pakistani officials and local Sikh community leaders, said a statement from the Evacuee Trust Property Board, a state-run body which administers the minorities' worship sites. The 10-day celebrations starting will last until April 22 in Hasan Abdal town of northeastern Punjab province. Thanking Islamabad for issuing visas, Sardar Gurumit Singh Bhog, a Sikh community leader, said the visitors are excited to take part in the spring harvest festival. It also marks the beginning of the new Sikh calendar year. Under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, a large number of pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to observe various religious festivals and occasions each year. Pakistan's Punjab is home to five of the most important Sikh pilgrimage sites, including Baba Guru Nanak's birthplace in Nankana Sahib district, where he was born in 1469, and Gurdwara (monastery) Panja Sahib in the city of Hasan Abdal, where Guru Nanak's handprint is stamped on a boulder at the monastery. The two sites are visited by thousands of Sikhs from neighboring India, Europe and the US every year. In Sept. 2019, Pakistan opened Kartarpur Corridor with India, allowing Sikhs to visit Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara – the final resting place of Baba Guru Nanak, who died in 1539.

<https://muslimnews.co.uk/news/south-asia/pakistan-around-1000-indian-sikh-pilgrims-take-part-baisakhi-festival/>

Pakistan's 'Safest Place' Joins the Tourist Map

By Nisar Ali

KHAPLU: A mountainous district in northern Pakistan that draws tens of thousands of local and international tourists every year could be one of the country's "safest places," according to locals and police officials. Renowned for its picturesque landscapes and surrounded by some of the highest mountains in the world, Ghanche, which borders China's Xinjiang province and the Indian-administered region of Ladakh, has not seen an armed robbery or other serious crimes such as murder in the past decade, a police official told Arab News. The last reported murder occurred about 15 years ago. "Ghanche is a very peaceful region of Gilgit-Baltistan. The crime rate here is quite negligible," police chief Jan Muhammad told Arab News. "We haven't witnessed serious crimes such as murders or armed robberies for years". Muhammad said that people in the district were hospitable and peaceful, and he had never received any complaints from locals or tourists of personal belongings or valuables being stolen. "This district is one of the safest places in northern Pakistan," Muhammad said. Police records show only 34 complaints of "an ordinary nature" registered across the district in

2020. This year, police in Ghanche received only three "minor complaints". Despite travel restrictions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Ghanche continues to host foreign and local tourists, mainly due to its safe reputation. "People prefer to travel to secure places, and Ghanche is the best place to visit due to its idyllic surroundings and peaceful environment," said Muhammad Zanique, a tourist from Lahore. "This is my second trip, and I recommend everyone visits this area." Muhammad Nasim Rashpori, a hotel owner in Ghanche, said people usually left their houses and vehicles unlocked since there was "no concept" of theft in the district. "Sometimes we find cell phones and wallets of tourists that they mistakenly leave behind in their rooms," Rashpori said. "We do our best to trace the owners and return these items." The Pakistan Army's brigade headquarters is located at Goma in Ghanche district. The army's Gayari Sector Battalion Headquarters is 32 km west of Siachen Glacier.

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1842896/world>



Tourists at Khaplu View Point in Gilgit-Baltistan's Ghanche district, Pakistan. (AN Photo)

Malik Riaz and Art of the Deal

By: Naziha Syed Ali



The Pakistani state went out of its way to ensure that the property tycoon's £190m settlement in the UK worked out in his favour. TOWARDS the end of 2019, something unusual happened at a federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Accountability Shahzad Akbar was allowed to present a 'non-agenda item'; he had with him a sealed envelope that he said contained a non-disclosure agreement. It pertained to a multi-million pound settlement that the UK-based National Crime Agency (NCA) had recently arrived at with property tycoon Malik Riaz. According to a source present at the meeting, "[Human Rights Minister] Shireen Mazari objected, saying, 'What approval are we giving when we don't even know its contents?' We were told that if it is opened there are implications for national security and the UK government also has reservations". The NCA investigates money laundering and illicit finances derived from criminal activity in the UK and abroad, and in the case of the latter, returns the stolen money to affected states. It seems that Mr Riaz had for some time been the subject of a 'dirty money' probe by the Agency. On Dec 3, 2019 it announced a £190 million out-of-court civil settlement with Mr Riaz — its largest till date — adding that it "did not represent a finding of guilt". In this country, on the pretext of the non-disclosure agreement, the matter was swept under the carpet. Despite its claims of holding the corrupt to account and bringing back ill-gotten gains stashed abroad by Pakistanis, the PTI government has been curiously tight-lipped about the asset forfeiture deal. More than one year on, the episode remains cloaked in secrecy. With the help of docu-

ments obtained by UK-based investigative journalism project Finance Uncovered, Dawn has pieced together a more complete picture. The deal with the NCA took on particular relevance for Pakistani citizens when Mr Riaz tweeted: "I sold our legal & declared property in UK to pay 190M £ to Supreme Court Pakistan against Bahria Town Karachi." It may be recalled that a few months earlier, in March 2019, the Supreme Court had accepted Mr Riaz's offer of Rs460bn as settlement dues by his real estate firm Bahria Town Ltd after it was found to have illegally acquired thousands of acres of land on Karachi's outskirts in district Malir. The amount, which translates to almost \$3 billion, was historic in scale. But the settlement with the NCA later that year was a travesty because, thanks to the Pakistan government, it afforded Mr Riaz a shocking reprieve. Lawyer Farrukh Qureshi of Samdani and Qureshi described it thus: "It is as if one is apprehended with the proceeds of a crime, and instead of such proceeds being reimbursed to the person wronged, they are used as reparations for another crime. ...The amount recovered should [have] come straight back to Pakistan, rather than being put back into Malik Riaz's pocket." Indeed, the British law-enforcement agency in this case may have allowed itself to be manipulated by Pakistan's power brokers. The 'accountability czar', Mr Akbar, did not respond to Dawn's questions despite repeated requests. The settlement included 1 Hyde Park Place, a £50m property. Located in one of the most expensive areas of London, it was bought by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in 2007. Over the next four years a number of high-end firms, including interior designers Tessuto, undertook a massive over-



A home cinema in 1 Hyde Park Place. — Photo: Knight Frank Real Estate

The sale illustrated the mutually beneficial relationships that exist among Pakistan's rarefied elite. Enter the Pakistani state. In 2019, Mr Riaz's £190m settlement in the UK was effected with the use of new civil

haul of what had been an office building and flats and transformed it into a single residential property. The changes included the excavation of a basement and the building of a swimming pool. On March 21, 2016 the property was sold by Mr Sharif's son Hasan Nawaz for £42.5m to a British Virgin Islands company named Ultimate Holdings Management Ltd. Mr Riaz's son, Ali Riaz Malik, signed for Ultimate Holdings; he was represented by Mischon de Reya law firm. Mr Nawaz signed for himself, witnessed by his lawyer Jeremy Freeman. (A couple of weeks before the sale took place, Mr Nawaz had been contacted by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists about the Sharif family's offshore companies that had come to light in the Panama Papers.) Interestingly, documents filed with the UK Land Registry show that a charge against the property was registered at the same time as the sale: Mr Nawaz is recorded as a lender to Ultimate Holdings. The terms of the loan were "as per the contract dated March 21, 2016 between the parties". However the contract itself is not filed with the land registry. The timing of the sale and the loan to Ultimate Holdings suggest that Mr Nawaz was keen to divest himself of the property, the priciest in the Sharif family's UK portfolio. On Sept 19, 2016, the loan by Mr Nawaz was discharged.

powers known as Account Freezing Orders (AFOs) which allow law enforcement to target suspected proceeds of crime using a civil rather than a criminal burden of proof. Because it was a civil case, the NCA was able to settle it privately with Mr Riaz rather than going to court to secure a Forfeiture Order. In August 2019, eight AFOs pertaining to the investigation against Mr Riaz were secured from Westminster Magistrates Court in London. In compliance with the AFOs, more than £100m — which the Guardian reported NCA "suspected to have been derived from bribery and corruption overseas" — was frozen on Aug 12. Some £20m associated with the Riaz family had been frozen earlier in December 2018. The AFOs were made out against accounts held by Mr Riaz's wife Bina Riaz, daughter Sana Salman, son Ali Riaz, daughter-in-law Mubashra Ali, as well as several companies, including Fortune Events and Ultimate Holdings. Enter the Pakistani state, reportedly at the behest of Mr Riaz. During September 2019, Mr Akbar is believed to have met Mr Riaz multiple times, at the Dorchester hotel and at the latter's daughter's residence. A widely circulated video showed him meeting the property tycoon outside his daughter's Paddington flat. According to a London-based Pakistani source well connected with the British politi-

cal establishment and anti-corruption organisations in the UK: “Mr Akbar advised the NCA to settle with him [Riaz]. Otherwise, he told them, Riaz would finish their prosecution budget [by having high-powered lawyers drag out court proceedings]”. Mr Akbar clearly took up the matter at the very highest levels of the British government. How else can one explain its Home Office’s refusal to share information about the case despite a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)? An email to the Home Office’s Criminal Finances Team asking for details about Mr Akbar’s meetings with Mr Riaz received a reply requesting more time for a “full response”, which arrived on Feb 1. The gist of the response was: “We neither confirm nor deny whether we hold the information that you have requested.” They based their response on certain sections under the FOIA that allow for exemptions to disclosure if doing so may prejudice relations with another state or prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. (The NCA is exempt from the FOIA and its actions can only be questioned through judicial review proceedings by a court. Even so, judicial reviews are a challenge to the way in which a decision has been made, rather than findings on the conclusion.) Whatever the approach Mr Akbar adopted, it seems to have worked and the NCA in early December 2019 agreed to a civil settlement with Malik Riaz. While noting this, the NCA’s annual report does not name Mr Riaz but describes him as “a Pakistani national, whose business is one of largest private sector employers in Pakistan.” The benign spin is remarkable: the Bahria Town behemoth indeed employs a large number of people. However, on May 4, 2018 the Supreme Court in separate hard-hitting verdicts found massive irregularities in the acquisition by Bahria of huge tracts of public and forest land for three of its housing proj-

ects across the country, declaring each of them null and void. In its judgement about Bahria Town Karachi (BTK) — which sprawls unofficially over 30,000 acres and is believed to be the largest such project in South Asia — the SC said: “We have been witnessing such nefarious activities in the past at a small level, but we have not even dreamt of such activities at such a huge, massive and colossal level.... Inaction would be disastrous and devastating for the state when the watchdogs of the public property allow the grabbers to grab it for a bone or a piece of flesh”. It also said: “Grant of land to Malir Development Authority for an incremental [low-cost] housing scheme proved to be a gimmick to accomplish the agenda of Malik Riaz aiming at his personal enrichment at the cost of the state and the people”. Investigative reports in this paper have detailed how indigenous communities have been strong-armed into ‘selling’ their land. On the one hand, police carry out raids on the goths, and book locals on fake terrorism charges. On the other, they say, Bahria personnel constantly threaten and intimidate them. Dawn made multiple attempts to obtain Mr Riaz’s response to its questions, to no avail. The Westminster Magistrates Court appointed Essex-based Haslers Accountants as receivers to handle the settlement. On Dec 5, 2019, Mr Akbar announced at a press conference in Islamabad that £140m had been repatriated to Pakistan, into the Supreme Court’s account — presumably the one set up by the court to receive Bahria Town’s liabilities — and the remaining £50m would be transferred later on the sale of 1 Hyde Park Place. When asked how the money could be transferred to the SC account, he deflected the question saying that the government, NCA and Mr Riaz had signed a “deed of confidentiality” which prevented him from elaborating on the matter.

