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Editorial



Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil - Assistant Editor

The unexpected results of the elections held on February 8th demonstrate that Pakistan is not a nation that genuinely adheres to hegemonic modern democratic ideals, but rather one that is completely devoid of democratic traditions. The results of the elections earlier since 1947 have also been called into question because to the unusual and illegal role played by the establishment, electoral corruption, systemic high jacking, and the exploitation of numerous state ministries. Sadly, because the powerful classes chose the government by dubious means and against preferences of the people, the nation will continue to be denied the binding advantages of true democracy long into the future.

Furthermore, the 1973 Constitution was overthrown, and the Imran regime's fall coincides with its demise. The explication and growth of constitutional provisions is merely a catchphrase, but the reality is truly inscrutable. Like in the halls of power, the constitution is merely a puppet. They are able to adjust, change, and practice in tandem with their own goals. Tragically, the common Pakistani is not protected by any of the laws; yet, the governing class and the privileged political elite are. Despite being the guardian of the constitution, the Supreme Court has completely failed to uphold the law, including the honest interpretation of the document.

The worst conditions that Pakistan is currently experiencing are obviously a reflection of the establishment's preferences and the egotism of the so-called politicians. Their subpar performance is undermining the integrity, dignity, and reputation of the nation. The country's economy is in danger of collapsing. However, a certain political class that has dominated the nation's politics for 75 years is unwilling to take ownership of their actions. They are merely taking advantage of the privileges and placing some of the burden of accountability solely on the PTI government. Without a doubt, PTI capitalized on the current political unrest, effectively utilizing the situation to their advantage and growing their support base, which is also evident in the outcomes of the most recent elections.

Allegedly, establishment used the illegal tactics to put the PTI out particularly from the electoral politics during election engineering of the last GENERAL elections. PTI and Imran Khan are still not accepted as facts by the system. However, PTI is asserting that it is the representative political force of the vast majority of Pakistanis. However, the establishment is making every effort to ignore the PTI and impose its own brand of limited democracy. As a result, the establishment and newly chosen PDM regime have not yet succeeded in winning over the public support. The establishment is now facing a huge challenge because of this.

Certainly, the newly chosen regime is ill-prepared for the impending financial crisis, which will exacerbate poverty, especially in light of the upcoming IMF program. No doubt to combat these awful situations a leader having the favour of the majority of the Pakistanis is need of the time. Under his leadership, the populace will stand with him and make any sacrifice imaginable in order to advance the nation, which is desperately needed at this time. The king who assumed power via deceit and illegitimacy can never be accepted by the populace. If not, the nation may suffer permanent harm as it descends into extreme political, social, and economic anarchy.

Moscow attack: Did Russia ignore US 'extremist' attacks warning?

By: Gordon Corera

There are always questions after any attack as to why it was not stopped or detected. But the Moscow attack raises particularly difficult issues for Vladimir Putin at a time of international tension and mistrust. And much of that comes because of a warning from Washington. The 7 March warning from the US to its own citizens was unusually specific. It talked of reports that "extremists" had "imminent plans to target large gatherings in Moscow" and specifically mentioned concerts. It advised Americans in the city to avoid large gatherings over the coming 48 hours. The timing may not quite match, but other details do tally closely with events on 22 March. It seems clear Washington had some kind of intelligence and that it related to Islamic State (IS) - the group that has issued a statement saying it was behind the Moscow attack. As well as the public warning to its own citizens, the US also said it had communicated with the Russian government directly. "The US government also shared this information with Russian authorities in accordance with its long-standing 'duty to warn' policy," a US official said in a statement after the attack. There are channels through which intelligence is shared between countries - even those that are not allies - especially when it relates to possible attacks on civilians. But the problem is that Moscow dismissed the warnings. Three days before the attack, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the board of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), whose job is to defend the country. The top priority, he told the assembled leaders of the security service, was to support what he called the special military operation - the official phrase for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. He claimed that Ukraine had switched to what he called "terrorist tactics". He also spoke directly to what he said were "provocative statements" from the West about potential attacks within Russia. He said the warnings "resemble outright blackmail and the intention to intimidate and destabilise our society". That suggests that the mistrust between the US and Russia meant Moscow may not have wanted to listen and instead saw the warnings as part of an attempt to threaten Russia, linked to the Ukraine conflict.

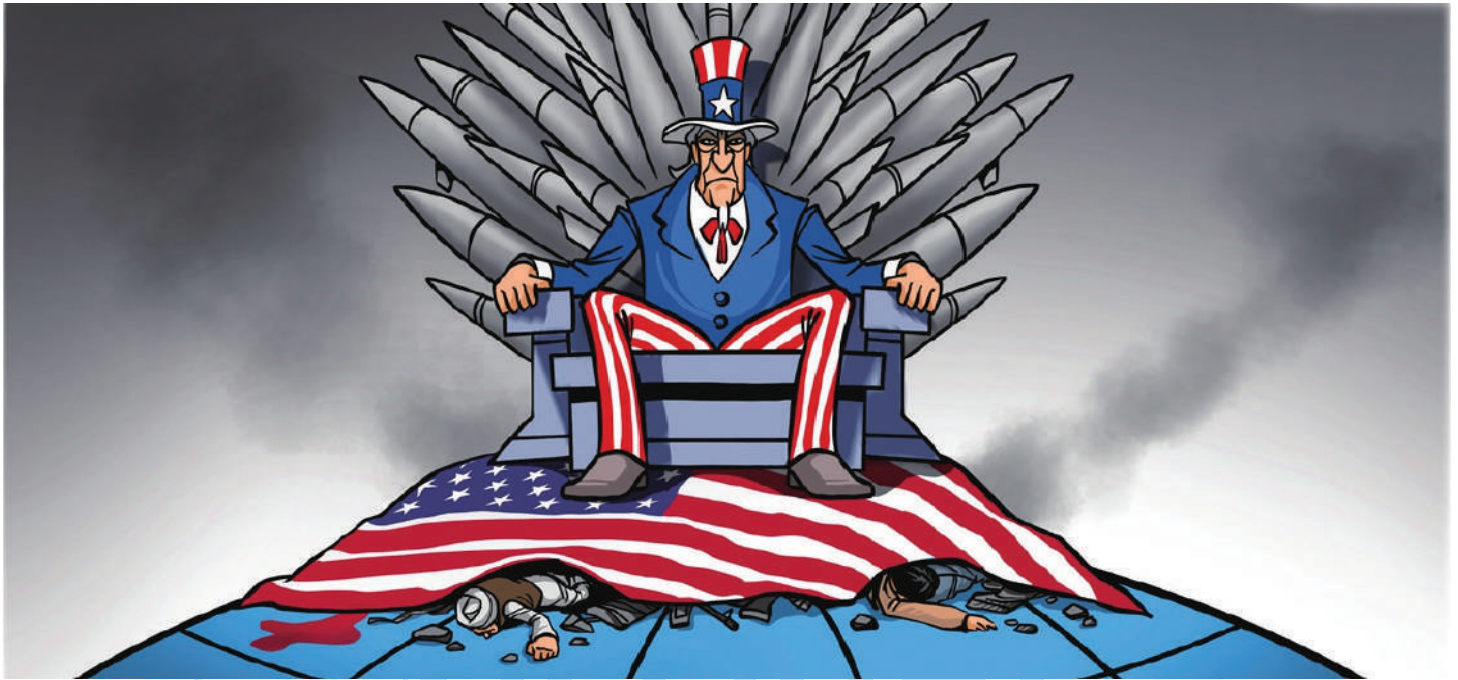


We do not yet know the exact nature of the information the US possessed or passed or how clear it was. Intelligence can often be vague and hard to act on. But the US has a vast intelligence-gathering machine and watches IS closely. The branch suspected of the Moscow attack was also linked to one on US forces and civilians at Kabul airport in August 2021, as well as more recent deadly bombings in Iraq. But if the intelligence that was shared with Russia was credible and specific about IS, then the FSB and Mr Putin might appear to be on the back foot about why they did not take it more seriously. And if so, it may be easier for Moscow to relate the attack in some way to Ukraine in order to deflect blame and also build support for Russia's actions there, rather than acknowledge what they might have missed.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-68646375.amp>

Who is threatening world with defense budget nearing \$900b?

By: Global Times



US President Joe Biden recently proposed a \$7.3 trillion US government budget for the 2025 fiscal year. Among this, the defense budget of the US has once again broken records, soaring to \$895.2 billion, an increase of over \$9 billion compared to the 2024 fiscal year, nearly reaching the \$900 billion mark.

The US defense spending for the 2024 fiscal year has already exceeded the combined military expenditures of the following nine countries, including China and Russia, accounting for about 40 percent of the global military expenditure. With the US national debt surpassing \$34 trillion in early 2024, equivalent to \$100,000 debt per capita, the US still allocates 12 percent of its government spending to defense for the fiscal year 2025, a practice of "spending lavishly on the military" that has shocked the international community.

Looking at the expenditure items in the 2025 fiscal year US defense budget, it is clear the majority will be used to support US military interventions and so-called "integrated deterrence" globally, research and development of new weapons and emerging military technologies, upgrading and modernizing nuclear arsenals, and enhancing military capabilities in strategic competition with other major powers. Despite continuous rhetoric of the "China threat" from US politicians, the continuously rising defense budget fully illustrates that the US is the biggest destabilizing factor threatening global peace and stability.

Combining recent speeches from US politicians, it is apparent that the US military will continue to conduct military interventions and so-called "deterrence" actions in regions such as the Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, which will undoubtedly lead to a more tumultuous and unstable world in the future. For example, Representative Mike Rogers, the Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, claimed, "Our defense budget should be built with the goal of deterring the threats facing our nation." In addition to the "European Deterrence Initiative" budget specifically prepared to strengthen military

containment against Russia, the US 2025 fiscal year defense budget also allocates \$9.9 billion for the "Pacific Deterrence Initiative" targeting China to enhance the deployment and operations of the US military in the Asia-Pacific region and increase targeted joint military exercises and patrols with allies. The US media outlets believe this is a not-so-subtle strategic message sent by the Biden administration to China. US Army Budget Director Major General Mark S. Bennett said the spending on military exercises in the Pacific by the US Army in the new fiscal year will be significantly higher than in the 2024 fiscal year.

In addition to continuing to fuel the conflicts in Russia and Ukraine and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the US will also support and condone "Taiwan independence" activities. Although the supplemental spending bill proposed by the Biden administration to provide military aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan region has been stalled in the House of Representatives, the defense budget document released by the Pentagon on Monday shows that the \$500 million "initial spending request" in the budget will be used to replenish US weapon stockpiles after weapons are sent to Taiwan region.

In addition to the \$500 million in aid to Taiwan region under the presidential authority, the Biden administration is also seeking \$100 million in the 2025 fiscal budget for the US State Department, which is referred to as a "historic investment in Taiwan's security," with the aim of "strengthening deterrence across the Taiwan Straits." This is the first time the US has specifically listed Taiwan region in a budget, revealing the side of the US supporting and tolerating "Taiwan independence" forces.