‘The stuff of sheikhdoms’

This effort to conceal facts on the specious pretext of ‘national security’ amounts to a mockery of the Pakistani people’s right to information in a matter of public interest. Abdul Moiz Jaferii, partner at Haider Waheed Partners said: “In simple terms, it is the stuff of sheikhdoms. An unelected person [Mr Akbar] wields authority unknown to the public to settle a matter hidden from the public on terms sworn to secrecy... . The guise of confidentiality is used as an excuse, even though the only confidentiality that could possibly bind the Pakistani state here would be one it willingly agreed with the accused person, and not one which the NCA has imposed upon them... .”. According to David Corker, senior partner at the Corker Binning law firm in London, confidential settlements like the one in question are the result of a financial crime strategy that increasingly focuses on recovery of funds over criminal litigation. “Law enforcement concerning white-collar and financial crime has become fatigued by trial by jury, with all the attendant delay and costs and are increasingly seeing the re-designation of their effectiveness by how much money they have seized and how many alleged plots they have disrupted. This is the natural outcome of that process: the NCA gets a good result but it is willing to make concessions to get there”. Back in London, 1 Hyde Park Place was first put up for sale with Knight Frank realtors: their brochure described it as “one of London’s last surviving Georgian palaces”. However, it did not find any takers, apparently because of the high price tag of £45m. According to a source in London, one of the realtors handling the property said that “mid to high £30m” would have been a more realistic number. The property is now being handled by Beauchamp Estates. It raises serious questions whether the price paid for its purchase was purposely inflated. Dawn

made several attempts to contact Mr Nawaz but received no response. As of now, however, 1 Hyde Park Place is not on the market. According to a source relevant to the process, “the sale of the property is on hold at the moment.... But it should be on the market soon, it just needs to undergo some due diligence before that happens”. The NCA has given contradictory messages about the status of the property and the matter remains shrouded in mystery. A senior official from the organization first told Dawn in December 2019 that “The NCA has taken ownership of the property and it will be sold with the proceeds going back to Pakistan,” but then retracted their words in a subsequent email. Meanwhile, several members of the Riaz family reside in the deluxe Lancaster Gate development just a short walk from 1 Hyde Park Place. Fortune Events Ltd, an offshore company based in the British Virgin Islands, bought nine apartments here between 2011 and 2018 for a total of £35.95m. There are indications that the Riaz family is the actual beneficiary of the nine apartments. For one, Ali Riaz’s email is given as a contact address on one of the title deeds; another lists a Dubai PO Box address which links to Ali Riaz’s property at P69 Emirates Hills. The address for the Mischon de Reya law firm is also frequently given as a contact address. On Nov 22, 2019 Westminster Magistrates Court set aside the eight AFOs dated Aug 12, 2019 and the first one from December 2018 to enable money in the accounts to be repatriated to Pakistan. Two of the accounts belong to Fortune Events, suggesting the Riaz family is indeed the beneficiary of the Lancaster Gate portfolio. The settlement appears to have left untouched his luxury portfolio worth £36m owned through a company served with two AFOs.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1618221>

Ideological Nexus of Turkey and Pakistan Preachers of Human Rights on Kashmir

In order to achieve clearly ulterior ideological motives, Turkey and Pakistan have been blindly supporting each other not only in defense relations but also at the diplomatic level globally. Recently, when there was a border dispute with Greece in the Mediterranean Sea, Pakistan had openly declared its support for Turkey without even assessing the conflict and its ramifications. Similarly, in the Mediterranean Sea, the navies of Pakistan and Turkey also declared solidarity by conducting military exercises. In return, Turkey openly supports Pakistan when it comes to Kashmir, be it an international platform or a regional diplomatic conclave. Turkish President Erdogan has consistently raised the issue at the UN forum to the extent of averring in February 2020 that the Kashmir issue is as important to Turkey as it is to Pakistan. Since then, the Turkish President Erdogan is constantly trying to preach India on its human rights record in Kashmir in its bid to gain sympathy from South Asian Muslims to challenge Saudi Arabia's monarchy in the Muslim world. Therefore, he teamed up with then-Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad and Pakistani PM Imran Khan to form an alliance of non-Arab Islamic countries in a sharp contrast to the Saudi-led OIC. Earlier also, Erdogan has repeatedly raised the Kashmir issue at the United Nations on several occasions. In September last year, flagged the Kashmir issue while addressing the UN General Assembly, and said that Kashmir was a burning issue and crucial for peace and stability in South Asia. "This has become even more serious problem after the removal of the Special Status of Jammu and Kashmir (Article 370). We want to solve this problem under the UN resolution" Erdogan said in a gesture to openly support Imran Khan, the prime minister of Pakistan during his address. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha in August last year, Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan assured Pakistani President Arif Alvi of earning him an avid international support for Kashmir. Erdogan has compared Kashmir to Palestine many times. Not only that, he has also falsely accused India of perpetrating more grievous atrocities in Kashmir after the outbreak of the Covid-19. While the truth is that Erdogan, who is trying to teach India a lesson of democracy on Kashmir, is known in Turkey's progressive cohorts as a populist and a staunch Islamist dictator who supports several radical Salafist organizations across the world including the notorious Ikhwan-ul-Muslimin which is banned in Egypt. Turkey has now emerged as the second largest center of 'anti-India propaganda' after Pakistan. According to reports, radical Islamic organizations in all parts of the country, including Kerala and Kashmir, have their sources of funding from the Turkish establishment. Most deplorably, Turkey is trying to dissuade Muslims in India, disassociate them with their local culture and ethos, pluralistic Indo-Islamic values and thus recruit extremists to further political ends. His attempt to expand his influence through the nostalgia of the Ottoman Caliphate/Khilafat-e-Usmaniya among South Asian Muslims is an open secret now. Egregious abuses of human rights within Turkey—persecution of the Hizmet Movement Sufi followers, jailing of interdependent journalists, enforced disappearance of scores of judges and lawyers, arrest and arbitration of teachers and many pregnant woman teachers accused of being linked to the Gulenist Network, sectarian attacks on the Shiite minority, and last but not the least, the conversion of the historic Hagia Sophia Museum into a mosque that remained a church until 1453; All these candidly expose the height of duplicity of Turkey on the issue of Human Rights. Violators of human rights only preach and never practice. The Syrian Observa-

tory for Human Rights has claimed in recent reports that Turkey is in the process of deploying Sadat—an organization of its mercenaries active in Syria—in Kashmir. Sadat is led by Adnan Tanarivardi, Erdogan's military adviser. Who has appointed a Kashmir-born terror sympathizer and a 24-hour anti-India propagandist Ghulam Nabi Fai set up a base in Kashmir. Fai has been sentenced to two years in a US jail for recruiting mercenaries and tax evasion against India at the behest of Pakistan. An active member of the radical organization Jamaat-e-Islami, Fai set up the American Council of Kashmir (KAC) to plot against the developments in Jammu & Kashmir in the US. In fact, the current Erdogan government in Turkey is an Islamist regime in a country which was actually a cradle of democracy, human rights and freedom of religion and a glaring example for most Muslim nations in terms of secular ethos. But of late, it has become a populist state full of political duplicity and moral bankruptcy and hypocrisy. This can be clearly seen that Turkish President Recep Tyep Erdogan is now habitual to preach to the world about what is right and wrong, and thus 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' (an Islamist doctrine of religious reformism often quoted by the radical and extremist organizations across the Middle East, based on some misunderstood Verses of the Qur'an). Clearly motivated by political ulterior motives, Turkish President Erdogan has been propagating the misleading rhetoric on the internal regional issue of Kashmir in a crazy bid to target against the interests of India to back up Pakistan in its ruthless propaganda on international forums including in the ongoing United Nations Human Rights Council session in Geneva. Until now, India has responded to Erdogan's blunts by merely focusing on bilateral relations. But this time, it's too much, and it cannot be easily digested.

16 While Pakistan, China and Turkey don't pull any punches in collectively targeting India on international platforms like the United Nations in a collaborative and coordinated manner, India continues to looks up to the mankind,

including of course, all the different types of nations and the world as 'One Family' in tandem with the Indian idea of "Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam". But as the saying goes on in Arabic language, don't remain innocent and saintly enough to let your enemies totally destroy you. This is precisely why, it seems, India on has asserted itself with a strong position to counter Turkish President Erdogan and his allies on the issue, especially the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC). "OIC was misled by Pakistan during its submissions at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)", India said. Exercising its right of reply to the statements made by Pakistan and the OIC, Indian diplomat Pawankumar Badhe rejected the reference to the UT of J&K in the OIC statement. The 57-member organisation, he said, has no locus standi to comment on matters related to J&K, which is an integral and inalienable part of India. He expressed great regret that the "OIC continues to allow itself to be exploited by Pakistan to indulge in its anti-India propaganda". The United Nations Human Rights Council began its 46th session on Monday. The foreign ministers of each country took turns: India's foreign affairs minister, S Jaishankar spoke about terrorism, the pandemic, and vaccines; US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke about democracy, harmony, and stability; but Turkey's foreign minister stooped too low to speak on the run of the mill topic of Kashmir to score a goal in the Islamist circles and gain more Muslim sympathizers in South Asia and South East Asia, particularly in Pakistan and Malaysia. Isn't it a clear duplicity and irony that Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Chavu-Shoglu, while speaking on Kashmir at the UNHCR, pulled no punches in targeting India but uttered no single word on the rights of Kashmiris in PoK? Blatantly, Turkish FM made no mention of the state-sponsored terrorism of Pakistan in Kashmir and the entire South Asian region.

<https://www.newageislam.com/the-war-islam/new-age-islam-correspondent/ideological-nexus-turkey-pakistan-%E2%80%94preachers-human-rights-kashmir/d/124475>

Covid-19: How India failed to prevent a deadly second wave

By: Soutik Biswas

In early March, India's health minister Harsh Vardhan declared the country was "in the end-game" of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr Vardhan also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership as an "example to the world in international co-operation". From January onwards, India had begun shipping doses to foreign countries as part of its much-vaunted "vaccine diplomacy". Mr Vardhan's unbridled optimism was based on a sharp drop in reported infections. Since a peak of more than 93,000 cases per day on average in mid-September, infections had steadily declined. By mid-February, India was counting an average of 11,000 cases a day. The seven-day rolling average of daily deaths from the disease had slid to below 100. The euphoria at beating the virus had been building since late last year. Politicians, policy makers and parts of the media believed that India was truly out of the woods. In December, central bank officials announced that India was "bending the Covid infection curve". There was evidence, they said, in poetic terms, that the economy was "breaking out amidst winter's lengthening shadows towards a place in sunlight". Mr Modi was called a "vaccine guru". At the end of February, India's election authorities announced key elections in five states where 186 million people were eligible to vote for 824 seats. Beginning 27 March, the polls would stretch over a month, and in the case of the state of West Bengal, be held in eight phases. Campaigning had begun in full swing, with no safety protocols and social distancing. In mid-March, the cricket board allowed more than 130,000 fans, mostly unmasked, to watch two international cricket games between India and England at the Narendra Modi stadium in Gujarat. In less than a month, things began to unravel. India was in the grips of a devastating second wave of the virus and cities were facing fresh lockdowns. By mid-April, the country was averaging more than 100,000 cases a day. On Sunday, India recorded more than 270,000 cases and over 1,600 deaths, both new single-day records. If the runaway infection was not checked, India could be recording more than 2,300 deaths every day by first week of June, according to a report by The Lancet Covid-19 Commission. India is now in the grips of a public health emergency. Social media feeds are full with videos of Covid funerals at crowded cemeteries, wailing relatives of the dead outside hospitals, long queues of ambulances carrying gasping patients, mortuaries overflowing with the dead, and patients, sometimes two to a bed, in corridors and lobbies of hospitals. There are frantic calls for help for beds, medicines, oxygen, essential drugs and tests. Drugs are being sold on the black market, and test results are taking days. "They didn't tell me for three hours that my child is dead," a dazed mother says in one video, sitting outside an ICU. Wails of another person outside the intensive care punctuate the silences. Even India's mammoth vaccination effort was now struggling. In the beginning, the rollout had been embroiled in a controversy over the efficacy over a home-grown candidate. Even as the country ramped up the drive and administered more than 100 million doses by last week, vaccine shortages were being reported. Serum Institute of India, the country's - and the world's - biggest vaccine maker said it would not be able to ramp up supplies before June because it didn't have enough money to expand capacity. India placed a temporary hold on all exports of the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, because the doses were needed urgently at home, and allowed imports of foreign vaccines. Even oxygen was likely to be imported now to meet the surge in demand. Meanwhile, almost in a parallel universe, away from the death and despair, the world's richest cricket tournament



was being played behind closed doors every evening, and tens of thousands of people were following their leaders to election rallies and attending the Hindu festival of Kumbh Mela. "It is beyond surreal, what is happening," Shiv Visvanathan, a sociology professor, told me.

Experts believe the government appears to have completely dropped the ball on the second wave of infections that was about to hit India. In mid-February, Tabassum Barnagarwala, a journalist with the Indian Express newspaper, flagged a seven-fold rise in new cases in parts of Maharashtra and reported that samples from the infected had been sent for genome sequencing to look for imported variants. By the end of the month, the BBC reported the surge and asked whether India was facing a new Covid wave. "We really don't know what the cause of the surge is. What is worrying is that entire families are getting infected. This is a completely new trend," Dr Shyamsunder Nikam, civil surgeon of an affected district in Maharashtra, said at the time. Experts now say that crowing about India's exceptionalism in "beating" the epidemic - younger population, native immunity, a largely rural population - and declaring victory on the virus turned out to be cruelly premature. "As is typical in India, official arrogance, hyper-nationalism, populism and an ample dose of bureaucratic incompetence have combined to create a crisis," said Mihir Sharma, a columnist for Bloomberg. India's second wave was fuelled by people letting their guard down, attending weddings and social

gatherings, and by mixed messaging from the government, allowing political rallies and religious gatherings. With infections declining, fewer people were taking the jabs, slowing down the vaccination drive, which had aimed to inoculate 250 million people by the end of July. In mid-February, Bhramar Mukherjee, a biostatistician at the University of Michigan, tweeted that India needed to "accelerate the vaccination drive while the case counts are low". Nobody quite took notice. "There was a feeling of triumphalism," said K Srinath Reddy, the president of the Public Health Foundation of India. "Some felt we had achieved herd immunity. Everyone wanted to get back to work. This narrative fell on many receptive ears, and the few voices of caution were not heeded to," he said. A second wave may have been inevitable, but India could have "postponed or delayed it and lessened its impact," said Gautam Menon, a professor of physics and biology. Like many other countries, India should have begun careful genomic surveillance in January to detect variants, Mr Menon said. Some of these variants could be driving the surge. "We learnt of new variants in February from reports from Maharashtra. This was initially denied by authorities," Mr Menon added. "This was a significant turning point." What are the lessons of this public health crisis? For one, India should learn not to declare victory over the virus prematurely, and it should put a lid on triumphalism. People should also learn to adapt to short, local lockdowns in the event of the inevitable future spikes of infection. Most epidemiologists predict more waves, given that India is evidently still far away from reaching herd immunity and its vaccination rate remains slow. "We can't freeze human life," Professor Reddy said. "If we can't physically distance in the crowded cities, we can at least make sure everyone wears a proper mask. And wear it properly. That's not a big ask."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56771766>

U.S. President Chalks Up Impressive First 100 Days



In his first 100 days in office, Joe Biden has achieved more than many of predecessors did during four years in office. The U.S. president is seeking to move away from neoliberalism to save democracy.



U.S. President Joe Biden has proven to be anything but old and feeble during his first three months in office.

Foto: Adam Schultz / White House / ZUMA PRESS / imago imagesi

It seemed presumptuous, almost megalomaniacal when Joe Biden last August sought to position himself as a modern-day Franklin Delano Roosevelt, arguably the most formative American president of the 20th century. The reasons the Democrats had chosen Biden as their candidate for president were all decidedly unglamorous. Predictability and experience were among them, but above all, there was a fear that a more ambitious candidate might scare off voters. Biden was the candidate to beat Donald Trump – that was the goal. Nobody expected a new FDR. Biden, who was 77 at the time, was both a emergency solution and a compromise: a Washington establishment figure everyone could agree on but no one was particularly excited about. And why should they be? The candidate generated excitement above all with his legendary Freudian slips and the question as to whether he, as the oldest president in the history of the United States, would even survive his term in office. And yet, on that warm August day, as he introduced himself on stage in Wilmington, Delaware, Biden compared himself to Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democratic giant who had defeated Adolf Hitler as president and fought the Great Depression at home with an unprecedented social-welfare program. FDR showed that the U.S. could recover and prevail. "And so can we," Biden said. That sentence got lost in the cacophony of the election campaign. If anything, it was interpreted as the hyperbole of a man who clearly needed to distract from his own weaknesses with exaggerated comparisons. After all, wasn't it Biden's own

advisers who admitted behind closed doors that Trump's derisive nickname "Sleepy Joe" contained a dash of truth? Biden will soon have served his first 100 days in office, and it can already be said that in this short time, he has achieved more than some of his predecessors did over the course of an entire term. "Uncle Joe," as Biden is referred to among Democrats in a strange mix of malice and affection, set a course for America in a matter of only weeks that is shaking off not only the pandemic, but also the neoliberalism that began in the early 1980s under Ronald Reagan. From 1979 to 2017, the purchasing power of a white middle-income worker fell by 13 percent, yet per-capita national U.S. income rose by 85 percent. As the elites on the coasts amassed fairytale wealth, industrial workers in the Midwest lost their jobs or were forced into poorly paid service jobs. Nothing benefited Trump more than the feeling among many voters that the Democrats are closer to Wall Street bankers and internet billionaires than plumbers in Wisconsin or nurses in Missouri. Biden has set out to change that. His American Rescue Plan is a gigantic \$1.9 trillion spending program that amounts to half of Germany's gross domestic product. Every American who makes less than \$75,000 a year will now receive a check for \$1,400. At the same time, child tax credit allowances for families will be increased to such an extent that, mathematically at least, child poverty will be almost halved. Free daycare spots are to follow. Biden has also announced an infrastructure program that includes another \$2 trillion in spending. The Democrats want to revamp 20,000 miles of roads and repair 10,000 bridges. The country is also to get 500,000 new charging stations for electric cars. This goes deeper than just putting a band-aid on the wounds of an acute economic crisis. Biden won't shape the U.S. into a full-fledged, European style social democracy – the belief in the power of the individual is too deeply anchored in American society for

that. But with a little luck, Biden could succeed in reining in an unbridled capitalism that now primarily serves a very narrow swath of the elite and is destroying trust in government. In 2016, two-thirds of white workers believed that the government in Washington was controlled by the rich and influential corporations and that voting had become a pointless exercise. Biden understood that the economy needed to recover before he could set about repairing American democracy, says Daniel Ziblatt, a political scientist and professor at Harvard University. "And that is what he has focused on." In doing so, Biden is ironically jumping into a void left by his predecessor. The New York real estate magnate was never a classic representative of his party. Trump won the presidential nomination against the Republican establishment – and with the promise of investing billions in American infrastructure. "We Can Reward Work, Rebuild the Middle Class" Now, Biden wants to implement the economic turnaround that Trump always talked about but never got around to implementing. The Democrat frequently mentioned his own humble upbringing on the campaign trail. He grew up the son of a businessman in Scranton, Pennsylvania, whose luck ran out in the 1950s. Biden has turned the story into a metaphor for a country that needs to take care of its normal people again. "We can reward work, rebuild the middle class," he said in his inaugural address on Jan. 20, which historian Jon Meacham helped draft. Meacham is best known for a dual biography he wrote about Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The book pays homage to the president who led the U.S. through World War II. But it could be argued that Roosevelt's "New Deal" did more to shape the country than his foreign policy. It was FDR who introduced the country's pension system and social security, established a minimum wage and gave workers the right to organize in unions. Nobody to that point had done more to change economic life in the U.S. And if Biden now positions

himself within this tradition, it can also be seen as a counterrevolution to the era of Reagan, who, in 1986, said that the most terrible words in the English language were: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help". Reagan's contempt for government became deeply rooted in the American consciousness and even influenced Democratic presidents like Bill Clinton, who further opened the U.S. to free trade and weakened the welfare state. The idea behind it was that the U.S. would be best served if the government withdrew as far as possible from the lives of its citizens. But the American conviction that everyone is the architect of his or her own fate has been deeply shaken by the pandemic. Hundreds of thousands of restaurant and store owners lost their livelihoods from one day to the next and are now dependent on checks from Washington. The country is currently finding its way out of the corona crisis as quickly as it is because the government invested more than \$20 billion in the development and deployment of vaccines. Viewed in this light, every vaccination appointment is the antithesis of the old Republican line that the government is the natural enemy of free citizens. More than 40 percent of Americans have already received at least one vaccination shot, and the vaccination drive is in full swing across the country: in hockey stadiums, drugstores and in supermarkets in places like Georgia Avenue in Washington, D.C. Inside the store, between the pasta aisle and the fruit section, a sign reads "COVID-19 Vaccine – Start here." If you have an appointment, all you have to do is bring your ID, that's it. After taking office, Biden formed a COVID team in the White House that has devoted all its energy to delivering vaccines as quickly as possible. On some days, 4 million people across the country receive their shots. A week ago, Biden announced that every adult American should be able to sign up for a vaccination appointment starting in mid-April, and by the end of May, the pandemic should be history for the

vast majority of them. It's clear to the president that the economy won't rebound until people no longer have to fear the virus, which is why he is relying on massive government spending in addition to vaccines. In this respect, the president does differ significantly from Roosevelt. The British economist John Maynard Keynes, the brainchild of deficit spending, implored Roosevelt in 1930s to stimulate the economy with a debt-financed program – and to thus show that the world's largest democracy was capable of changing the lives of its people for the better. Despite all the reforms, Roosevelt remained a child of his times and viewed Keynes' revolutionary ideas with skepticism. Until World War II, U.S. borrowing never exceeded 6 percent of gross domestic product, which was a major contributing factor to the economic crisis dragging on well into the 1930s. It was a mistake that Biden won't repeat. In the current year alone, the president plans to rack up around \$2.3 trillion in debt, more than 10% of U.S. economic output. It's a huge amount – and in normal times, Republicans would do all they could to put a stop to it. The idea that the state must not live beyond its means was part of the Republican creed for decades. But here, too, Trump shattered old convictions: During the final year of his presidency, fresh borrowing exceeded 15 percent. Compared to that, Biden has been almost miserly. The president doesn't want to finance his infrastructure program solely by means of borrowing, though. He also wants to increase taxes for Americans with annual incomes of over \$400,000. Biden has learned the lesson from his time in the Obama administration that voters are unforgiving when it comes to hesitance. During the election campaign, he promised to reach out to the Republicans in Congress. In retrospect, this seems more like a tactical maneuver to maintain an aura of bipartisanship. Biden, after all, pushed his stimulus package through Congress using a procedural trick that made it impossible for his opponents to torpedo the