In order to obtain more military funding, the US military has recently been hyping up the "Chinese military threat theory." For example, the commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command claimed that Chinese military aircraft will start operating near the US Air Defense Identification Zone as early as this year, "not only military aircraft, but also ships, and even submarines." In addition,

Pentagon analysts have also exaggerated China's lead in the field of hypersonic weapons. As a result, the new US defense budget for the coming year has increased investment in missile defense systems and strengthened research and development efforts for hypersonic weapons. In fact, since 2018, the Pentagon has invested over \$12 billion in developing a variety of land, sea, and air-based hypersonic strike weapon systems.

The new US defense budget also allocates huge funds to continue developing emerging technologies, upgrading and modernizing the nuclear arsenal, and enhancing the "nuclear triad" strike capability, including the development and construction of the next-generation Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarine, the B-21 Raider strategic bomber, and the new generation of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The world can see clearly that the US' nearly \$900 billion defense budget has a major goal of taking various measures to enhance the military capabilities of the US in strategic competition with other major powers, seeking to achieve "absolute security" for the US by undermining the security of other countries, thereby allowing the US to dictate terms and maintain its global hegemonic status.

Faced with a world in turmoil, the US should abandon Cold War thinking, stop military confrontation, bloc confrontation, and geopolitical games, and work with the international community to uphold world peace and security, which is the responsibility that a major power should fulfill.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202403/1308888.shtml>

“Russia will be remembered as a pioneer of the multipolar world, daring to challenge the Globalist system”, Interview with Alexander Markovics

By: Alexander Markovics and Steven Sahiounie



Globalization is an economic process which has created a global system. Some major countries have come to view other countries as enemies, to be threatened with wars. In the global system countries are economic enemies competing in world markets, according to Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira. Currently, the war in Ukraine pits the US against Russia, and the EU and NATO have played follow the leader. However, Germany is in recession, and Russia's economy is growing. In an effort to understand the situation fully, Steven Sahiounie of Mid-EastDiscourse interviewed Alexander Markovics, the chief of the Suworow Institute in Vienna, author of books on the European New Right, Transhumanism and Biopolitics, editor of Deutsche Stimme Magazin since 2020, and Editor in Chief of Agora Europa since 2021.

Steven Sahiounie (SS): Sweden became a member of NATO. Why did Sweden take that step, and what will be the repercussions from doing so? **Alexander Markovics (AM):** The Swedish Army consists of approximately 7,000 soldiers and has 110 Leopard 2 tanks, 319 CV-90 infantry fighting vehicles and 26 Archer self-propelled howitzers. In the last decades, Pacifist Sweden didn't take part in traditional warfare. As we know from the battlefield in Ukraine, where NATO is waging a proxy war against Russia, this force wouldn't last two months in a real war. As most of the West, Swedish politicians believed in the “end of history” and cut their military budgets to death. Basically, Sweden joining NATO in 2024 is the same as joining the Warsaw Pact in 1991 – an act of political insanity. Before Sweden was respected as a neutral country, now it will a Russian military target – for drones, hypersonic missiles, FAB bombs and more – in case of open confrontation with NATO – and nuclear annihilation, if the madmen in Washington, Brussels and Paris are triumphant in the end.

SS: The US, and their western allies, have placed many sanctions on Russia after the Ukrainian conflict began. Have these sanctions had an effect on Russia?

AM: Of course these sanctions had an effect on Russia. They forced Russia to abandon its' economic cooperation with the West, and started its' realignment with China, Iran, India, and

even the People's Republic of Korea. Furthermore, the sanctions strengthened a trend in the Russian economy towards autarky which always started with economist Sergey Glaziev. Obviously, Russia isn't a "gas station with a government" as the West thought, but nowadays Russia is the strongest economy in Europe, whereas the former economic powerhouse Germany is in a recession. The sanctions only proved, that Europe was more dependent on Russia than vice versa. Basically, the sanctions led to a strengthening of the Eurasian Economic Union and the unfolding Multipolar World as such, whereas unipolarity and G7 are since then in a steady decline. Now the West is committing suicide not only in cultural terms via 'wokeness' and LGBT propaganda, but also in economic terms with its' anti-Russian sanctions. It's my hope that the backfiring of these sanctions will lead the peoples of the West finally to rise up in revolution against their Globalist puppet masters who are controlling their countries for the sake of the Western war effort.

SS: There was an election in Russia. How do you see the election, and the issues being faced in the election?

AM: As we know now, Vladimir Putin has won the election. The Western secret services did everything in their power to stop him from doing that. They organized scams in order to force ordinary people into sabotaging the elections, and even made Ukraine organize suicidal military raids into the territory of Belgorod region. Nevertheless, more than 70% of the Russians participated in the elections (the highest turnout since 1991) the West wanted them to boycott as "farce", and more than 80% of the Russians voted for the acting president Putin. Western schemes in Russia have failed miserably.

SS: The Russian conflict in Ukraine is dangerous for both countries. The US is fighting Russia on Ukrainian soil in a proxy-war, while it is Russians and Ukrainians dying, not Americans. How do you think the history books will record this period in history, and what will they have to say about Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine?

AM: I think history books will remember the 24th of February 2022 as a watershed in history; the very moment when unipolarity started to end and multipolarity was forged by fire and sword. Russia will go down into the annals of history as avant-garde of the multipolar world who dared to challenge the Globalist system at the height of its power. Whereas, President Putin will be remembered as the liberator of his own people, and Ukraine; Volodymyr Zelensky and the Western elites forcing him to lead this suicidal war against Russia will be seen as the dangerous villains and madmen they are. At the moment, we only know for sure that Zelensky will not be the president of Ukraine for long. But, how he'll leave the stage of Post-modern democracy simulation – either assassinated by his Neo-Fascist allies, his Western puppet masters, suicide, or overthrown by his own people and incarcerated in a Russian prison – that's still open for debate. However, all the people who made this awakening of Russia possible, and were murdered for their fight for multipolarity – Daria Dugina, Walden Tatarsky and many more – will be remembered as heroes.

SS: President Donald Trump has vowed to stop the conflict in Ukraine if he is elected in November. In your view, will Trump be able to stop the flow of weapons to Ukraine?

AM: That really depends on Trump. Will he be successful in draining the Globalist swamp in Washington, and fighting the military industrial complex? Can he defeat the Cathedral of Globalist academia, press and media? I only wish all real American patriots the best, that they together with Donald Trump will be triumphant over the Globalist elites hijacking their country. Trump has disappointed them once – maybe twice is the charm?

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/russia-remembered-pioneer-multipolar-world-daring-challenge-globalist-system-interview-alexander-markovics/5852629>

UK and Australia sign new defence pact

The United Kingdom and Australia inked a new defence agreement in Canberra on Thursday, as they try to boost a fledgling nuclear-powered submarine programme with the United States. UK defence minister Grant Shapps signed the agreement in Canberra with his counterpart Richard Marles, establishing a legal framework that makes it easier to host troops and share military intelligence. The agreement stops short of a full mutual defence pact, which would bind one side to intervene if the other was attacked.



But it does include a “commitment to consult” about emerging threats and establishes a “status of forces agreement”, which makes it easier to host soldiers from the other nation. “It is extraordinary, actually, the United Kingdom and Australia didn’t already have a defence cooperation treaty in place,” Shapps said after the signing ceremony. Alongside the United States, Australia and the UK are members of the fledgling AUKUS defence alliance — a landmark pact aimed at curbing Chinese military expansion in the Asia-Pacific. Barely two years old, there are already signs the AUKUS programme is under threat — and some fear Donald Trump could scrap it completely if he returns to power next year. Australian National University security analyst David Andrews said Thursday’s agreement gave the stalling AUKUS plan some much-needed momentum. “If there was a Trump administration at end of year, and for whatever reason they were not interested in pursuing the agreement, or not in the same way it is envisioned now, there is potential for a heavier bilateral pathway,” Andrews told AFP. A major pillar of the AUKUS pact is a promise to help Australia build and acquire a fleet of potent nuclear-powered submarines, one of its biggest-ever military upgrades. Thursday’s agreement would make it easier, for example, for Australian sailors to train on the UK’s nuclear subs, or for British crews to be based in Australia. “This is a reflection of increased engagement between our two defence forces,” said Australian defence minister Marles. “And it will greatly streamline the ability for us to work together.”

Consult on threats

London and Canberra have pledged to consult each other if looming regional threats start veering towards conflict. “I think one of the most important elements is it describes a mechanism by which we consult when either of our countries are under threat,” said Shapps. Australia is deeply involved in US-led efforts to counter China’s increasingly assertive behaviour in the Asia-Pacific. Among a host of other initiatives included in the deal is “closer collaboration on undersea warfare”, and greater UK contribution to Australian-hosted joint military exercises. Australia has also agreed to join a coalition with the UK and Latvia that aims to supply drones for the Ukrainian war effort. The UK has been a major backer of Ukraine in its grinding war against invading Russian forces. High-level talks are slated to continue on Friday, when UK foreign secretary David Cameron meets Australian foreign minister Penny Wong in Adelaide. Earlier this week Australia played host to Beijing’s top diplomat Wang Yi, who returned to the country for the first time since 2017.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1822919/uk-and-australia-sign-new-defence-pact>

Taking a page from the French anti-Islam playbook, UK redefines ‘extremism’

By: Omar Suleiman

As the genocide in Gaza continues to be streamed live to our screens, many Western governments are not only refusing to end their complicity in the slaughter, but also trying to silence and demonise the Muslim movements and organisations resisting the Israeli occupation within their countries' borders. In January of this year, the British government proscribed Hizb ut-Tahrir as a “terrorist” organisation, making it a criminal offence to belong to or invite support for the decades-old movement. No matter your view on the movement itself,



this proscription is clearly a convenient political play. In the post-9/11 era, Hizb ut-Tahrir has repeatedly been threatened with proscription and aggressively surveilled under the country's inherently Islamophobic counter-radicalisation programme, Prevent. Former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron tried to outright ban the group, in 2005 and 2010 respectively, but both times Home Office lawyers concluded that the group did not engage with or glorify any form of violence and advised that it should be allowed to continue its activities.

There is no suggestion that the group has since changed its approach to violence, or committed any crime under British law, so its official banning appears to be nothing but a French-style attempt at framing any Muslim movement, ideology or political expression that appears to challenge Western norms as violent and a threat to national security. This week, the British government took yet another page from the French anti-Muslim playbook, and redefined “extremism” in a blatant attempt to subjugate and marginalise British Muslims who are taking a stance against the genocide of Palestinians. In a clear attempt to curtail weekly pro-Palestine demonstrations attended by hundreds of thousands, and amid wider attempts to conflate all pro-Palestine activism with extremism, Communities Secretary Michael Gove announced that the state has expanded the official definition of extremism.

The new definition, Gove revealed, would include “the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others” or attempts to “undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights”. It would also classify those who “intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve” these aims as extremists. While the former definition focused on actual acts of violence, this new one is broader and much less precise. It appears to have been purposefully crafted to open the door to loaded, ideologically driven interpretations that could lead to the branding of all Muslim thought and political action not explicitly approved by the government as “extremism”. The inclusion into this definition of those supposedly creating “a permissive environment” for extremist behaviour is especially dangerous, as it could result in the arbitrary crim-

inalisation of large segments of Muslim civil society in Britain.