bill. It almost seems as if the Oval Office has molded Biden into a new politician. For decades he cultivated the image of a centrist Democrat who is guided not by ideology, but by the dictates of what is possible. He didn't care that friends of his in the left-wing of the party consider him to be an opportunist. While still on the campaign trail, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the hero of the progressive wing of the party, said: "In any other country, Joe Biden and I would not be in the same party." Now, the very Biden who so carefully polished his image as a centrist is pushing through the most determined reform program in recent American history, much to the delight of his erstwhile detractors within the party. "I think President Biden understands what many progressives have been saying for a long time: that Trump was not a break from the status quo, but a product of the status quo," says Matt Duss, an adviser to leftist Senator Bernie Sanders. He says the new administration must show it is capable of improving the lives of its people if it wants to prevent a return to Trump-style politics. Biden's metamorphosis cannot be understood without looking through the lens of the botched start to the Obama presidency. As Obama's vice president at the time, Biden experienced first-hand how his boss became entangled in tough negotiations with the Republicans in Congress. Obama wanted to show that he was willing to work together with the very America that had fought him so passionately. But ultimately, it was the Republicans who reaped the rewards, winning a majority in the House of Representatives in landslide 2010 midterm elections. Biden is determined to avoid a similar fiasco in the midterm elections in November 2022. But his presidency will only be a success if he can defend his majority in the Senate, which currently hangs on a single seat. Biden also wants to step out of the shadow of Obama, who has outshone him with his rhetorical brilliance and what seems like effortless nonchalance. During the election campaign, Obama's

loyal supporters still talked about Biden as if he were a somewhat dim student who, although not short of diligence, unfortunately lacked that crucial bit of quick wit and charisma. After Biden made another bad slip of the tongue during a debate, former Obama spin doctor David Axelrod shook his head in pity on CNN in response. In that respect, the U.S. is also experiencing a late act of emancipation. Obama's presidency was first and foremost a symbolic success: He was the first black president in more than 200 years of U.S. history. At the same time, it was associated with the hope that, after the bloody aberration of the Iraq War, sanity would finally return to the White House in the field of foreign policy, which is also the precise reason Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in a kind of pre-emptive move just eight months after he took office. But the president was never quite able to live up to those expectations. He neither managed to bring the Israelis and Palestinians closer together nor end the killing in Syria. He didn't even keep his promise to close the Guantanamo detention camp in Cuba. In terms of domestic policy, he was also a disappointment in the eyes of many Democrats. His health care reform remained piecemeal, and an overhauling of the country's immigration laws bogged down in Congress. "FDR did not become a legendary president because he gave such inspirational speeches," says Max Bergmann of the Center for American Progress in Washington. It was because "he took things in his hand and got so much done." Biden probably thinks along similar lines. He now wants to actually carry through with the things that Obama talked about so eloquently. And Biden isn't letting vanity get in the way. If it can somehow be avoided, he shuns the big stage – which at the same time also serves to reduce the risk of dominating the headlines for days on end with one of his famous bloopers. Even when Biden without a Teleprompter, danger always lurks. That he recently indirectly called Russian President Vladimir Putin a

killer in an interview was likely more of an oversight than any clever foreign policy maneuver. And when, a little over two weeks ago, he held his first big press conference, he got so hopelessly lost in thoughts about Senate reform that he was only able to finish his convoluted sentence construction with a sighed "anyway." Biden Says He Might Run Again, At the Age of 81 It's up to his new team to iron out such blunders. Biden's chief of staff Ron Klain is one of them, but also Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who has been a Washington insider for decades. Most recently, she proposed a global minimum tax on corporations in order to dry up tax havens. The advantage of Biden's age and experience is that he no longer gets dragged into every political skirmish. Biden doesn't share Trump's passion for social media and would never think of sharing his anger with the world via a tweet. He leaves the debates about gender toilets and cancel culture to the rowdy anchors at Fox News looking for low-hanging fruit. Biden wants to lower the country's political blood pressure, because all the excitement only benefits the Republicans. He can also see how desperate his Republican opponents have become. And as long as the refugee movements on the southern border of the United States don't trigger a sense of national crisis, they have nothing on a president who already enjoys popularity ratings that Trump could only dream of. In their desperation, the Republicans are resorting to tinkering with election laws in the states to make it harder for African Americans to go to the polls. Which only seems to further motivate Biden. At his press conference, the president let it slip that he could well imagine running again in 2024. He would then be 81 years old.

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/dream-start-for-sleepy-joe-u-s-president-chalks-up-impressive-first-100-days-a-f9585ccd-5418-4767-82e7-da7a0666e604>

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Monthly Lahore International and Aabgeenei Magazine have received monetary donation from a few friends to whom we are very grateful. Their generosity has helped make it possible for us to continue publishing this magazine for the betterment of society and the propagation of true Islam.

We would like to thank the following friends. Please remember them in your prayers:

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Mars Ingenuity Helicopter Makes Historic Test Flight

NASA has carried out the first powered, controlled flight on another planet. Ingenuity was able to lift, rotate, and land. More complicated tests are planned in the coming weeks. The United States space agency, NASA, on Monday successfully tested a small helicopter on Mars, with flight data traveling across the "deep space network" and arriving at mission control several hours after the test was completed. Ingenuity executed a pre-programmed flight using an autopilot mechanism and a navigation system. The flight maneuver needed to be pre-programmed, as it takes 15 minutes for signals to travel from Earth to Mars. The 1.8-kilogram (4-pound) craft was able to lift off, hover in place above the surface, and then land gently. The test was carried out in a vast Martian basin called Jezero Crater. In a live broadcast of the data arriving, NASA scientists applauded as images arrived showing Ingenuity hovering above the Martian surface. Images of the flight were captured by the Perseverance rover, which was parked some 76 meters from

Ingenuity traveled to the red planet strapped to the Perseverance rover, which touched down on February 18 to begin a mission searching for signs of life on Mars. For now, the goal of the Ingenuity is to demonstrate that its flight technology works, which could pave the way for faster exploration of extraterrestrial surfaces.

The thin air on Mars, which has less than 1% of Earth's atmospheric pressure, also makes it harder to achieve lift, although this is partially offset by a weaker gravitational pull. NASA engineers had also been particularly concerned about wind gusts during the landing, as the helicopter cannot prop itself up if a gust of wind, or a botched maneuver, knocks it over.

What next for Ingenuity?

After the first successful flight, Ingenuity will carry out several lengthier flights in the coming weeks, with breaks to recharge batteries. The next flight should take place within four days. Each test is set to be successively more difficult. For example, NASA eventually aims to have the craft rise 5 meters and then move laterally.

Ingenuity's "lifetime will be determined by how well it lands" each time, said Ingenuity project manager MiMi Aung. "Once we get to the fourth and fifth flight, we'll have fun," she said. "We are going to take very bold flights and take high risk." NASA had compared Monday's test flight to the first powered flight of an airplane, achieved in 1903 by the Wright brothers in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The Ingenuity

is carrying a small piece of fabric from the Kitty Hawk plane, in honor of the first flight on Earth. "Each world gets only one first flight," said Aung ahead of the first attempt.

<https://www.dw.com/en/mars-ingenuity-helicopter-makes-historic-test-flight/a-57247908>



the flight zone. Cameras on the Ingenuity also took several photos of the Martian surface. All of the flight data was transmitted back to Earth by Perseverance. NASA hopes more images and a more complete video of the flight will arrive to Earth over the course of several days.

What is Ingenuity's mission?

France to Boost Vigilance Around Muslim Worship Places

By: Shweta Desai



(CFCM) said the incident in Rennes occurred two days after an arson attack on the Arrahma mosque in Nantes as well as death threats addressed to Muslim jour-

PARIS (AA): France's interior minister directed law enforcement agencies Sunday to step up vigilance around Muslim places of worship in the country and condemned the defacing of an Islamic center with hateful graffiti as "unacceptable."

"The anti-Muslim inscriptions that have been inscribed on this cultural and religious center are unacceptable. Freedom of worship in France is a fundamental freedom," Gerald Darmanin said during a visit to the Avicenna Islamic Cultural Center in the city of Rennes in northwest France. The center's premises were vandalized days before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan with Islamophobic graffiti. Darmanin said he traveled there to show the government of President Emmanuel Macron's solidarity with the Muslim community. The graffiti included tags insulting Islam and Prophet Muhammad, references to restarting the Crusades and a call for Catholicism to be made the state religion. "The crusades will resume", "Charles Martel save us", "No to Islamization", "Long live the Roy", "Eternal France", "Catholicism, state religion" or "EELV = Traitors",

The French Council of Muslim Worship

nalist Nadiya Lazzouni. It blamed the upsurge in anti-Muslim acts on the ongoing debates around a bill consolidating the principles of the Republic indiscriminately targeting the Muslim community. In a statement, CFCM said the debates "have unfortunately served as forums for haters of all stripes." It added that the Islamophobic slogans are part of a separatist movement whose ideology inspired Brenton Tarrant, who opened fire on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019, killing 51 people, and is theorized by French intellectuals. "This separatism and those who instrumentalize Islam feed each other and constitute a threat to our country and our fellow citizens," it warned, while appealing to Muslims to be vigilant and not get in the "wrong fight." In the western city of Nantes, the door of a mosque was destroyed by fire on Thursday night. And on Friday, a 24-year-old neo-Nazi was charged for making threats against the mosque in Le Mans, also in western France.

<https://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/france-boost-vigilance-around-muslim-worship-places/>

Is Hijab Ban in France Islamophobic?



By Basima Mirza

For anyone who has been keeping up with the news, you might have heard about the ban on hijab in France. It is a law making it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to wear a hijab. Mothers who wear hijabs also can not accompany their children on school trips. Their justification for this act is that the hijab is “oppressing women” which I think is ridiculous. This isn’t about the rights of women; this in my view is pure Islamophobia. In fact, they are taking the rights of women away. They are prohibiting Muslim women from being comfortable, practicing religion, or even giving them the option to choose for themselves. The country is controlling what women can or cannot wear, and that doesn’t seem like liberating women to me. What makes this even more outrageous is that the age to wear a hijab is even higher than the age of consent in France! Previously in 2004, France had also banned the wearing of a face veil (niqab). So when will France stop continually targeting Muslim women. Along with hijab, France has also banned other symbols of religion such as crosses (Christianity) and Skull caps (Judaism). But as you can tell someone of Christian faith to take off their cross, you cannot tell a Muslim woman to take off her headscarf for obvious reasons. While we are on the topic of different religions, I am confused to why it is acceptable in society for nuns (Christianity) to be modest and cover their heads without question but when it comes to Islam it’s suddenly unacceptable? Now imagine something like this happening all over Canada, what would we as Muslims do? As a matter of fact it is happening in parts of Canada i.e. Quebec. It prevents anyone from wearing any symbol of faith from working. Islam’s point of view on

this is that this is unacceptable. What bothers society so much about women covering their heads and being modest? Specifically Muslim women - everyone should have the freedom to express their religious beliefs (to an extent). To sum up, this ban on hijab in France should be abolished. It is outrageous that a girl under the age of 18 is forced to stop wearing hijab. It is a matter of dignity of a Muslim girl when she wears a headscarf. We as Muslims should pray that this ban be lifted as soon as possible



because it is more than just a piece of clothing.

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How to Overcome Sectarianism Within the Muslim Community?

By Syed Asad, MD FACP

The world's 1.6 billion Muslims are united in their belief in God and the Prophet Muhammad. However, Muslims have widely differing views about many aspects of their faith. Raising the question of how important religion is to their lives, who count as a Muslim, and what is acceptable in Islam, according to a worldwide survey by the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion & Public Life. The survey finds many Muslims worldwide share other faith articles, including belief in angels, heaven, hell, and fate (or predestination). While there is broad agreement on Islam's core tenets, Muslims across the 39 countries and territories surveyed differ significantly in their religious commitment levels, openness to multiple interpretations of their faith, and acceptance of various sects and movements.