For years, France has used a loose, ideologically-driven definition and understanding of secularism to marginalise, criminalise and subjugate its citizens originating from its former colonies, who are overwhelmingly Muslim. Today, with this new, loose and ideologically-driven definition of extremism, Britain is attempting to do the same to British Muslims, who are standing up in support of Palestinians facing genocide and doing so with ever-increasing support from other Britons of conscience. The global Muslim community, which stood with French Muslims as their government tried to crack down on their basic rights under the guise of secularism, will also be firm in its support for British Muslims as their government attempts to curtail their rights under the guise of “fighting extremism”. In a speech last week at the House of Commons, Gove suggested that a number of mainstream Muslim organisations, such as the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), may fall foul of this new definition of extremism and as a result be banned from access to public money, ministers and civil servants. In response, the MAB, known for the extensive role it played in anti-Iraq war protests and movement in Britain, condemned the government’s redefinition of extremism as “a cynical move to appease the hard-right, targeting mainstream British Muslim organisations” and challenged Gove to repeat the allegations without parliamentary privilege so they can sue. Other Muslim media organisations like 5Pillars were under threat of being included in the government’s list of extremist groups, only to be eventually excluded. Dilly Hussain, the editor of 5Pillars, responded to the initial suggestion that the media platform would be on the extremist list by saying, “it’s not the job of Rishi Sunak, Michael Gove, or [the UK Prime Minister’s office] to be labelling and targeting members of the free press [with] whom they ideologically disagree with while claiming to be champions and upholders of “freedom of expression”. Other British Muslim civil society organisations such as Friends of Al-Aqsa, which had a prominent presence in protests against the genocide in Gaza, and CAGE, which led the efforts to challenge France’s crackdown on Muslim civil liberties, are also facing the risk of being classified as “extremist” under the new definition. Even a mainstream mosque like the Lewisham Islamic Centre is under threat due to the initial inclusion of its Imam, Sha-keel Beg. The British government’s redefinition of extremism requires deep scrutiny because it amounts to a feigned reinvention of what “extremism” actually means. Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), a well-established NGO, referred to this in its response to Gove’s slander. “Victory for resistance to Gove’s extremism, he has NOT placed MEND on an extremism list because the facts don’t allow it. Instead, he uses parliamentary privilege to slander.”

As Muslims, we must be proactive in condemning the thought policing of the British Muslim community. We must speak loudly against the British government’s efforts to silence and criminalise Muslim civil society for thought crimes, especially at a time when the same government is complicit in a genocide against Muslims in Gaza. And when we speak up, we must speak up for all groups and organisations facing such baseless and discriminatory attacks. This includes groups that may have ideas or approaches that aren’t representative of the majority of Muslims. At a time when Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian bigotry is on the rise, we cannot allow the British government to pick and choose which Muslims have a right to cultivate ideas, campaign or protest – we should stand firmly in defence of all our Muslim brothers and sisters in the UK and everywhere else. We should also encourage members of the British civil society of all ethnic and religious backgrounds to speak up in defence of Muslims in their country who are currently under a multi-pronged attack. Only if we bravely speak up, and do so together, can we prevent Britain from transforming into an Orwellian dystopia, like France already did.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/3/19/taking-a-page-from-the-french-anti-islam-playbook-uk-redefines-extremism>

Donald Lu highlights poll irregularities in House testimony

By: Anwar Iqbal



WASHINGTON: Ahead of his appearance at a Congressional panel on Tuesday, US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu submitted a written statement expressing Washington's concerns about irregularities in the Feb 8 elections while also emphasising the need to stay engaged with Pakistan to help it navigate through the crises it is facing. Mr Lu is the diplomat whose supposed warning to former Pakistan Ambassador to the US Asad Majeed was the subject of a cipher sent by the envoy to Islamabad. This is the same document that former PM Imran Khan used to allege a US conspiracy to oust his government in 2022, and Mr Khan is currently on trial for mishandling the same confidential document. Mr Lu is scheduled to testify today before a subcommittee of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, at a hearing titled 'Pakistan After the Elections: Examining the Future of Democracy in Pakistan and the US-Pakistan Relationship'. This bipartisan hearing is expected to draw significant attendance from both Democratic and Republican legislators. In his written testimony, Mr Lu highlights Washington's concerns about election irregularities in Pakistan, which encompass restrictions on freedoms, electoral violence, and allegations of interference. He also mentions that several political leaders faced obstacles, such as the inability to register specific candidates and political parties, which disadvantaged them in the electoral process. Additionally, he highlights the harassment and abuse faced by many journalists, particularly female journalists, at the hands of party supporters. However, he also acknowledges positive aspects, such as a significant turnout of over 60 million voters, including more than 21 million women, and a record number of women and minority candidates. His statement emphasises the importance of fortifying Pakistan's democratic institutions and fostering economic stability through avenues such as development grants, private sector investment, and humanitarian aid. He also recognises Pakistan's mounting debt challenges and stresses the necessity of economic reforms and private sector-led investments to spur economic growth. Underlining the significance of counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan, Mr Lu also advocates for respecting human rights and religious freedoms. Additionally, he commits to collaborating with the subcommittee to implement US policy in Pakistan and advance a vision of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous nation. The written testimony, uploaded to the

House subcommittee's website a day ahead of the hearing, notes that Islamabad is an important US partner, being the top destination for Pakistan's exports. "Unfortunately, Pakistan is facing mounting debt challenges after the past decade of elevated borrowing, including from [China]. This year, nearly 70 per cent of the federal government's revenue is expected to go to payments to service this massive debt," Mr Lu says, explaining why the US needs to stay engaged with Pakistan. "Pakistan needs economic reforms and private sector-led investments that will deliver economic growth for the Pakistani people and not dig their government deeper into debt," he adds.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1822665/donald-lu-highlights-poll-irregularities-in-house-testimony>

Your iPhone will soon be able to replicate your voice after 15 minutes of training

(CNN) — Apple on Tuesday announced a series of new accessibility tools for the iPhone and iPad, including a feature that promises to replicate a user's voice for phone calls after only 15 minutes of training. With an upcoming tool called Personal Voice, users will be able to read text prompts to record audio and have the technology learn their voice. A related feature called Live Speech will then use the "synthesized voice" to read the user's typed text aloud during phone calls, FaceTime conversations and in-person conversations. People will also be able to save commonly used phrases to use during live conversations. The feature is one of several aimed at making Apple's devices more inclusive for people with cognitive, vision, hearing and mobility disabilities. Apple said people who may have conditions where they lose their voice over time, such as ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) could benefit most from the tools. "Accessibility is part of everything we do at Apple," said Sarah Herrlinger, Apple's senior director of Global Accessibility Policy and Initiatives, in a company blog post. "These groundbreaking features were designed with feedback from members of disability communities every step of the way, to support a diverse set of users and help people connect in new ways." Apple said the features will roll out later this year. While these tools have potential to meet a genuine need, they also come at a moment when advancements in artificial intelligence have raised alarms about bad actors using convincing fake audio and video – known as "deep-fakes" – to scam or misinform the public. In the blog post, Apple said the Personal Voice feature uses "on-device machine learning to keep users' information private and secure." Other tech companies have experimented with using AI to replicate a voice. Last year, Amazon said it's working on an update to its Alexa system that would allow the technology to mimic any voice, even a deceased family member. (The feature has not yet been released). In addition to the voice features, Apple announced Assistive Access, which combines some of the most popular iOS apps, such as FaceTime, Messages, Camera, Photos, Music and Phone, into one Calls app. The interface includes high-contrast buttons, large text labels, an option for an emoji-only keyboard and the ability to record video messages for people who may prefer visual or audio communications. Apple is also updating its Magnifier app for the visually impaired. It will now include a detection mode to help people better interact with physical objects. The update would allow someone, for example, to hold up an iPhone camera in front of a microwave and move their finger across the keypad as the app labels and announces the text on the microwave's buttons.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/16/tech/apple-accessibility-features/index.html>



Trump needs a \$464m bond in three days. What if he can't get it?

By: Madeline Halpert

Donald Trump's lawyers are asking a New York court to put a \$464m (£365m) fine in a civil fraud case on hold, as the former president finds himself in a precarious financial situation that could ultimately see his most prized properties taken. If Mr Trump wants to continue his appeal in the case without the state seizing the fine from him, he must submit the full amount in cash or secure a bond from a private company by 25 March. On Monday, his lawyers said that despite their "diligent efforts" it had been "practically impossible" to find a company willing to act as a guarantor of the full sum and asked for a pause. "We really are in a moment of serious crisis for Trump personally, as well as for his business," said Professor Will Thomas from the University of Michigan Ross Business School. Just days later, however, Mr Trump said on his social media site Truth Social that he had secured more than \$500m in cash that could be used as collateral for a bond. With the clock seemingly ticking, here's what could happen next in the case.



1) Trump secures a bond

A panel of appeals court judges will decide by 25 March whether the \$464m judgement can be paused while Mr Trump appeals. In filings earlier this week, Mr Trump's lawyers said they had approached 30 bond companies without success, due to the "massive" size of the judgement. To secure a bond, an individual must demonstrate to the company providing the guarantee that they have enough liquidity - usually in the form of cash plus stocks or securities which can be sold quickly - to cover the amount. The bonding company would agree to pay the financial penalty if Mr Trump loses his appeal and cannot do so himself. In a Truth Social post on Friday, Mr Trump said he had secured nearly enough funds for collateral. Companies require slightly more than the judgement itself to put up a bond. "Through hard work, talent, and luck, I currently have almost five hundred million dollars in cash," Mr Trump wrote, adding that he had hoped to use the money for his presidential campaign. The former president testified last year that he had around \$400m in liquid assets. He could have sold other assets or taken a personal loan to reach half a billion. Previously, New York Attorney General Letitia James said his claims about not being able to secure a bond were "unreliable", arguing he could always get several smaller bonds.

2) Trump pays the penalty

Mr Trump could also use the \$500m in cash he says he has to pay the judgement himself. But he is much more likely to use it as collateral, which is generally more cost-effective than paying the judgement outright, Mr Thomas said. Mr Trump is seeking to overturn the judge's finding that he owes millions in potential lost interest by the banks that loaned him money, and from the profits of his sale of his New York golf course and Washington DC hotel. Some have suggested another source of funds for the fine or the bond: Trump Media, the

company behind the Truth social media platform. It is poised to become a publicly listed company and trade in the stock market. Mr Trump's stake is expected to be worth \$3 bn. But that avenue is almost entirely closed to him. He will be barred for six months from selling his stock and would need a waiver to use his shares as collateral, which is a difficult hurdle to clear.

3) The option he may want to avoid: Bankruptcy

He could also declare bankruptcy, which would allow him to avoid paying the judgement. While many analysts have said this is the cleanest way out of a financial mess, it is the path he will be least inclined to take. Bankruptcy could be costly. It is also a very public process that could damage Mr Trump's reputation as a financial titan in an election year. "Practically, it's the most devastating thing that Donald Trump could ever do to his self image," Mr Thomas said. Mr Trump has filed for bankruptcy for his businesses multiple times in the past, but never for himself.

4) Trump gets a pause

An appeals court could side with the former president and allow him to hold off paying the judgement or posting bond while he appeals. This would be a best-case scenario for the former president, who is no doubt eager to avoid having to pay an estimated 16% of what Forbes reports is his \$2.6bn net worth. However, an appeals court is less likely to grant Mr Trump this relief now that he has admitted to having the cash necessary to secure a bond, experts said. Renato Mariotti, a lawyer who represents large real-estate developers, said it was hard to predict how the court would treat a former president. "But my clients wouldn't get a pause," he said.