There are three major well-recognized sects, Sunnies, Shias, and Sufis. The survey asked Muslims whether they identify with various sects of Islam and their attitudes toward other sects and subgroups. The survey suggests that many Muslims worldwide either do not know or do not care about them. Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa tend to be most keenly aware of the distinction between the two main branches of Islam, Sunni, and Shias. In most countries surveyed in the region, at least 40% of Sunnis do not accept Shias as fellow Muslims. Only in Lebanon and Iraq – nations where sizable populations of Sunnis and Shias live side by side – do large majorities of Sunnis recognize Shias as fellow Muslims and accept their distinctive practices as part of Islam. In 32 of the 39 countries surveyed, half or more Muslims say there is only one correct way to understand Islam's teachings. By contrast, in the United States, 57% of Muslims say Islam is open to multiple interpretations. Sectarianism is the primary

source of disunity and conflict among Muslim society, particularly in the Middle East and Pakistan. The political context of the Middle East necessitates the political mobilization and manipulation of sectarian identities to survive. Authoritarianism is the political context that allows sectarianism to flourish. In the last two decades, we have witnessed the rise of Shiite power all over the Middle East. Sunni rulers have viewed with much anxiety the new Shiite crescent that extends from Iran to Lebanon. Consequently, the Syrian crisis became more of a regional problem than a local and seen as an opportunity to weaken the Shiites and replace them with a Sunni government.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have been the two main actors of conflict in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia overwhelmingly represents Salafism's ideology, and the country historically sees itself as the Muslim world leader since its territory includes the birthplace of Islam. On the other hand, Iran is directed by Shiite policies, especially since 1979 when the Islamic revolution of Iran took place, forming a theocracy that aims to spread its ideology to the outside world. The Ummah is broadly divided against itself, torn up and fragmented into nearly fifty nation-states separated by artificial boundaries designed to create and ensure continued tension and confrontation, especially among neighbouring states. None of these states has had the chance to attain the outright freedom and stability, or social integration that would enable it to concentrate its energies on construction and development. Sectarianism, factionalism, and nationalism, all of which cause disharmony, have dominated affairs and have led to a continual state of instability, allowing foreign powers to manipulate at the time of their choosing. Such a situation only leads to more turmoil and anarchy. The lack of

individual freedom prevents the people from pursuing their intellectual and cultural, and natural psychological development. Muslims continue to live under the shadow of poverty, oppression, and terror, from military dictators who seize power and set their own frivolous, arbitrary, and whimsical policies through force, torture, and intimidation. In such dictatorships, political and administrative bodies and institutions' roles prevent and destroy all of the people's qualities and artistic potential. The few Muslim states that have followed the industrialization path have not attained complete self-sufficiency because they still depend on foreign sources for most of the equipment and the capital needed to develop their industries. As a result, these foreign sources can control the nascent industries and direct them according to their own political and economic interests. The overwhelming majority of the Ummah is illiterate. The people's needs far outweigh the goods, materials, and services they can provide. Even in the critical and vital necessities of life, almost no Muslim state is self-sufficient. This deficiency is usually made up by imports, which only increases dependency on foreign powers. What makes the situation even more intolerable is that raw materials are bought from Muslim states at the lowest prices, or even taken for nothing, and are returned to them as manufactured goods at the highest prices. In most cases, "Muslim industry" was not designed to meet the Muslim world's desperate, immediate, and vital needs but to meet only its inhabitants' tangential and secondary needs and satisfy and cater to the consumeristic desires. Unfortunately, the Muslim world has developed the habit of consuming new non-Islamic civilization products and has adopted many of its outer aspects, such as "modern" roads, buildings, and entertainment places in its capitals. It has also established some political and economic institutions based on the western model. Unfortunately, such measures have failed to bring about the desired transforma-

tion. The Muslim world's current education system has failed to instil fundamental beliefs, sound vision, standards, or motives. Materialism has become widespread among the educated classes, which have lost any sense of a clear purpose in life. Academic syllabi have failed to establish a useful purpose in the Muslim conscience. In contrast, despite their secularism, the West's secondary schools teach students about western heritage, cultural history, and traditions in an integrated and comprehensive manner. It gives the students a sense of belonging and instils their nation's primary goals and strategy. They grow up with this feeling and carry their nation's vision and concepts of life, the universe, humanity, other cultures, as well as other aspects of its worldview. In the USA, we have mosques and Islamic centres in all major cities and suburban areas. They are predominantly Sunni centres, and few are Shia and others. A majority of them are ethnically centred and have no cross-links between them. Unlike Churches and Synagogues, the Mosques lack centralization in education, which has created a power vacuum. In house Fitna, power politics and tribalism have hampered progress. The clergy is not inclined to adapt to modernity, tolerance, and pluralism, leading to chaos and isolation. In light of the above, the first step toward formulating an Islamic cultural strategy is to redefine knowledge in terms of Islamic epistemology and in a way that will be acceptable to Muslims everywhere. In this context, we need to emphasize that all knowledge is derived from revelation, reason, perception, or experiment. Religious pluralism, interreligious dialogue, democracy, and a good functioning secular state are essential tools to overcome sectarianism within the Muslim community.

<https://www.newageislam.com/islam-sectarianism/syed-asad-md-facp-new-age-islam/sunnis-shias-sufis-disunity-muslim-ummah/d/124455>



Welcome to Beautiful Ramadan Customs

By: Noor A. AlNaboud

During Ramadan, all get a fresh chance to preform and practice new healthy and spiritual programs far away for the daily, boring, routine and repetitive tasks and actions in a person's life. One of the most vivid memories during the holy month is how people decorate their homes and streets, welcoming all with a smile or food, while the rituals of this month brings peace, comfort and love. One of the famous customs in the Middle East during the month of Ramadan is the sound of the drums, as the streets reverberates with drum beats to indicate that it is time for people to wake up and have their Suhoor meal before dawn. Some of the other Ramadan customs includes wearing the traditional style of clothing, illuminating our homes and our neighborhoods with unique lanterns and decorations, reliving our traditional beliefs and listening to stories of Muslim communities that act as guiding principle or learning something new from each area or country. During Ramadan, Muslims communities all over the world make it a point to think about others, especially our near and dear ones expressly our relatives with whom we've lost connection. The Muslims tend to forgive the follies of others while showing kindness, compassion and mercy towards others. One of the simplest and helpful deeds practiced during this holy month is sharing food with your neighbors, and even providing what is

in our means to the needy. It is a month when we turn on our generosity, become sociable, and exude friendliness and openness. The last ten days of Ramadan are particularly spiritual where Muslims choose to stay in mosques during this period in order to focus on worship as I'tikaaf. But this Ramadan, this will not be allowed due to the pandemic that has set up a slew of protocols that has limited our daily lives. We can't forget the way we were in the grip of confusion concerning the TV shows and series that are launched during this month which extend for 30 episodes — one for each day of Ramadan. The many series packed in the month make us lose our concentration with a major worry of which show or series to follow. Ramadan is an ideal period of time in the Hijri calendar when we leave everything behind to be connected with Allah, seeking utmost bliss, peace and happiness. At the end of this holy month comes the Eid Al Fitr feast. And we don't know what kind of Eid we will have this year. The question is are we going to celebrate it at close quarters or at a distance, and are we going to meet our families or will we be connected remotely only!

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/605548/Opinion/Welcome-to-beautiful-Ramadan-customs>

India: SC Quashes Plea to Scrap 26 Verses from Quran, Slaps Rs 50k Fine

Rizvi had sought removal of 26 verses of Quran, which he said promoted Jihad and insurgency among the Muslim youth.

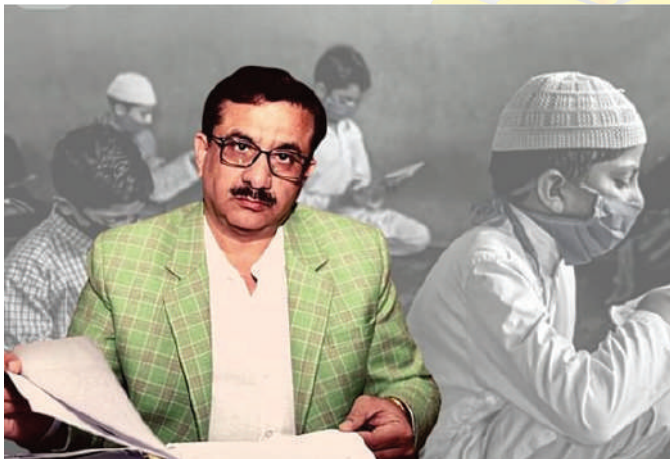
The Supreme Court on Monday, 12 April, slapped a fine of Rs 50,000 on former Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board Chairperson Syed Waseem Rizvi seeking removal of certain verses from the holy book of Quran on the ground that they allegedly promote hatred and terror. Calling the petition “absolutely frivolous,” the apex court asked Rizvi's counsel if he was actually serious about the matter and keen on pressing the petition, according to IANS. After hearing the arguments, the court dismissed the petition with a fine of Rs 50,000, to be paid to legal service authorities. Rizvi's counsel argued that teaching in the holy book is not protected under Article 25 or 30 of the Constitution and cited issues with the interpretation of the verses. The counsel further urged the top court to issue guidelines on the issue, so that students, studying in the madrasas under the government, are not indoctrinated. The counsel said that Rizvi had also written to the central government on these issues in the past.

What Did Rizvi's Petition Say?

Rizvi had moved the Supreme Court on 13

March alleging that the Holy Quran had 26 verses, which promoted Jihad and insurgency among the Muslim youth, and asked for them to be removed. The petition alleged that “these verses were added at a later stage by the first three Caliphates to aid the expansion of Islam by war.” The Condemnation of the Petition. The petition led to protests in several cities last month including Lucknow and Hyderabad, with many demanding Rizvi's arrest. Shia and Sunni clerics had reacted saying that not a word has been altered in the Holy Quran in 1,400 years. Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawad in a protest held in Lucknow on 15 March called Rizvi an “enemy of Islam and Quran” and called for a social boycott of him. Senior BJP leader and spokesperson Syed Shahnawaz Hussain also criticised Rizvi asking him not to “vitilate the atmosphere of the country,” as it “hurts people's sentiments.” “It is my party's stand that saying absurd things about any religious text, including Quran, is a highly condemnable act,” Hussain had told PTI. The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) had also issued a notice to Rizvi on 15 March, condemning his alleged bid to disturb communal harmony in the country. An FIR has been lodged against lawyer Amirul Hasan Zaidi, a former district bar association president, after his speech announcing a Rs 11 lakh reward for beheading Rizvi went viral on social media.

<https://www.thequint.com/news/india/supreme-court-quashes-plea-by-syed-waseem-rizvi-to-scrap-verses-of-quran-slaps-rs-50k-fine#read-more>



UAE Names First Female Astronaut



Newly named Emirati astronauts Mohammed Al-Mulla (L) and Noura Al-Matroushi (R)

The United Arab Emirates on Saturday announced the next two astronauts to participate in its ambitious space program, including its first female astronaut. The move comes as the country's gender equality reputation suffers amid allegations against Dubai ruler Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum's treatment of his daughter Latifa. Al-Maktoum, who also serves as the UAE vice president, identified the female astronaut as Noura Al-Matrooshi and her male counterpart as Mohammed Al-Mulla. Al-Maktoum said on Twitter they were "selected from over 4,000 candidates to be trained with NASA for future space exploration missions." Al-Matroushi, 28, works as an engineer at the Abu Dhabi-based National Petroleum Construction Co., according to the announcement. Al-Mulla, 33, serves as a pilot with Dubai police and heads their training division, the government said. The two are set to head to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, for training. **What are the UAE's space plans?**

The UAE had unveiled an ambitious space program that included building a human settlement on Mars by the year 2117. In 2019, Hazzaa Al-Mansoori became the UAE's first astronaut. He spent a week on the International Space Station. In February, the UAE became the first Arab country to launch a successful interplanetary mission with the "Hope" space probe entering Mars' orbit. The mission launched from Japan in July. The mission is expected to spend two years orbiting Mars, studying the planet's atmosphere and changing seasons and capturing images. The data will be shared with the international scientific community. The success of the mission makes the UAE the 5th country in the world to reach Mars. Women make up 80% of the science team behind the Mars mission, according to the Emirati Ministry of State for Advanced Sciences.