5) A compromise option

The court still could come back to Mr Trump with a middle-of-the-road option, experts said, requiring Mr Trump to post a bond of a smaller amount while he appeals against the ruling. Mr Trump, however, has already asked an appeals court to allow him to post a bond covering \$100m instead and was turned down. Ultimately, if Mr Trump does not get a pause and the court offers no compromise option, he could appeal directly to New York's Court of Appeals. But with a deadline of 25 March to pay the judgement or post a bond, he is working on a tight timeline and is seeing thousands of dollars in interest added to the penalty sum each day.

6) New York takes Trump's assets

If Mr Trump cannot find a way to pay the fraud judgement or secure a bond by 25 March, Ms James can begin to take his assets. She is preparing to do so. Recently, Ms James filed the fraud judgement with clerks in Westchester County, an indication she might try to take property in New York City's northern suburbs, where Mr Trump owns Seven Springs, a golf course and 212-acre estate. Experts say this is another worst case scenario for Mr Trump, as he could lose some of his most famous properties. They can take any of his buildings - not just those in New York - including the 58-floor Trump Tower and his sprawling Florida club, Mar-a-Lago, his most valuable asset, according to Forbes. The outlet said it was worth \$292m in September 2023.

Ms James would likely not sell any assets until the appeals process is over, Mr Thomas said, because her office would have to pay Mr Trump back if he wins. But if Ms James does eventually sell them, there would be a court-ordered process to do so, with the first \$464m going to New York state to pay the judgement, and any money left over going to Mr Trump, said Mitchell Epner, an attorney who handles commercial litigation. Mr Epner said the state could seize multiple assets, as none of Mr Trump's properties on their own appear to be worth \$464m.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-68609685.amp>

Obamacare is a Lifeline for Immigrants Like Me | Opinion

By: Jorge Neri



This year 21.3 million Americans chose Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace coverage during the open enrollment period. About a fourth of those were new to the marketplace and 16 million Americans renewed their coverage. Despite its popularity and the fact that it's a lifeline for millions of people, former President Donald Trump is threatening to terminate it.

This is exactly why I work in politics—to ensure the representation of underrepresented and marginalized voices. The fight against the dismantling of ACA, colloquially known as Obamacare, is personal. Not just because I'm an immigrant from a low-income community who knows what it's like to live without insurance, but because I worked in the White House during the Obama administration during the ACA's 2014 roll-out. I've seen how important this work is to Democrats and specifically to President Joe Biden.

Back then, I was insecure and felt inadequate. I was surrounded by people who boasted college credentials from some of the top schools in the nation. I didn't finish college. That wasn't even the worst of it. My family faced a number of hardships just before I was set to graduate from high school. This threw me into survival mode. I became a college dropout. My only goal was to make it through each day. This went on for four years. I was 19 working for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union when I had health insurance for the first time in my life.

Fighting for basic human rights is what put me on a path to the White House. It was in my role as associate director of Latino and immigration affairs where I was asked to devise the plan to help Latinos understand the importance of the program and get them to sign-up for it. I struggled with basic memo writing in relation to my peers—the task of creating a successful roll-out plan felt like a herculean task.

This is where I see the importance of diversity—in age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. It was my boss, a Latina (Julie Chávez Rodríguez), who saw me for who I was. She encouraged me to step into my power and allow my lived experience to be as authoritative as a college degree. I was the only individual in that room who grew up without health insurance. I was also the only person with a family still uninsured. I know firsthand what it's like to treat a pharmacist like a makeshift doctor, to pay in cash for doctor visits, or to avoid primary care because past bills are due.

I leaned in and helped write the plans still being used today to help people obtain health insurance. The memo took me hours, but it was worth it. I want people to know that it was a Mexican immigrant whose first language is Spanish, who grew up uninsured, who fought to make sure their voices were heard so they wouldn't have to live their life being uninsured.

This is exactly what I told then-Vice President Joe Biden when I was assigned to brief him for a Latino town hall on ACA 10 years ago. He responded in the affirmative with a snap of his fingers and an "I got it!" He could see Obamacare's value and importance to helping people live healthy lives. In President Biden's first term, he took on insurance companies to lower the price of insulin and prescription drugs; and fought to save Medicare, Medicaid, and the ACA, which did not surprise me.

That moment in my life working on the ACA was pivotal. It also has a special significance in relation to the status quo. My boss who kept me going when I felt like I wasn't smart enough to be doing this work was Julie Chávez Rodríguez, now the campaign manager for President Joe Biden's 2024 re-election campaign. Representation matters and so do diverse life experiences. Latinos have been a priority for Democrats since day one and continue to be so at a time when people like Trump work to dismantle systems that help marginalized communities.

Last year, my mom became a breast cancer survivor. Her hospital bills were well over six figures. Without Medicare her healthy victory would have been overshadowed with the news of financial ruin. I no longer work in the White House but the threats against ACA continue. I'll stay in the fight for as long as needed.

Access to health care transformed my life and the lives of countless others. For my mother, the ACA wasn't just a policy; it was a beacon of hope, the first step toward a healthier, more secure future. Joe Biden's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the ACA is paramount. As president, he champions health care as a fundamental right, prioritizing its protection and expansion. His dedication resonates with individuals like me, who understand firsthand the transformative impact of accessible health care.

The ACA isn't just legislation; it's a lifeline for millions. Its preservation ensures that no one endures the hardships of being uninsured.

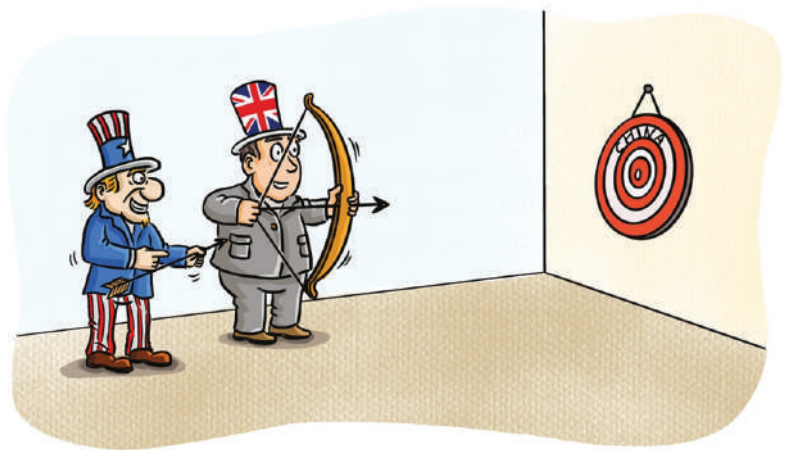
Jorge Neri was an appointee in the Barack Obama administration and served on President Joe Biden's campaign and transition team. He is a political strategist, Mexican immigrant, and advocate for the voting power of Latinos.

The views expressed in this article are the writer's own

<https://www.newsweek.com/obamacare-lifeline-immigrants-like-me-opinion-1882128>

UK becomes more self-isolated by restricting official Chinese visas

The UK government is considering limiting the number of Chinese nationals who can enter the UK on official business, fearing that this is "abused to bring spies into Britain," according to Bloomberg on Wednesday. The UK's approach to the so-called national security threat posed by China and its paranoid and spurious interpretation of national security once again refreshes people's impression of its bottomlessness.



This is not only a corny political speculation based on subjective assumptions, but also a typically selective, discriminatory move. The British side made the absurd accusation against Chinese nationals out of nothing but "fear," without showing any evidence. Some British politicians have fallen into severe anti-China paranoia, and their unfounded slander against China is intended to cover up their own incompetence and failure in solving political, economic and social problems in the UK.

A purpose of such hype is to make their people believe that Sunak's government is tough on China, as the British prime minister is under pressure due to the upcoming election. At this time, he can't afford to be the slightest bit weak on his China policy, or he may lose more votes. Li Guanjie, a research fellow with the Shanghai Academy of Global Governance and Area Studies under the Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times.

In August last year, some British media reported that a "Chinese spy" was alleged to have contacted British officials through LinkedIn, the well-known professional networking site, which is another typical case of the UK hyping up the so-called "China threat" theory. Later, the Chinese Embassy in the UK called the accusation "pure speculation" and "malicious slander" that was perpetuated without any evidence.

Why does the UK repeatedly stir up the topic of "Chinese spy?" The reason behind is worth pondering. On the one hand, it essentially reflects the consistent bottomless anti-China stance of some British politicians. It is easy to understand: they are relying on such political manipulations, and the "China threat" is a perfect tool. Only by continuously fabricating and maximizing the "China threat" theory can these politicians highlight their value in their careers and gain greater political benefits.

On the other hand, the British government closely follows the US by smearing China against the backdrop of US-China competition. Some US media and politicians have frequently fabricated the incidents of "Chinese spy" in recent years. In January, the US also restricted Chinese students entering the US on the grounds of national security. In order to ride on the US'

chariot to contain China, Britain is even willing to serve as the pawn. In sharp contrast to the UK's visa restrictions, China has adopted a visa-free policy for Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Luxembourg since March 14. As of now, China has signed mutual visa exemption agreements with 157 countries. The Western rhetoric of "China's self-isolation" collapses on itself. If the UK wants to carry out visa restrictions and become more and more self-isolated, just like the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the boomerang of more than 200 years ago is now seemingly going to backfire on the UK. Such consideration of Sunak's government that turns back the wheel of history will only ruin the UK in the end.

Some British officials are concerned that any move to restrict diplomatic activity now would "risk inflaming tensions with China." This shows that there are still voices of reason in Britain. China is always seeking for an equal and mutually beneficial relationship with the UK. In the face of current political situation, if Sunak's government attempts to challenge China's diplomatic interests, then China will certainly impose reciprocal diplomatic measures on the UK. What is the right way forward? What is the sensible choice? This question isn't difficult to answer.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202403/1308862.shtml>

UN calls for guidelines to address AI's risks, rewards

UNITED NATIONS: The UN General Assembly on Thursday called for the development of a set of international guidelines to address the risks and benefits of artificial intelligence. The resolution, co-sponsored by dozens of countries and adopted by consensus, emphasises the necessity of guidelines "to promote safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems," while excluding military AI from its purview. On the whole, the resolution, prepared by the United States, focuses more on the technology's positive potential, and calls for special care "to bridge the artificial intelligence and other digital divides between and within countries." It also seeks "to promote, not hinder, digital transformation and equitable access" to AI in order to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to ensure a better future for humanity by 2030.



"As AI technologies rapidly develop, there is urgent need and unique opportunities for member states to meet this critical moment with collective action," US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said earlier, reading a joint statement by the dozens of co-sponsor countries.

According to Richard Gowan, an analyst at the International Crisis Group, "the emphasis on development is a deliberate effort by the US to win goodwill among poorer nations." "It is easier to talk about how AI can help developing countries progress rather than tackle security and safety topics head-on as a first initiative," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1823027/un-calls-for-guidelines-to-address-ais-risks-rewards>

CHARLEBOIS: Canadian icon celebrating 60 years of global delight

By: Dr. Sylvain Charlebois



"Poutine's humble beginnings in rural Quebec have blossomed into a global culinary phenomenon, embodying the spirit of Canadian innovation and cultural pride. As it celebrates its 60th anniversary, poutine stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of a simple dish that has captured hearts and taste buds around the world." Poutine, that deliciously indulgent combination of cheese curds, fries, and gravy, is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. While many attribute its creation to Jean-Claude Roy in Drummondville, Que. in 1964,

the true origins of poutine can be traced back to Fernand Lachance and his wife Germaine in Warwick, Que. It was at their restaurant, L'Idéal (later Le Lutin qui Rit), where the word "poutine" first appeared on a menu in 1957, during a time when Quebec was under the influence of Duplessis and the Catholic Church held significant power.

Interestingly, the original poutine didn't include gravy, as Mr. Lachance in Warwick wasn't a fan. It wasn't until around 1962 that Mrs. Lachance added her sauce as a side dish, completing the iconic trio of ingredients. However, it was Roy in 1964, a professional saucier, who was the first to bring all three main ingredients together: cheese curds, gravy, and fries. This historical account is detailed in the book "Poutine Nation," which was released in 2021.

The dish's popularity grew rapidly, with chip trucks spreading it across rural Quebec. Ashton Leblond, the founder of the Ashton restaurants, further popularized poutine in the Quebec City region in 1972, emphasizing the importance of Quebec's cheese curds in the dish.

Today, poutine can be found on menus worldwide, from Washington to Shanghai, forever associated with Quebec and Canadian cuisine. Despite its global popularity, poutine has yet to receive the recognition it deserves on the international stage. UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural agency, has been declaring intangible cultural heritage since 2003, including dishes like Neapolitan pizza, French baguette, and Chinese traditional tea. Canada, how-

ever, has not signed this convention, meaning no Canadian dish is currently on UNESCO's list.

Canada has the opportunity to change this by not only becoming a signatory to the convention but also by nominating poutine as the first Canadian dish to be declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Poutine's journey from a humble rural Quebec dish to a global culinary icon is a testament to its cultural significance, deserving of recognition on the world stage.

Poutine's success story is one of resilience and adaptation. It has evolved over the years, with variations that include toppings like pulled pork, foie gras, and even lobster. Despite these modern twists, the core elements of poutine remain unchanged, a testament to its enduring appeal.

Part of what makes poutine so special is its ability to bring people together. Whether you're enjoying it at a roadside chip truck in rural Quebec or a trendy restaurant in a cosmopolitan city, poutine has a way of creating a sense of shared experience. It's a dish that transcends borders and cultures, bringing a little piece of Quebec and Canada wherever it goes. Yes, it may be disgustingly unhealthy, but it is indeed iconic.

In addition to its cultural significance, poutine also has economic importance. It has become a symbol of Canadian identity, attracting tourists from around the world who want to experience this iconic dish firsthand. In Quebec, poutine is not just a dish; it's an industry, supporting cheese curd producers, potato farmers, and restaurateurs across the province.

As we celebrate poutine's 60th anniversary, let's not just enjoy this delicious dish but also reflect on its cultural and economic impact. Let's recognize poutine for what it is: a true Canadian success story and a culinary masterpiece that deserves its place among the world's most beloved dishes.

<https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/charlebois-canadian-icon-celebrating-60-years-of-global-delight>



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Trudeau's

carbon tax by the numbers

Since the Trudeau government insists 80% of Canadian households paying the federal carbon tax receive more in rebates than they pay in carbon taxes, here's what independent, non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux said when he examined the carbon tax last year. "When both fiscal and economic impacts of the federal fuel charge are considered, we estimate that most households will see a net loss. Based on our analysis, most households will pay more in fuel charges and GST — as well as receiving slightly lower incomes — than they will receive in Climate Action Incentive payments." He concluded



60% of households in provinces paying the federal carbon tax (Quebec and B.C. have their own systems) were already paying more in carbon taxes than they received in rebates, rising to 80% in Nova Scotia in 2025, in Ontario in 2026, in Manitoba in 2029 and in Alberta and P.E.I. in 2030. Here's the net cost, after rebates, the PBO calculated for average households, from 2024 to 2030, as the carbon tax increases by 23% from \$65 per tonne of industrial greenhouse gas emissions to \$80 on April 1 and then rises by \$15 annually to \$170 in 2030.

Alberta: 2024 \$911; 2025 \$1,137; 2026 \$1,445; 2027 \$1,783; 2028 \$2,136; 2029 \$2,453; 2030 \$2,773.

Ontario: 2024 \$627; 2025 \$799; 2026 \$987; 2027 \$1,184; 2028 \$1,396; 2029 \$1,605; 2030 \$1,820.

Saskatchewan: 2024 \$525; 2025 \$687; 2026 \$871; 2027 \$1,079; 2028 \$1,345; 2029 \$1,545; 2030 \$1,723.

Manitoba: 2024 \$502; 2025 \$633; 2026 \$791; 2027 \$951; 2028 \$1,122; 2029 \$1,305; 2030 \$1,490.

Nova Scotia: 2024 \$537; 2025 \$665; 2026 \$826; 2027 \$987; 2028 \$1,162; 2029 \$1,351; 2030 \$1,513.

Newfoundland and Labrador: 2024 \$377; 2025 \$488; 2026 \$637; 2027 \$802; 2028 \$974; 2029 \$1,141; 2030 \$1,316.

Prince Edward Island: 2024 \$550; 2025 \$671; 2026 \$838; 2027 \$1,007; 2028 \$1,172; 2029 \$1,345; 2030 \$1,521.

New Brunswick isn't included because it joined the federal system after these calculations were made; the three-year carve-out on paying the carbon tax for households heating their homes with oil will temporarily reduce costs for them. Meanwhile, Saskatchewan is refusing to collect the carbon tax on natural gas. The carbon tax is progressive because households with higher incomes have larger carbon footprints than lower-income ones.

<https://torontosun.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-trudeaus-carbon-tax-by-the-numbers>

Canada should have recognized Palestine as a state

By: Thomas Walkom

Israel has a unique role in the Middle East. By virtue of its victories in three wars, it is treated by the United Nations as the occupying power in at least four regions in the Middle East. But this status as occupying power also carries considerable obligations.

In the end, the New Democratic motion on the Middle East was an opportunity squandered.

Billed as an attempt to provide some clarity to Canada's approach to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the motion, passed by the House of Commons this week, after the NDP allowed it to be amended substantially by the Liberals, provided just more confusion.

In particular, it was unclear if anything had changed.

That wasn't supposed to happen. When the motion was introduced, it revolved around a clear question: should Canada recognize Palestine as a state.

Many countries in the world do offer Palestine such recognition. But it is far from universal. The U.S. does not recognize Palestine as a state. Neither does Britain, France or any other member of the G7. Neither does Israel.

But there are reasons why more countries should recognize Palestine. In particular, it would put pressure on Israel to act more sensibly.

Israel has a unique role in the Middle East. By virtue of its victories in three wars, it is treated by the United Nations as the occupying power in at least four regions in the Middle East.

This gives it considerable legal authority in Syria's Golan Heights, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza itself. It can dictate much of what goes on in these territories.



But this status as occupying power also carries considerable obligations. The occupying power cannot arbitrarily dispossess the original inhabitants of their properties. It cannot drive them from their homes.

It must treat civilians humanely under terms of the Geneva Accords. It cannot impose collective punishment, that is it

cannot penalize entire populations for crimes committed by a few.

It cannot deprive populations under its control of food and medical care solely on the basis of their ethnicity.

It was the claim that Israel had broken these rules that led to it being brought before the International Court of Justice on allegations of genocide.

In all of this, Palestine plays a lesser role. Canada, like many other nations, talks to the Palestinians. But because they are not considered by Ottawa to represent a state they are treated less seriously.

This is ironic, given Canada's history in the region. For it was Canada's Lester Pearson who first gave voice in 1947 to what has become the UN orthodoxy — that of the two-state solution.

The Pearson formula called for Palestine to be divided into a Jewish state, an Arab state and an international city to run Jerusalem.

The Jewish and Arab states would have equal powers.

Over time, the idea of the two-state solution broke down into what was, in effect, a one and a half state solution made up of a Jewish state (Israel) plus bits and pieces left over for the Palestinians.

Hamas' brutal attack last October gave Israeli opponents of the two-state solution, such as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an excuse to ignore the very idea of a Palestinian state.

That's why the NDP motion that Canada recognize such a state was worth passing. And it's why the NDP failure to push forward with its motion, and instead allow it to be amended to death by the Liberals, was so unfortunate.

https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/canada-should-have-recognized-palestine-as-a-state/article_0144ec84-e7a3-11ee-8cb7-53b823072c11.html

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The sad story of a meaningless debate over Palestinian statehood

By: Andrew Phillips

That the Liberal felt a need to engage with the NDP at such length rather than vote against the NDP motion hints at bigger divisions in their caucus — and perhaps their cabinet as well — on the Mideast than has become public. What a weird way to make foreign policy — or whatever it was that members of Parliament occupied themselves with for most of Monday.



Our elected representatives started the day by debating a motion put forward by the NDP that would have radically changed Canada's policy on the Israel-Palestine question, tilting it decidedly toward a more resolutely pro-Palestinian stance.

They ended it by doing something else entirely. After a flurry of backroom meetings and an emergency cabinet session they ended up supporting an "amended" motion that basically restates existing Liberal government policy — with some tweaks that, it seems, many of them didn't actually understand.

Indeed, days after this spasm of parliamentary verbiage the headline on a story about the outcome was all about how the motion that finally passed "sows confusion among NDP, Liberal MPs" on Canada's policy toward arms exports to Israel.

Note that those NDP and Liberal MPs are the very ones who voted for the resolution, and whose leaders crafted the text the House of Commons approved late on Monday evening by a vote of 204-117. If they're confused about what they voted for, what chance do the rest of us have?

Some Liberal MPs reportedly thought they'd voted for an arms embargo against Israel, along the lines of the original NDP motion that called on Canada to "suspend all trade in military goods and technology with Israel." Others thought the motion only affirmed existing government policy — not to approve new arms export permits.

That's closer to the actual words of what the Commons voted for — calling on Canada to "cease the further authorization and transfer of arms exports to Israel." But if that's the case, what's the big deal? Especially since, as the Star's Tonda MacCharles reported, the details of all this are still to be worked out because much of what Canada exports to Israel is modified there and shipped back for use by Canada's armed forces or shipped onward to our allies.

In a word, it's complicated.

No wonder an analysis in the Jerusalem Post concluded that what was widely reported as Canada's "arms embargo" on Israel really amounts to "foreign policy theatre for domestic audiences."

The NDP, to start there, comes out of this episode looking foolish, indeed feckless. It went into Monday's debate proclaiming the importance of recognizing a Palestinian state right now, today. By the end of the night, it was signing on to a routine statement about recognizing Palestine eventually "as part of a negotiated two-state solution" — the traditional Canadian position it had previously dismissed as too wishy-washy for these troubled times.

It was like that all along the line. Wherever the NDP had proposed tougher language against Israel (such as imposing sanctions on Israeli officials "who incite genocide") the Liberals managed to roll the wording back. Yet NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh was out on social media claiming his party had "forced" the Liberals to do various things they were already doing — through a non-binding resolution, no less — while his foreign affairs critic was wringing her hands about not getting what they were after.