<https://www.dw.com/en/uae-names-first-female-arab-astronaut/a-57158454>

3,000-Year-Old 'Lost Golden City' Unearthed in Egypt



trative and residential districts. 'Golden age of the pharaohs' Items of jewelry have also been unearthed, along with colored pottery vessels, scarab beetle amulets and mud bricks bearing Amenhotep III's seals. Ancient historians say Amenhotep III inherited an empire that stretched

Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of an ancient city dating back 3,000 years, which they describe as the "largest" ever found in Egypt. The renowned Egyptologist Zahi Hawass announced the discovery of the "lost golden city" located near Luxor, home of the legendary Valley of the Kings. In a statement released on Thursday, the excavation team said the city "was lost under the sands and dates to the reign of Amenhotep III and continued to be used by Tutankhamun and Ay."

Biggest discovery since Tutankhamun's tomb Betsy Bryan, professor of Egyptian art and archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, described the find as the "second most important archaeological discovery since the tomb of Tutankhamun" nearly a century ago.

Excavations began in September 2020 between the temples of Ramses III and Amenhotep III near Luxor, some 500 kilometers (300 miles) south of Cairo. Within weeks, the team discovered mud brick formations that ran in all directions. After seven months of excavations, several neighborhoods have been uncovered, including a bakery complete with ovens and storage pottery, as well as adminis-

from the Euphrates River in modern Iraq and Syria to Sudan and died around 1354 BC. His reign, which lasted over four decades, was renowned for its opulence and grand monuments, including the Colossi of Memnon — two massive stone statues near Luxor that represent him and his wife. Bryan said the city "will give us a rare glimpse into the life of the ancient Egyptians at the time where the empire was at its wealthiest." Egyptian archaeology trending Last week, Egypt had transported the mummified remains of 18 ancient kings and four queens across Cairo from the iconic Egyptian Museum to the new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization. The elaborate procession was dubbed the "Pharaohs' Golden Parade." Among the 22 bodies were those of Amenhotep III and his wife, Queen Tiye. The transportation was livestreamed for audiences around the world to watch. bh/ss (AFP, AP)

<https://www.dw.com/en/3000-year-old-lost-golden-city-unearthed-in-egypt/a-57141492>

Arab and Islamic Countries Defend China on Uyghur Persecution

While the world denounces China on its persecution of Uyghur Muslims, China brazenly defends it as only anti-terrorism and deradicalisation process and denies that Uyghurs are being tortured and killed and their women are sterilised, tortured, raped and even killed. According to reports 1.5 to 3 million Uyghur Muslims, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turk and even Christian ethnic minority people are being held in detention camps in Xinjiang since 2017 under the government of Xi Jinping.

But the irony of fate of these hapless Uyghurs is that many of the Muslim countries have not only turned a blind eye to their plight but have also supported or defended China.

Recently, the persecution of Uyghurs again assumed centrestage in global political arena when on March 21, 2021 the US, UK and Canada released a joint statement condemning China's persecution of Uyghurs. The statement said:

"We the foreign ministers of Canada, United

Kingdom and the United States Secretary of State are united in our deep and ongoing concern regarding China's human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang." Four days later, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu conveyed "sensitivity" regarding the treatment meted out to Uyghur Turks during his meeting with his Chinese counterpart on 26 March in Ankara. Protests were held in Istanbul where Turks shouted slogans "Dictator China" and "Stop Uyghur genocide, close the camps".

To counter the criticisms and protests by the US, UK, Canada and Turkey, China took the help of its Arab allies. The government owned news network of Saudi Arabia Al Arabiya published a long interview of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 27 March, 2021. In the interview, Mr Yi justifies his government's inhuman treatment of Uyghurs. He says: "Fundamentally, the issues related to Xinjiang are about the fight against violence, terrorism and separatism. There was a time when Xinji-



Saudi crown prince defends China's right to put Uighur Muslims

ang was a target of frequent violent and terrorist activities which generally undermined the right to survival and development entitled to all ethnic groups living there. In recent years, putting the well being of the people front and center, the Xinjiang region responded actively to the call of the UN, drew on the useful practices of many countries and redoubled prevention, counter terrorism and deradicalisation efforts." He further says, " Between 2010 and 2018, Xinjiang Uyghur population grew from 10.17 million to 12.72, an increase of over 25%, much faster than the 2% growth of Han population in Xinjiang during the same period. How can it be "ethnic genocide"? He also argues, "On the contrary, we find that some western countries have implemented the policy of dissolving the indigenous population in their official narrative. As a result, many children were forced to convert to Christianity and learn English."

But the FM of China fails to give example of detention camps for communists or Muslims in European countries. He also forgets that Muslims are entitled to the right to preach and profess their religion in European countries. Their women are not sterilised or forced to undergo abortions. Surprisingly, the reporter of Al Arabiya does not ask Chinese Foreign Minister about Uyghur detention camps, torture of men and women in these camps, forced abortions, rape and sterilisation of Uyghur women in and outside the detention camps. It seems that the Saudi Arabia government gives China a platform to defend itself. According to reports, 1.5 to 3 million Uyghur Muslims and people of other ethnic minorities have been held in these detention camps. According to a report by Associated Press in June 2020, "The State regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks and forces intrauterine devices, sterilisation and even abortion on hundreds of thousands". The foreign minister of China gave the statistics of population growth of Uyghur Muslims from 2010 to 2018. It is clear that the

Xi Jinping government built detention camps in 2017 with the purpose of stopping the growth of Muslim population. He did not say how many Uyghur Muslim women have been sterilised and forced to undergo abortion, raped, tortured and killed in order to bring about a demographic change in Xinjiang since 2017. The Xi Jinping government claims that it is only taking steps to curb terrorism and radicalisation in the Muslim population of Xinjiang. But a political economist in the University of California Victor Shihi had said in 2019 that the mass internments were unnecessary because no active insurgencies existed, only isolated terrorist incidents."

Turkey and European countries have repeatedly accused China of detaining and torturing Uyghurs in the province of Xinjiang. But many Muslim countries have defended and supported China on the issue of Uyghur persecution and Saudi Arabia is one of them. The Chinese Embassy in India, on its website claimed that "In the recently concluded session of the UN Human Rights Council, 21 Arab and Islamic countries spoke up for justice in support of China." Currently 39 countries denounce China and 45 countries defend it on the issue of Uyghur persecution. Out of these 45 countries, 21 are Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia has trade ties with China and so defends it; Pakistan needs China to keep India at bay in Afghanistan while Iran needs China to protect itself from the US aggression. Turkey criticises China but only conveys its "sensitivity" on the Uyghur issue. Amid all this sycophancy, insensitivity and hypocrisy of the Arab and Islamic countries, Uyghur Muslims have been going through all the torture, humiliation and persecution under the Chinese regime.

<https://www.newageislam.com/islam-politics/new-age-islam-correspondent/arab-islamic-countries-defend-china-uyghur-persecution/d/124661>

Insecurities of Muslims in India: Exclusive Excerpts from Ghazala Wahab's Book *Born a Muslim*

By Ghazala Wahab

I first came across the term 'minority appeasement' while I was still in school in Agra. The local Hindi newspapers in the late 1980s were full of the phrase, 'alpsankhyakon ka tushtikaran'. While the trigger was the Shah Bano case, the argument revolved around two issues—the hajj subsidy and the absence of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC). The hajj subsidy, which started in 1954, was designed to appeal to Muslim sentiment. Since Islam makes hajj compulsory for all able-bodied Muslims who can afford it, devout Muslims aspire to visit Mecca and Medina at least once in their lifetime. However, according to Islamic law, one can only perform hajj after one has fulfilled all worldly obligations—including the repaying of all debts and marrying off one's daughters. The total cost of hajj has to be borne by the one undertaking it; there can be no charity here. If one accepts charity, then the sawaab or religious benefit of hajj will accrue to the charity-giver and not to the one undertaking the journey. Towards the end of his life, my grandfather wanted to perform the hajj once again. But since his health did not permit it, he sponsored another person's visit to Arabia in the belief that the hajj would be listed in his account of good deeds. As the majority of Muslims in India are poor and illiterate, and till a few decades ago the hajj involved an arduous sea journey, the Government of India, taking a leaf out of the Mughal emperors' books, decided to facilitate the process. In any case, government intervention is required for several reasons. Hajj can only be performed during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. In 2018, over two million people performed hajj, of which 175,025 went from India. Every year, Saudi Arabia, which organizes the pilgrimage, decides the number it

can accommodate for that one week in a year. Accordingly, a limit is fixed for all countries with Muslim populations. Based on the numbers allocated to Indian Muslims, the Hajj Committee of India selects the potential pilgrims through a lottery from all the applications received. This entire process requires bureaucratic assistance from the government.

As long as the journey was made by sea, it was affordable for a greater number of people. Once it was replaced by air travel, fewer people could afford it, especially when, in the name of convenience, the government mandated that pilgrims could only travel on the state airlines, Air India. The 'subsidy' was paid not to the pilgrims but to Air India for the hajj flights. Hence, in a roundabout way, the government was servicing Air India's debts in the name of the hajj subsidy. A few years ago, when other airlines were finally allowed to fly this route, Air India's monopoly and arbitrary pricing ended. Air travel for hajj became affordable once again, which is why there were no protests from Muslims when the Narendra Modi government announced the end of the subsidy in January 2018. The other measure that critics castigated as Muslim appeasement was the government's acquiescence in the Muslim insistence for a personal law as opposed to the UCC. It's true that Muslims have been the most vociferous opponents of the UCC, even though several other religious communities in India, including certain sections amongst the Hindus, have been opposed to it for reasons ranging from inheritance laws to divorce laws and so on. This is the reason that despite frequent discussion on this, even the current BJP government has not made any effort to bring in a UCC. Interestingly, when the Supreme Court asked the government to

make a law for the enactment of a UCC, the law ministry passed the matter onto the Law Commission of India, which on 31 August 2018 submitted that a UCC is 'neither necessary nor desirable at this stage'. And that's where the matter rests. Yet, frequently, someone or the other raises the bogey of Muslim appeasement. Stripped down to its bare bones, the problem is this: the Hindu Marriage Act of 1956, passed by the Nehru government, abolished polygamy amongst Hindus, but Muslim men are allowed four wives. Hence, the slogan 'hum panch, hamare pachchees' (we are five, we have twenty-five) that is frequently used in politics to demonize Muslims. Even if one were to accept the argument of Muslim appeasement because they are allowed to marry four times and divorce their wives by merely uttering 'talaq' three times, how exactly is this appeasement detrimental to other communities? It's another matter that, despite this law, the incidence of polygamy amongst Muslims, in comparison with other religious communities in India, is amongst the lowest in the country. Never mind the data, why would a Muslim man choose to bear the cost of keeping two or more wives when he can get rid of the ones that preceded them merely by uttering 'talaq' thrice, and not even pay compensation? In any case, Indian Muslims are unnecessarily vilified for their insistence on a personal law that governs only aspects of marriage, succession, and inheritance. The truth is, across the world, including in the West, governments allow Muslims to govern their personal matters such as marriage and divorce under Shariah-inspired laws. The reason for this is simple. The scope of personal law is so limited that it does not impinge upon national life in any way. In fact, in a country like India, family courts like darul qazas (dealt with in detail in the chapter on women) take the burden off the overworked civil courts. But logic is often a casualty of propaganda. In an interview to me, in July 2009, Arun Shourie,

journalist, author, and former minister in the BJP's Vajpayee government (1998–2003), calling the Shah Bano case a watershed moment in Indian history, said, 'When the Rajiv Gandhi government reversed the court order on Shah Bano case, it was seen as the capitulation of the secular forces in the face of irrational religious ones.' According to him, this drove the Hindus towards religious extremism in the 1980s. In this narrative, Rajiv Gandhi having humoured the Muslim communalists by overturning the Supreme Court verdict, tried to then placate the Hindu communalists by ordering the unlocking of the gates of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The rise of the Ram Janmabhoomi–Babri Masjid issue and Hindu communalism then was the direct consequence of Gandhi's capitulation on the Shah Bano case. But the chronology of events does not bear this out. The VHP had started the Ram Janmabhoomi programme, mobilizing Hindu support for reclaiming the mosque site, in April 1984. In September–October 1984, it took out a rath yatra (similar to what BJP president Lal Krishna Advani would do four years later) from Sitamarhi in Bihar to Ayodhya. Indira Gandhi's assassination forced the VHP to suspend the movement. It was resumed in October 1985. This was also the time that the Muslim agitation against the Shah Bano verdict was at its peak. On 25 January 1986, a local lawyer, Umesh Chandra Pandey, appealed to the Faizabad court (Ayodhya is in Faizabad district) to allow Hindus to worship inside the Babri Masjid premises. 'On 31 January 1986, Faizabad district judge K. M. Pandey ordered that the locks on the gates of the premises of the Babri Masjid be opened.' The Muslim Women's Bill was introduced in Parliament on 25 February 1986. This sequence of events shows that Muslim communalists were placated only after Hindus communalists had been accommodated!