Quite a performance.

But the NDP is a bit player in all this. The Liberals have the burden of actually running a G7 government that has pretensions to play a role in major international issues. What they should have done was skip the parliamentary antics and vote against the NDP motion, which went against decades of bipartisan Canadian policy, not to mention current Liberal policy on the Gaza conflict.

The fact they felt a need to engage with the NDP at such length hints at bigger divisions in their caucus — and perhaps their cabinet as well — on the Mideast than has become public. So, they went down a road that ended nowhere in particular but managed to create more confusion along the way.

Presumably a bit of confusion is the point, a feature rather than a bug. If even Liberal MPs are reading different things into what the government has endorsed, then others are sure to do the same. If clarity risks only division, then better to go straight to deliberate ambiguity.

Hey, it's worked before.

https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/the-sad-story-of-a-meaningless-debate-over-palestinian-statehood/article_78e591bc-e7b7-11ee-8443-af26d4f384fd.html

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Next Week's U.S.-Israel Talks Could Get Heated | Opinion



Shortly after President Joe Biden delivered his State of the Union address, he ran into Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado as he made his way out of the House chamber. The microphones picked up what was meant to be a private conversation about the most sensitive of topics: Biden's relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "I told him, Bibi, and don't repeat this, but you and I are going to have a 'come to Jesus' meeting," the president said.

That "come to Jesus" moment could occur next week, when Netanyahu's most trusted ministers travel to Washington for talks with U.S. officials on what to do about Rafah, the Palestinian city near the border with Egypt, and the last major urban area the Israeli military has yet to comb through for Hamas militants.

This sudden meeting was the byproduct of a phone call Biden had with Netanyahu on March 18, in which he yet again pressed Israel to do more on the humanitarian front. With famine in Gaza's north projected to occur sometime this spring, the Biden administration is frantically trying to mitigate food insecurity with periodic airdrops and the building of a temporary pier off Gaza's coast to scale up aid deliveries. The U.S. and Israel are united on the ultimate objective: degrading Hamas to the point where it can't execute a similar campaign of slaughter like it did on Oct. 7. But the two close partners are at loggerheads over crucial details.

The U.S. would like Israel to take a far more targeted approach to Rafah, which is teeming with refugees previously driven from their homes and serves as the main gateway for whatever humanitarian aid comes into the enclave. In the U.S. view, a large-scale Israeli ground invasion of Rafah would do more harm than good. "Our position is that Hamas should not be allowed a safe haven in Rafah or anywhere else," National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said

during a White House briefing this week. "But a major ground operation there would be a mistake.

It would lead to more innocent civilian deaths, worsen the already dire humanitarian crisis, deepen the anarchy in Gaza, and further isolate Israel internationally." It's hard not to agree with him; with about half of Gaza's total population bottled up in the area and Palestinians still unable to move back to the north, an Israeli offensive in Rafah could be the bloodiest of the war.

Netanyahu insists that no ground invasion will happen until Palestinians are evacuated from Rafah. The U.S., however, hasn't seen a plan from the Israelis, suggesting one of two things: the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) haven't bothered to come up with one, or they have but the plan is unworkable. Regardless, the Israeli government has emphasized that the question isn't whether the IDF will go into Rafah but when.

A day after talking with Biden, Netanyahu told the Knesset that he "made it as clear as possible to the president that we are determined to complete the elimination of these battalions in Rafah, and there is no way to do this without a ground incursion."

If the U.S. is hoping to use next week's encounter to dissuade Israel from launching an operation entirely, then it's wasting its time. Biden may have his red lines but so does Netanyahu—under no circumstances will Israel avoid taking military action in the southern Gaza Strip. Because the stakes for Israel are higher than they are for the U.S.,

Netanyahu's red line will likely triumph over Biden's. One also needs to take political considerations into account. Biden will survive regardless of what the Israelis choose to do in Rafah. You can't make the same assumption for Netanyahu.

He's administering the most ultranationalist coalition government in Israel's history and may conclude that catering to Washington's wishes on the matter would get him into trouble with his partners—some of whom represent a hard-right constituency that daydreams about a day when Jewish settlements in Gaza can be rebuilt.

The U.S. will instead try to promote alternatives to a full-fledged invasion of the city, which now houses more than 1 million Palestinians. According to anonymous U.S. officials, those alternatives include focusing more on the Philadelphi Corridor that divides Gaza with Egypt in an attempt to shut down the smuggling routes Hamas has used to re-stock their weaponry. The Israelis, of course, are well aware of the smuggling tunnels, so this proposal wouldn't come as news. Yet the Israelis are likely to view it as a supplement to an offensive, not as a replacement for one.

The Biden administration will also try to delay an offensive for as long as possible. The reason for this is straightforward: the longer the Israelis delay, the more time the U.S., Europe, the United Nations and international partners will have to flood the zone with humanitarian aid and prepare infrastructure for another exodus of Palestinian civilians.

That's good in theory, but difficult to implement in practice. Even if Israel agrees to delay going into Rafah, it won't put handcuffs on itself by declaring a unilateral ceasefire against Hamas, particularly when ongoing truce and hostage negotiations remain active.

The conversation next week could get awkward and heated. But it's a conversation the U.S. and Israel need to have.

<https://www.newsweek.com/next-weeks-us-israel-talks-could-get-heated-opinion-1881579>

What do we know about Kate's cancer diagnosis?

By: Michelle Roberts, Philippa Roxby & Smitha Mundasad

Catherine, Princess of Wales, says she is having treatment for cancer which was discovered following major abdominal surgery. She started preventative chemotherapy in late February.



When was the cancer found?

The princess underwent surgery in January. The palace did not disclose details at the time but said the procedure was planned and her condition was "not cancer-related". Her video message says that tests carried out after the operation found cancer had been present.

What type of cancer does the princess have?

Kensington Palace has not said what type of cancer she has. A spokesperson said: "We will not be sharing any further private medical information. The princess has a right to medical privacy as we all do."

What is preventative chemotherapy?

Catherine said her medical team advised she should undergo "preventative chemotherapy" and she is in the early stages of this treatment. Chemotherapy is a catch-all term for medication to kill cancer cells - it can be given via a drip or in pill form. Prof Andrew Beggs, a consultant colorectal surgeon, said: "Preventive chemotherapy after surgery is given to reduce the risk of the cancer coming back in the future." How much you need and how often depends on the type of cancer and how it is growing.

How did doctors find the cancer?

After the surgery in January, which Kensington Palace says was successful, doctors performed tests which revealed cancer had been present. Commonly, tissue removed during surgery would be sent to a lab for analysis and to see what cells are there.

Is she getting treatment privately or on the NHS?

Catherine's original operation took place at the London Clinic, a private facility. The Palace is not commenting on where she is now receiving care. In her video message Catherine thanked the "fantastic medical team" who have been treating her.

What is cancer?

Cancer occurs when cells in a specific part of the body divide in an uncontrolled way. Untreated, these cells can potentially spread to other tissues in the body, including organs, which is known as secondary or metastatic cancer.

How many people get cancer?

In the UK, one in two people develop some kind of cancer during their lifetime. There are more than 200 different types of cancer - the most common ones in the UK are breast, lung, prostate and bowel, according to the NHS UK website. Each cancer is diagnosed and treated in a particular way. Anyone can develop cancer, but the risk goes up the older we become because there's more time for cell damage to build up. Most cases of cancer are in people aged 50 and over. In the UK, a third of all cases are in people aged 75 and over.

Survival from cancer has doubled in the last 50 years.

What should you do if you think you have cancer?

If you notice something that isn't normal for you, see a doctor.

That might include:

- unexplained bleeding or pain
- an unusual lump or swelling
- unexplained tiredness and weight loss
- a persistent cough

The symptoms you are experiencing may not be cancer, but it is important to get checked.

Finding cancer early can often make it easier to treat.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-68641710>

"A tale of cruelty"

By: Fakeha Qamar

One evening in March 2003 in Karachi, while traveling in a taxi to Islamabad airport, she was kidnapped by unknown people near the Safari Park and taken to an unknown location. It was that evening, when an endless series of trials and tribulations began for Doctor Aafia and her family. The news of Dr. Aafia's arrest and abduction was broadcast not only on domestic, but also on foreign media platforms. Human rights organisations also voiced their concerns and protested against it. During the time of General Pervez Musharraf's government, Dr. Aafia's family were asked to remain silent. News appeared in the headlines on March 31st 2003 in all the national newspapers of Pakistan that Dr. Aafia had been handed over to the American government. All schools of thought protested the kidnapping of Dr. Aafia in Pakistan but it had no impact. After Dr. Aafia's transfer to America, it seemed that a new chapter of persecution had started. All eyes of the whole world were on the case, in which a woman was accused of terrorism, the American judiciary badly exposed in this false case. During this time, despite the harshness of the Pakistani government, efforts to release Dr. Aafia continued at public level, named as the "Aafia Release Movement." Dr. Aafia's mother, Ismat Siddiqui, passed away on 2nd of July last year after not being able to bear the pain of her daughter's separation. Her son Ahmed and daughter Maryam had become more than 20 years old during her imprisonment. This human tragedy born from the war in Afghanistan is still a stigma on Pakistani and American democracy and an infringement of basic human rights, which must be eradicated now. Dr. Aafia is confined in a cramped cell in the infamous American prison, where her month-long rotation has become like a park.

I hope this dark night of cruelty will end soon and our sisters will be among us InshAllah.

US delegation leaves Saudi Arabia early over kippah row

A US delegation on religious freedom said on Monday it cut short its visit to Saudi Arabia after one of its members was asked to remove his Jewish head covering, or kippah.



The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) said its delegation was near Riyadh visiting Diriyah, a historic town and Unesco world heritage site, when the commission's chair, the Orthodox rabbi Abraham

Cooper, "refused their requests that he remove his religious head covering".

Cooper said in a statement: "No one should be denied access to a heritage site, especially one intended to highlight unity and progress, simply for existing as a Jew."

The USCIRF said Cooper and its vice-chair, the Rev Frederick Davie, were invited to tour the site last Tuesday as part of their official visit when, after several delays to the tour, officials requested that Cooper remove his kippah "while at the site and any time he was to be in public, even though the Saudi ministry of foreign affairs had approved the site visit".

Saudi Arabia "is in the midst of encouraging change under its 2030 vision", Cooper noted. "However, especially in a time of raging antisemitism, being asked to remove my kippah made it impossible for us from USCIRF to continue our visit."

The USCIRF said it was particularly regrettable it happened to the representative of "an American government agency that promotes religious freedom". The commission is a US government advisory body mandated by the US Congress. Davie, the USCIRF vice-chair, described the incident as "stunning and painful".

He added: "It directly contradicted not only the government's official narrative of change but also genuine signs of greater religious freedom in the kingdom that we observed first-hand." The Saudi embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

The incident comes against a backdrop of tensions between Saudi Arabia and US ally Israel over the war in Gaza, and US efforts to promote normalization of ties between the two states once the conflict is over.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/11/us-delegation-saudi-arabia-kippah>

A Ramadan no Palestinian will ever forget

By: Ahmad Ibsais



It was in the streets of Nablus, el-Bireh, and – whenever I was able to sneak past illegal checkpoints – those of occupied East Jerusalem, that I first experienced the purest form of Ramadan and recognised the true meaning and purpose of my religion.