<https://www.newageislam.com/books-documents/ghazala-wahab/in-securities-muslims-india-exclusive-excerpts-ghazala-wahabs-book-bor-n-muslim-some-truths-islam-india/d/124444>

Muslim Preachers Must Introspect On How to Curb Suicide and Murder in the Muslim Community

By: G.G. Siddiqui

Taking one's own or another's life in depression, anxiety, enmity, dispute, or otherwise has become a routine affair worldwide. Geographical, racial, sectarian, religious, marital, be it at any level, it needs to be curbed, primarily on the humane ground and value. The major factor in this connection may be lack of education or the non-practicing of what is taught in the educational programs relating to the characteristic and behavioural values on how to treat wife, daughters and the human fellows, beyond the shackle of prejudice, immorality, injustice, oppressive power and low attitude. The lack of education, or the non-practicing behaviour, predominantly rooted in our multicultural society, is a challenging but not an impossible task ahead of us. Thereby we must work for social awareness, propagate human ethos and relevant religious teachings to eradicate this social evil, that is, taking one's or other's life. For the case study of the subject, two examples can be taken. One of them is the incident of Ayesha's (23) taking her own life by way of suicide, and the other is that of Sayed Mental's (60) hammering to death his wife Safeela (50) and two daughters Rajia (20) and Shabana (15) while the third daughter Sultana (18) is battling for life in the hospital. In both the examples, either of the two reasons; lack of religious education or the non-practicing upon the religious information can be traced. Ayesha is reported to have suffered torture and harassment due to dowry or her husband's illicit affair with another girl, the case of which still needs to be properly investigated by the police, and hence we are not sure enough to describe the exact sort of harassment which compelled her to commit suicide. Our point of discussion is beyond judging the nature of harassment that compelled Ayesha to commit suicide. Not even can we call Ayesha back to

life but raise a question; can her suicide be justified under any such pressing circumstances? The simple answer is: 'No, It can't be justified. If it can't, then why did Ayesha commit her suicide? Had she, being a Muslim lady, a lack of religious education which definitively forbids suicide, or did she deliberately commit suicide, despite knowing the fact that it is strongly prohibited to commit suicide in Islam under all circumstances, dowry pressure or otherwise? Another incident, which is related to Sayed Mental's killing his wife and daughters, narrates the act of brutality inflicted not just upon his family but also upon Islam in the sense of disrespecting the divine command which forbids taking other's life unjustly. Again the same question can be repeated here for Muslim community; can Sayed Mental's killing his family be justified? Their answer would be in negation. But why did Sayed Mental take his step towards killing his family, due to lack of religious education or non-practicing behaviour? These questions related to both the incidents will definitely lead to represent the shortcoming within the Muslim community in general. That shortcoming could be either lack of religious education or the act of not practicing the religious command that vehemently lays emphasis on the value of one's or other's life as a blessing of Allah Almighty. Both the incidents indicate that Muslims are living either with a lack of religious education or have become non-practicing. If it is reported that some Muslims are aware of Islamic teachings and that they are practicing Muslims too, then they can't deny the fact that they have failed to curb the growing evil of taking one's own life by suicide and another's life by unjust killing. Ayesha's life was, above all, a blessing of Allah Almighty, which she should not have wasted by commit-

ting suicide. She could have intended to maintain safety for this God-gifted blessing in several possible ways. For the sake of her so-called lover, she could not seek to uphold her love to Allah Almighty Who endowed her with the blessing of life. She could have loved her life just for obeying the following commands of Allah Almighty and the sayings of the Prophet peace be upon him, "Do not kill yourself" (4:29) "But whoever will do that through transgression and injustice, we shall soon throw him into the Fire (of Hell) and that is very easy for Allah" (4:30). This verse denotes the value of life by declaring all types of suicide forbidden. Hence a believer is not permitted to commit suicide, whether to take one's own or another's life. In another verse, Allah Almighty says, "And do not cast yourselves into destruction with your own hands, and adopt righteousness. Verily, Allah loves the righteous" (2:195) The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "The one who commits suicide will go to Hell, and will keep falling into it and will abide there forever" (Sahih Bukhari, The book of Medicine, Chapter: Taking poison and using it for medical treatment or using what may be dangerous or Impure) Narrated Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (Allah is pleased with him) that the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Whoever stabs himself to death will continue to stab himself in Hell. And whoever throws himself off a cliff will continue to throw himself off a cliff in Hell. And whoever hangs himself will continue to hang himself in Hell". (Sahih Bukhari, The book of Funeral Rites, Chapter: What has come to us about someone who kills himself?) Hadhrat Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah Almighty (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever purposely throws himself from a mountain and kills himself, will be in the (Hell) Fire falling down into it and abiding therein perpetually forever. And whoever drinks poison and kills himself with it, he will be carrying his

poison in his hand and drinking it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide eternally forever; and whoever kills himself with an iron weapon (stabbing himself), will be carrying that weapon in his hand and stabbing his abdomen with it in the (Hell) Fire wherein he will abide eternally forever." (Sahih Bukhari, The book of Medicine, Chapter: Taking poison and using it for medical treatment or using what may be dangerous or Impure). The afore-mentioned Quranic verses and Ahadith are stern warnings (wa'eed) for those who intend for committing suicide for killing themselves or others. We seek forgiveness for Ayesha who committed a mistake by committing suicide, and indeed Allah is the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful. However, we should make the common Muslim masses aware of these verses and Ahadith related to the forbiddance of suicide, in order that they never go to take such an extreme step, whatever the case may be. Thousands of people including women are suffering from hardships in several forms; poverty, starvation, injustice, helplessness, and severe harassment. Despite that, they are living their life with patience and perseverance because they know suicide is not a solution to their problem. They are to be heartily saluted because they are facing all their difficulties with courage, and tantamount to valuing the blessing of life granted by God Almighty. With regard to the UP's Bulandshahr case in which Sayed Mental killed with a hammer, his wife, and two daughters whereas his third daughter is battling for life in the hospital, the police are yet to ascertain what exactly led the father to kill his family, while villagers told the police that the man often used to beat his wife and daughters without any reason. The man was reportedly and mentally unsound and therefore the villagers had added the word Mental to his name. This case can also be taken to deduce the idea that how far our common Muslim masses have gone from Islam that they have transgressed all the limits of transgression. One of the objectives of marital relations

in Islam is that love, friendship, peace, and good ties of kinship prevail between the spouses. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty ordered the husband to live with his wife lovingly and honourably. He says: "treat them (wives) honourably". The context of the verse is about the duty of a husband towards his wife. In its broader understanding, treating a wife honourably means the prohibition of violence over a wife. So, a husband in Islam is prohibited to exercise violence over his wife. In another verse, Allah the Almighty says, "Live with them in kindness; even if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good" (Quran, 4:19). Allah Almighty also says: "Retain them (wives) in kindness or release them in kindness. But do not retain them for injury; so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own soul" (2:231). The word "Dirar" (رارض) has multiple meanings; such as 'hurt', 'injury', 'harm', 'damage', 'detriment' and 'wound' etc. With any of these meanings, it would be fully appropriate to derive a sense from this verse that practicing any kind of violence over wife to cause injury or harm or damage is forbidden in Islam. In addition to the Qur'anic verses, there are many Ahadith that teach the husband to maintain good ties of kinship, love, and gentleness for his family. The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The best among you are those who behave well with their women (wives) and daughters" (Al-Baihaqi). To be best for wife and daughter in the modern-day, it is binding upon a husband to keep away from the practice of violence over his wife and daughter. Once someone asked Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) what the obligations of husbands towards their wives are. He replied: "Feed her when you eat and provide her clothing when you provide yourself. Neither hit her on the face nor use impolite language when addressing her" (Mishkat Shareef, the chapter on the maintenance of women). In another Hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari, the lady

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said "the prophet (peace be upon him) was in the service to his family". (Bukhari). The sacred texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah imply that both husband and wife are obliged to fulfil their respective duties towards each other. Obedience to each other's responsibilities is binding upon them. The spouses ought to take care of each other's emotions and sentiments. Their primary purpose must essentially focus on co-operating each other in joy and sorrow with patience. They should never let themselves be possessed by anger, as it is unlawful in Islam. Anger destroys the faith of a man and often breaks even good ties. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Verily anger spoils faith just as aloes spoils honey" (Al-Tabrani and al-Baihaqi). Therefore, the husband and the wife must avoid getting angry, as it causes nothing but tension, depression, frustration, mental torture, and violence. Adhering to Islamic teachings is therefore binding upon both of them to bring prosperity and peace in their married life, and thus to save from every kind of violence. Our Islam lays emphasis on maintaining a good relationship between the spouses and on the value of one's and other's life, by prohibiting the act of unjust killing. But it is the members of the Muslim community who fear neither the divine punishment on the Day of Judgment nor the law of punishment enforced by their country. Is this the result of lack of education or that of not practicing the divine guidance which strongly prohibits hurting, torturing, and hitting the wife and children? It is the responsibility of Muslim preachers to ponder over this question for hours and find out the ways to curb the growing suicide and murder in the Muslim community and come out of facing further shame.

<https://www.newageislam.com/debating-islam/ghulam-ghaus-siddiqi-new-age-islam/muslim-preachers-introspect-how-curb-suicide-murder-muslim-community/d/124496>

BLASPHEMY & ISLAM

Who is committing blasphemy, the critics of Islam or the so-called clergy and their followers?

By: Laiq Ahmed Atif



I would like to start by stating that, our Lord and Master, the Chief of the Prophets, the Chief of all mankind, Muhammadsa, the chosen one was the perfect man with the highest and loftiest character, millions and millions of blessings and peace be upon his noble soul. (Ameen). The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdias, a true and devoted lover of the Holy Prophet Muhammadsa, has expressed his love for him in an exceptional way. He says: "After God I am inebriated with the love of Muhammadsa; if this is infidelity, then by God I am a great infidel." This love was instilled in him by the Divine who bestowed on him the following revelation: "Every blessing is from Muhammad on whom be peace and blessings of Allah. Blessed is He Who taught and he who was taught." The Promised Messiahas, further states that: "We have attached ourselves to a Prophet who manifests God to us. A poet has put it beautifully:

Muhammad of Arabia, King of both the worlds;

Whose threshold is safeguarded by the Holy Spirit

I cannot call him God, but I do say;

To recognize him is to recognize God

How shall we express our gratitude to God who bestowed upon us the good fortune to follow the Prophet who is a sun for the souls of the righteous as there is a sun for the bodies. He appeared in a time of darkness and illuminated the world with his light. He was neither tired nor fatigued till he purified all parts of Arabia from associating partners with God. He is the proof of his own truth for his light is present in every age and true obedience to him

purifies a person in the manner clear and transparent water of a river cleanses dirty linen." (Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, pp. 302-303)

Undoubtedly, we all love the Holy Prophet Muhammad, infinite blessings of Allah be upon him. But what does true love mean? What is the right way to express our gratitude and sincerity with him? This is a crucial question of utmost importance that every Muslim must find the answer for. In recent weeks, the world has witnessed the closure of roads, violence, aggression, killing, disruption in the law and order, a great deal of congestion and extreme inconvenience for the general public on the streets of Pakistan. This all was staged with the slogan of love for the Holy Prophet Muhammadsa. Is this truly the way to show love for him? What was his character and what were the examples he set for us to follow in his footsteps? For me as an Ahmadi Muslim, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, is dearer to me than my own life; and if I had 1000 lives, I would be ready to sacrifice them all in an instant for his sake. He is the love of my life. We have been taught that after Almighty God, we must love the Holy Prophet Muhammadsa above all else. However, rationality requires me to deliberate, what does true love mean? Does it mean to kill others, create a chaotic situation in the country, create inconvenience for the general public, block roads, burn tyres, cars, buses and properties or, does true love demand that we follow his noble example and divine teachings brought by him (ignoring the misinterpretations of today's clerics) and become well-wishers of humanity just as he was titled by God as a "Blessing for the entire mankind"?

I truly believe that true love means to truly follow the guidance and footsteps of the Holy

Prophet Muhammadsa. Therefore, we must substantiate our claim with concrete examples and must try to become like him as without actions, it is just a hollow claim which does not qualify on any merits. Hazrat Musleh Maood, Khalifatul Masih IIra, has very beautifully summarised the duties of a citizen as explained by Islam and practiced by the Holy Prophet Muhammadsa, in his book: 'Ahmadiyyat or the True Islam', p. 250-256, that are guiding principles for all of us to reflect upon and to follow. I would like to mention a few. A duty of a Muslim citizen is that he should greet everybody he meets with the salutation, 'Peace of God be upon you,' thus laying the foundations of good fellowship. A Muslim is required to visit those of his friends and neighbours who may be ill, to console and cheer them. Muslims are told to avoid undignified conduct and such conduct as is likely to offend or annoy others. The Holy Quran says that the Muslims should walk in the streets and bazaars in a dignified manner. Muslims must not throw refuse into streets or public places. The Holy Prophetsa has said that God is displeased with a man who throws refuse on to streets or places of public resort. On the other hand, Muslims are required to help in keeping such places clean and free from obstruction or danger. The Holy Prophetsa says,

'God is pleased with a man who removes from a road that which is likely to cause annoyance or obstruction.'

Muslims are prohibited from quarrelling in public places, and thus disturbing the peace and comfort of others. They must not utter abuse, or do any other act likely to offend or annoy. Another duty of a Muslim is to exhort people to virtue and to warn them against evil. But he must do so with kindness and affection, lest people out of contrariness, should recede further from virtue. Another duty of a Muslim is not to endanger the lives and safety of others. For instance, the Holy Prophetsa has prohibited people of an infected area from going outside that area, and people from other

areas from entering an infected area. This injunction anticipated by a matter of centuries quarantine regulations and other similar measures, which are supposed to be the result of the wisdom gained from modern science and research. A Muslim should be ever ready to make sacrifices for national and patriotic causes, and should be active in the discharge of his civic duties and responsibilities. Another duty of a Muslim is to save the life of a person who is in danger; and if he fails to render assistance in such a case he draws upon himself the anger of God. The Holy Prophetsa has said, 'A man who sees another being murdered and does not render him any assistance or make an effort to save him, is under the curse of God.' It is, therefore, the duty of a Muslim to rescue the drowning, help in putting out fires, and to render assistance in times of calamity like earthquakes, mining disasters, railway collisions, volcanic eruptions, storms, etc. In short, whenever and wherever there is danger to life and security, a Muslim must render every assistance in his power towards the work of rescue; if he fails in this duty, he is answerable to God for his default, and would not deserve the grace and mercy of God. Again, a Muslim is prohibited from pointing a weapon or an arm even playfully at another. Such is a Muslim! But by Muslim I do not mean the so-called Muslim of today who has entirely forsaken Islam and looks to the West for moral and spiritual sustenance of every description. By a Muslim I mean the Muslim of thirteen hundred years ago, whose type has been revived in the present age by the Promised Messiahas.

About the Author: Laiq Ahmed Atif is currently serving as an Imam and National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Malta. He is a very regular writer in national and international newspapers and journals, in Urdu, Maltese and English.
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India: Nepali Man Freed From Jail After 41 Years Without Trial

A Nepali man was arrested on murder charges in India in 1980 and sat in jail for decades without a trial. Rights activists say Durga Prasad Timsina's ordeal highlights the grim reality of pretrial detainees in India. Durga Prasad Timsina had lost all hope of ever seeing his mother or going back to his village in Nepal after awaiting trial on a murder

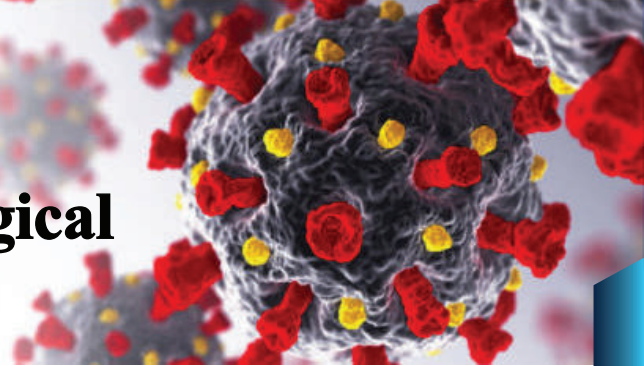


charge for 41 years. He was moved from one jail to another across West Bengal, and finally ended up at a correctional center near Kolkata, where no one could understand his native language, Nepali. Timsina could not speak Bengali at all, and barely knew Hindi: the two languages essential to get by in that part of the eastern Indian state. But, against all odds, the day finally came last month when Timsina walked out of the Dum Dum Central Correctional Home. Timsina was accompanied by officials from the Nepali consulate in Kolkata and members of the West Bengal Radio Club — a collective of amateur radio operators — who had been instrumental in securing his freedom. The case has shed light on the plight of people awaiting trial in Indian jails, many of whom are imprisoned for longer than their sentences would have been if they were convicted. 'Celebrations for days' after release "We are all overjoyed to have him back home. There were celebrations for days after he came back to the village," Timsina's cousin Prakash Chandra told DW. "Sadly, the time in jail has left him traumatized. His hands and legs are shaky; he can hardly eat and is also suffering from a number of physical ailments," he said. Timsina is being treated at a local hospital, and the provincial government will take care of the medi-

cal expenses, Chandra said, adding that he was not in a condition to talk to people. Why was he arrested? Timsina left his village in a remote region of eastern Nepal in search of a job at 20 years old. In 1980, he went to the scenic Indian town of Darjeeling, wedged between Nepal and Bhutan. There Timsina met a man who promised him a job with the Indian army. However, according to Chandra, the man ended up framing Timsina for committing a murder. Timsina says he was falsely identified as a man named Dipak Jaishi and arrested by police. He told a crowd of reporters soon after his release that he was innocent, which his family has maintained since he was arrested. "No one ever came forward with any evidence. They just took Durga Prasad and put him in jail," Chandra said. The name change, he said, was because of a filing error by police. "The people who knew him in Darjeeling knew only of his nickname, Dupat, which somehow became Dipak on the police charge sheet," Chandra said. "His surname was registered as Jaishi, which is actually the name of our community."

<https://www.dw.com/en/india-nepali-man-freed-from-jail-after-41-years-without-trial/a-57148777>

COVID-19 May Not Actually Infect the Brain, but Neurological Damage Persists: Study



TORONTO -- Does COVID-19 impact the brain? The answer is both yes and no, according to a new study which suggests the virus likely doesn't infect the brain itself. The study, conducted by specialists at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and published in the journal *Brain* on Thursday, found that while the patients examined did not have significant traces of the virus in their brain cells, they still sustained neurological damage. "We were unable to find any signs of virus inside brain cells of more than 40 COVID-19 patients," James E. Goldman, professor at Columbia University and lead author of the study, "At the same time, we observed many pathological changes in these brains, which could explain why severely ill patients experience confusion and delirium and other serious neurological effects--and why those with mild cases may experience 'brain fog' for weeks and months." Newsletter sign-up: Get The COVID-19 Brief sent to your inbox It has been observed since the beginning of the pandemic that many patients have developed neurological symptoms after contracting COVID-19, but not much research has looked at the virus within the brain. This recent study looked at 41 people who had died from the virus at a medical centre in New York City. The average age was 74, and researchers obtained family consent to perform autopsies in order to study the brain. One fifth of those studied had died from the virus within 24 hours of arriving at hospital, and many of the patients had a comorbidity such as Parkinson's disease, dementia or mild cognitive impairment (MCI). Every brain was examined by at least two neuropathologists. Researchers examined the brains for viral RNA and viral proteins, using

a variety of methods, and focusing on different sections of the brain. One area they examined was the olfactory section of the brain, to investigate a theory that the virus could travel to the brain through the nasal cavity. While viral particles were found in the nasal cavity, researchers didn't find any that had made their way into the brain. Goldman mentioned in the release that some other studies looking at a smaller number of brains have claimed to find traces of the virus in brain cells, but maintained that their findings suggest "if there's any virus present in the brain tissue, it has to be in very small amounts and does not correlate with the distribution or abundance of neuropathological findings." If the virus isn't reaching the brain itself in large enough quantities to affect it, why are we seeing these neurological impacts in COVID-19 victims? Researchers say the damage comes down to a few factors. One main issue is hypoxia. When the body is struggling to take in oxygen, different areas of the body are starved of the proper amount of oxygen. This can occur in the brain as a result of severe COVID-19. Every single brain studied had hypoxic damage, the research stated. "The first thing we noticed was a lot of areas with damage from a lack of oxygen," Goldman says. "They all had severe lung disease, so it's not surprising that there's hypoxic damage in the brain." Other things associated with severe COVID-19, such as strokes and blood clots, can also cut off oxygen to the brain. But another finding was that specific immune cells in the brain, called microglia, were activated in these COVID-19 patients. Researchers believe these immune cells were wrongfully attacking neurons, and theorized that it could be due to inflammatory



proteins associated with virus infection. "At the same time, hypoxia can induce the expression of 'eat me' signals on the surface of neurons, making hypoxic neurons more vulnerable to activated microglia," Peter D. Canoll, professor of pathology and cell biology, said in the release. "So even without directly infecting brain cells, COVID-19 can cause damage to the brain." The sections in the brain most affected by the microglia were lower brain-stem areas that regulate heart and breathing rhythms, as well as the hippocampus, which governs things such as memory and mood. If neurons are attacked by microglia, their loss is permanent, Goldman said, which could cause memory problems down the line. Interestingly, despite the fact that the study included people who had battled the virus for a range of time periods before dying, including some from days to weeks, "neuropathological findings did not appear to correlate with time of hospitalization," the research stated, suggesting that interventions at the hospital did not have a significant impact on the type of neurological damage researchers were seeing. Many COVID-19 long-haulers report experiencing neurological symptoms such as "brain fog" for

months after other symptoms clear up, and the study's authors say more research into these issues could help understand how to treat these lingering affects. "It is important to consider the potential impact of the neuropathological changes we, and others, have found in autopsies if such changes are present in the brains of patients who survive COVID-19," the research said. As the research was done through autopsies, researchers acknowledge that this means the findings reflect severe cases of COVID-19, and may not be directly applicable to more mild cases. Moving forward, the researchers will be investigating the brains of more COVID-19 patients who died of the virus under different circumstances, such as those who died months after recovering from COVID-19 and those who experienced acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) prior to their death, in order to get a better picture of how the virus affects the brain.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/-covid-19-may-not-actually-infect-the-brain-but-neurological-damage-persists-study-1.5393529>