It was there that I realised Ramadan is much more than just fasting and prayer, that it is a remembrance of the strength of our faith, and a celebration of the resilience of our people.

In those streets, occupied and under constant threat of aggression, but defiantly full of hope and children's laughter, I came to appreciate the unique beauty of the sound of Adhan and the calming wisdom of being Muslim.

This Ramadan, I am not at home, in Palestine. And as I break my fast at every sundown with the images and sounds of my homeland's ongoing destruction playing out in my mind, I am devastated to think what Ramadan now looks and feels like for my beloved people.

For those in Gaza, who survived more than five months of genocide, there is no food for Iftar. Israel is still blocking aid from reaching the most desperate, and people are cooking grass to have something, anything, to break their fast with.

Babies and children are all malnourished, and dozens have already died from lack of food and clean water. Everyone in the besieged enclave lost someone, but they are not even provided with the time and space to breathe, mourn and process their trauma.

There is no mosque left undamaged, and no safe place for collective prayer. Indeed, people of Gaza are still under constant bombardment.

Even those who tried to find refuge in Rafah, that last so-called "safe zone" in the besieged enclave, are still being threatened with a ground invasion – an invasion that would undoubt-

edly kill and maim thousands more innocents.

Sure, Ramadan has not been carefree for the people of Gaza for years – due to Israel's relentless blockade, many parents were going without food in this holiest of months to feed their children long before the beginning of this genocide.

Yet death and destruction has never been this close, and fear about the future this acute in this once beautiful land, during any Ramadan, ever.



For those in the West Bank, Ramadan is nothing like it was before either.

Sure, Ramadan was never a straightforward affair in the occupied territory. It always involved navigating illegal checkpoints, enduring harassment from occupation soldiers and resisting provocations. But this year, it is much, much worse.

Palestinians in the West Bank are not only agonising over the genocide of their brothers and sisters in Gaza, but also trying to survive relentless attacks from settlers, police and soldiers. They wonder who among them will be the next to be arbitrarily arrested, displaced or assaulted – they wonder whether they and their loved ones will live to see another Ramadan.

And for those in the diaspora, we are left practicing our faith with an undying guilt that I do not have the capacity to describe neither in English nor in Arabic.

How should I break my fast when so many of my people haven't properly eaten in months?

Pray in a mosque while my people pray on rubble? Religiously, I know I must, but that does answer the questions that make my heart bleed.

Ramadan after Ramadan, the Palestinian people have been tested. But the Palestinian spirit will outlive the tyranny of occupation.

As I watch Gazans perform Friday prayer amidst the rubble of their society, I am reminded of what steadfastness looks like: that you can destroy one's home or mosque, but never one's Iman (faith).

I often imagine what Ramadan would look like if Palestine were never occupied. Perhaps I would be breaking fast with the children of Gaza who are no longer here.

Perhaps I would be making knafeh, my speciality, in the eastern mountains of Nablus, on land that was stolen from my grandfather, who never got to see freedom.

One thing is certain, Ramadan will never be the same. Every year from now on, my prayers will not be for myself but for my martyred people who are no longer able to pray for themselves.

I will be praying to absolve my guilt for not being able to do enough to save them. May God's mercy be upon the souls of our martyrs.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/3/21/a-ramadan-no-palestinian-will-ever-forget>

Military Might

By: Shaza Arif



Ensuring military readiness to confront future challenges and uncertainties has always been imperative for the armed forces. The approach often requires a consistent and steadfast commitment to innovation and modernization.

Central to this concept is the acquisition and integration of new and cross-cutting technologies. The possibility of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) acquiring the Shenyang J-31 stealth fighter has created buzz recently.

Speaking at a recent induction ceremony of J-10C Firebird fighters and other advanced weaponry on January 2, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber alluded to the expansion of the fleet with the acquisition of the J-31 stealth fighter jets in the near future.

Tagged as a game changer, the J-31 has a similar mission profile as the J-20 and US F-22A Raptor. Designed as a stealth-enabled air superiority jet with cross-cutting technologies, advanced avionics, supersonic speeds, long-range strike potential, and radar-evading capabilities, the aircraft represents technological advancement, marking a notable leap in the service's capabilities.

The acquisition can provide the PAF with fifth-generation aircraft. The stealth feature, due to the smaller radius cross section, enhances the ability of the aircraft to engage targets without immediate detection, allowing a greater probability of a successful strike. Likewise, advanced avionics comprising advanced sensors and radar systems enable refined situational awareness, enabling early threat detection, precise targeting, and successful engagement.

The acquisition can further refine the first-shot capability that contributed to the PAF's aerial victory over the Indian Air Force (IAF) in the Operation Swift Retort on February 27,

2019. The possession of AMRAAMs provided the first-shot capability to the PAF. It was anticipated that the combination of Rafale jets and meteor missiles might shift the capability to the Indian side. However, Pakistan addressed the threat by opting for the Beyond Visual Range (BVR) PL-15 missile.

Like the J10, J-31 can also carry various air-to-air missiles, including the PL-15 medium-range missile. Hence, the combination of stealth capabilities and firepower makes it a formidable asset, offsetting the advantage claimed by India. While these features are crucial, tactics and prior training also prove decisive in aerial encounters. Hence, its potential acquisition is also likely to initiate comprehensive training programmes tailored to materialize the advanced features of the aircraft for missions' success.

The potential acquisition is likely to mark another chapter of ongoing close cooperation on fighter aircraft with China. Pakistan is familiar with Chinese military technology, including fighter aircraft, and surface-to-air missile systems, among other weaponry.

Acquiring weaponry from the same buyer also mitigates integration challenges faced by the IAF due to its diverse weaponry acquired from multiple retailers. It is equally pertinent to mention that contrary to perceptions, the acquisition is not a replacement for the F-16 fleet; it is an effort to modernize the existing arsenal. A successful deal with Pakistan could also open new markets for Chinese aircraft.

The future acquisition of the J-31 stealth fighter by the PAF is also likely to mark an important chapter in the regional dynamics of South Asia. The news of this potential acquisition has sounded alarm bells across the border, sparking widespread anxiety and igniting a flurry of discussions in electronic media.

The IAF is awaiting the induction of its indigenous fifth-generation aircraft – the advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA). However, the induction may take several years – as late as 2035. In the meantime, India may resort to options such as the American F-35 aircraft or the Russian Su-57 as an interim measure to avoid suffering a tactical disadvantage. Procuring fifth-generation aircraft was also advocated in the Standing Committee on Defence (2022-2023) report, citing the delayed timelines of its indigenous counterpart.

The PAF has consistently countered the IAF's numerical superiority through technological advancements and efficient training, which remain the cornerstone of its strategy to address threats from India. Pakistan's acquisition becomes even more important given the presence of an aggressive and risk-tolerant regime in India.

It can provide Pakistan with a potential edge in future conflicts, improve overall military readiness, position itself as a modernized force, and bring it a step closer towards becoming the next-generation air force.

Since its inception, the PAF has consistently demonstrated its excellence in maintaining aerial dominance and safeguarding national sovereignty. Through acquiring advanced technologies and implementing efficient training programmes, the PAF has consistently showcased its commitment and visionary approach. The pursuit of the J-31 fighter aircraft marks yet another strategic step forward, ensuring the PAF remains at the forefront of addressing the nation's evolving defence challenges.

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<https://www.thenews.com.pk/amp/1167089-military-might>

The US war on reproductive rights should concern women everywhere

By: Julie Bindel

In the United States, women's reproductive rights, gained through half a century of feminist struggle, are rapidly being replaced with reproductive wrongs. In 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v Wade* – the landmark 1973 ruling that gave women the constitutional right to abortion. Since then, in 28 states access to abortion has been restricted depending on gestational age, with bans ranging from six weeks to more than 24 weeks. Abortion is almost completely banned with limited exceptions in another 14 states. In Idaho, for example, abortion is allowed only in cases of rape or incest that have been reported to police, or where necessary to prevent the death of the pregnant woman. A similar ban is in force in Indiana, while in Kentucky and Louisiana, it is banned except in the case of a medical emergency or if the pregnancy is “medically futile”. There are also efforts to establish not only the rights of foetuses but even those of embryos frozen in labs as superior to the rights of women.

Just last month, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that frozen embryos have the same rights as children under state law. The perplexing decision was issued in relation to a “wrongful death” claim made by three couples whose frozen embryos were accidentally destroyed at a fertility clinic. Judges, citing verses from the Bible, ruled that a 1872 state law called “the Wrongful Death of a Minor Act” that allows for parents of deceased children to seek punitive damages where “the death of a minor child is caused by the wrongful act, omission, or negligence of any person” could be applied to “all unborn children, regardless of their location”. The ruling will have overreaching implications on the legality in the state of in vitro fertilisation (IVF), which is problematic in itself as it feeds the surrogacy trade. More importantly, however, this ruling has wide-reaching implications for women's bodily autonomy. It implies that any man who impregnates a woman – even through rape – could sue that woman under the Wrongful Death of a Minor Act for seeking an abortion at any point in gestation.

This blatant war on women's reproductive rights and bodily anatomy in the US should concern not only Americans but also feminists in Europe, and especially those of us in the UK. This is not only because we should expose and challenge threats to women's rights wherever

they appear, but also because the cultural norms and political perspectives gaining traction in the US will have a significant effect on British politics, and consequently rights and wellbeing of British women and girls. Indeed, in the past few decades, as the anti-abortion movement started to make legal and political gains in the US, we have started to witness a similar trend in the UK. Since 2015, the Pro-life All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) has been working to dial back abortion rights across the UK. For the



past four years, the country's leading anti-abortion charity, Right To Life UK, has served as the Secretariat of this cross-party group. In 2021, as feminists were campaigning to fully decriminalise abortion, this same charity ran adverts calling on supporters to prevent Parliament from introducing "extreme" laws that would "introduce abortion, for any reason, up to birth".

Since October 2022, Maria Caulfield, the Conservative MP for Lewes, has been serving as the Parliamentary undersecretary of state for women, as well as for mental health and women's health strategy. Caulfield supports cutting the abortion time limit and voted against buffer zones outside abortion clinics. She is vice chair of the Pro-Life APPG, and has voted against legalising abortion in Northern Ireland. The very fact that such an open and proud opponent of abortion rights was appointed minister for women is horrifying in and of itself, because it communicates the government's sympathy towards efforts to restrict British women's rights and freedoms. Caulfield has called the UK's 1967 Abortion Act, which legalised abortion in Great Britain on certain grounds by registered practitioners, "one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world". But this is untrue; Britain has some of the most draconian abortion laws in the world, and is still sending women to prison over "illegal" abortions.

Indeed, as recently as in June 2023, a woman in Britain was sentenced to 28 months in prison for having an abortion after the legal limit of 24 weeks gestation during a COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. Following an appeal, her sentence was reduced to 14 months and suspended – but the case was a clear warning to all women that this could also happen to them. Feminist campaigners are now demanding an overhaul of the out-of-date laws the 44-year-old mother of three was sentenced under. These laws date back to the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, under which all abortions were criminalised – except those undertaken to save the mother's life, a caveat introduced in 1929. The 1967 Abortion Act legalised abortions with an authorised provider, but this was a mere amendment to the 1861 act, which was never repealed. Thus, the deliberate termination of a pregnancy remains illegal in the UK unless certain conditions are met.

The Abortion Act originally allowed terminations up to 28 weeks, though this was reduced to 24 weeks, the point after which the foetus is accepted as viable outside the womb, in 1991. Today, a woman in the UK may be allowed to abort after 24 weeks only if her life is at risk, or the child she is carrying would be born with a severe disability. Crimes under the Offences Against The Person Act carry a maximum sentence of life in prison. Prosecutions are rare, but according to data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act in England and Wales, 67 women were tried for "procuring an illegal abortion" between 2012 and 2022. While the overturning of *Roe v Wade* did not directly affect UK abortion law, it certainly emboldened anti-choice campaigners, many of whom have joined forces with their US counterparts to pedal propaganda to the public. We have also witnessed an increase in anti-abortion activism outside some abortion clinics. I think this is because, after the largest democracy on the planet abandoned federal abortion rights protections, many anti-abortion activists here started to feel more optimistic about their chances of effecting change in the UK.

Many battles remain to be won in the UK, before we can claim to be on the side of women's reproductive health and choices. Until very recently, abortion was only permitted in Northern Ireland in the most exceptional of circumstances. And even though it is, in theory, now permitted, the Department of Health regularly refuses to commission abortion services, leaving many women still having to travel to England to exercise their reproductive rights. This problem is not limited to Northern Ireland either – according to pro-choice group Back off Scotland, many women there are forced to travel to England for second-trimester abortions, between weeks 13 to 26, because no health board in Scotland actually provides abortion care up to the legal limit of 24 weeks. Between 2019 and 2022, a minimum of 170 Scottish abortion clients were referred by their doctors to travel to England for an abortion.

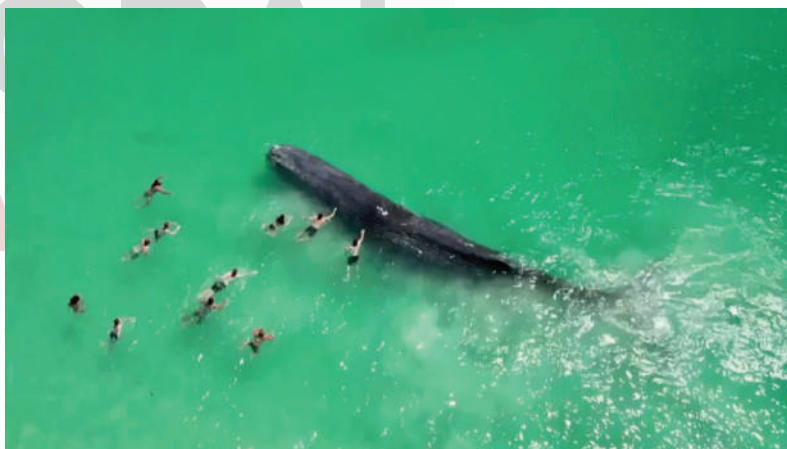
Women seeking to access legal abortion in the UK face bureaucratic nightmares, and loud, very active anti-abortionists keep a constant buzz of anti-choice rhetoric alive in the narrative. This is why, when Roe v Wade was overturned, many in the UK reacted with rage. And this is why, we are watching the constant backpedaling of reproductive rights there with fear and concern. We do, of course, support our sisters in the US in their fight to protect their rights, but we also know that what happens there will have consequences for us in the UK.

The US presidential election in November will be one where abortion rights is at the top of the agenda. That election will decide whether American women will face further attacks on their hard-earned reproductive rights, or have the opportunity to work with an administration that is committed to try and repair the damage done by the reversal of Roe v Wade. Whatever the result of that election, however, women in countries around the world, including those of us in the UK, will continue to suffer from the ripple-down effects of the US Supreme Court's fateful decision not to afford constitutional protections to abortion rights.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/3/22/the-us-war-on-reproductive-rights-should-concern-women-everywhere>

Whale seen in video with swimmers dies off Australian beach

Sydney CNN — A sperm whale that became stranded on a sandbank at a popular beach near Perth, Western Australia on the weekend has died. Officials from the Parks and Wildlife Service of Western Australia confirmed the 15-meter (49-foot) long whale died Tuesday morning after it swam off the sandbank into open water. "It was moving pretty gingerly and swam only 200 or 300 meters before it really seemed to sort of stop. Its respiration gave us some signs that it really was coming to the end," said Mark Cugley, Incident Controller from the Parks and Wildlife Service. The whale appeared on Saturday at Rockingham Beach, where people swam close to it, touching it and taking selfies. The whale would already have been in distress on Saturday when it arrived at the beach and the interaction with people may have increased its stress, government marine mammal expert Kelly Waples said Monday. "Sperm whales are pelagic animals, that means they live offshore in deep water and that's where they forage and spend their time," Waples said. "It is pretty unusual to see them this close to shore." The whale swam out to sea after that interaction Saturday, but was found on Monday stranded on a sandbar nearby "thin, emaciated and in a place it doesn't belong," Waples said. "It's come into this area in very poor health and its very unlikely to survive." Authorities had considered euthanizing the whale before finding it dead. According to a statement from the Parks and Wildlife Service of Western Australia, rangers will now move the 30-tonne carcass to a "more secure location in the water, away from the beach," which remains closed.



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<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/12/australia/large-whale-perth-beach-dies-intl-hnk/index.html>

Five of the best books inspired by classic novels

By: Sophie Ratcliffe

Retellings of classic novels are having a bit of a moment: both Sandra Newman's feminist take on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Julia, and Barbara Kingsolver's Pulitzer-winning modernised *David Copperfield*, *Demon Copperhead* have made a splash in the last couple of years, while Percival Everett's reimagining of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *James*, will hit bookshops in April. If each work of art builds on what came before it, the novels below take indebtedness



to the next level. With riffs and rewritings, playful challenges and prequels, these writers re-imagine the stories that inspired them – and allow us to rethink the idea of novelty itself. After all, as WH Auden puts it, our belief in our own “uniqueness” is “absolutely banal”.

The Hours by Michael Cunningham

Spinning Virginia Woolf at least three ways, Cunningham's Pulitzer-winning novel tests the ways in which fiction forms part of our reality. In one timeline, an unhappily married housewife reads *Mrs Dalloway*. In another, a woman called Clarissa plans a smart Manhattan party. The world of the Bloomsbury writer, as she composes her modernist day-in-the-life story, haunts the remaining chapters. Structurally brilliant, melancholy, and sharply edged.

On Beauty by Zadie Smith

In 2007, Smith's debut, *White Teeth*, was framed as a modern classic of kinds, reissued in Penguin's orange retro-livery. *On Beauty*, a campus-based transatlantic homage to EM Forster's *Howards End*, asks why art objects become seen as “classics” in the first place – and presses on the powerful structures that keep such works in place. Combining vivid characters with philosophical riffs on high art and hip-hop, this exploration of class, race and family asks how we might “only connect” in the 21st century.

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys

A passionate, feminist prequel to *Jane Eyre*, Rhys's final novel gives a voice to the madwoman in the attic. Before she became Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife was we learn, the beautiful, troubled Antoinette Cosway. Dramatic and painterly, Rhys's narrative captures the beauties of the landscape of Jamaica, Cosway's childhood home, as well as the ugliness of historical guilt and complicity. Groundbreaking on its publication in 1966, *Wide Sargasso Sea* has lost none of its charge.

Dispossession: A Novel of Few Words by Simon Grennan

In a series of miniature tableaux, this gorgeous graphic novel takes on Trollope's 1879 work, *John Caldigate*. It's the usual 19th-century fare: indebted hero travels to Australia to make his fortune, but ends up accused of bigamy – though Grennan's take is quite out of the ordinary.

Dispossession playfully and skilfully interrogates the Victorian novel. A bonus for readers: versions of well-known 19th-century works of art are hidden among the quadrillage, like a wonderful kind of Where's Wally.

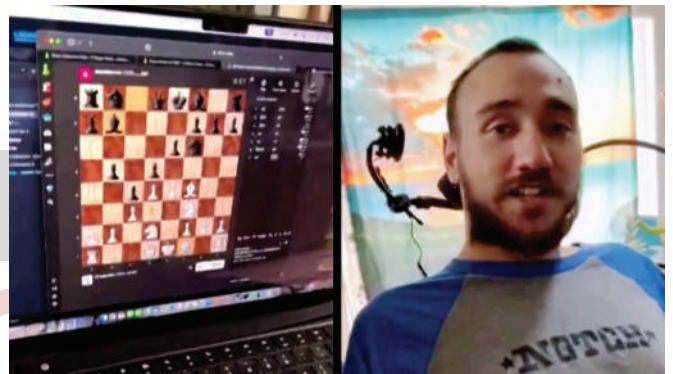
Flaubert's Parrot by Julian Barnes

Retired doctor, Geoffrey Braithwaite, is obsessed with works of Gustave Flaubert. But gradually, his diligent accretion of details about Flaubert's fiction reveal themselves as a carapace – and a way of avoiding his own reality. The layers of this brilliant love story lift painfully, with the ghost of Flaubert's most famous heroine, Madame Bovary, drifting beneath the surface. Flaubert's Parrot doubles back on itself so many times it feels like a corridor of mirrors. But you're left, in the end, not with emptiness, but with a feeling of generous, sorrowful yearning. "Books", Braithwaite bleakly reflects, "make sense of life. The only problem is that the lives they make sense of are other people's lives, never your own."

<https://amp.theguardian.com/books/2024/mar/14/five-of-the-best-books-inspired-by-classic-novels>

Neuralink: Musk's firm says first brain-chip patient plays online chess

Elon Musk's brain-chip company Neuralink has shown its first patient moving a cursor on a computer using an implanted device. In a nine-minute livestream on X, formerly Twitter, Noland Arbaugh uses the cursor to play chess online. Mr Arbaugh was paralysed below the shoulders after a diving accident and received the chip implant in January. The company's goal is to connect human brains to computers to help tackle complex neurological conditions. "The surgery was super easy," Mr Arbaugh said during the presentation. Mr Arbaugh also said that he had used the brain implant to play the video game Civilization VI. Neuralink gave him "the ability to do that again and played for eight hours straight", he said. However, Mr Arbaugh said the new technology was not perfect and they "have run into some issues". Neuralink's device, which is about the size of a one pound coin, is inserted into the skull, with microscopic wires which can read neuron activity and beam back a wireless signal to a receiving unit. The company has also run trials in pigs and claimed that monkeys can play a basic version of the video game Pong. Neuralink was given permission to test the chip on humans by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in May 2023. Neuralink is one of a growing number of companies and university departments attempting to refine and ultimately commercialise this technology. For example, the École Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne in Switzerland has successfully enabled Gert-Jan Oskam, who is paralysed, to walk just by thinking about the movements involved. That was achieved by putting electronic implants on Mr Oskam's brain and spine, which wirelessly communicate thoughts to his legs and feet. Details of the breakthrough were published in the peer-reviewed journal Nature last year. The human brain is home to around 86 billion neurons, nerve cells connected to one another by synapses. Every time we want to move, feel or think, a tiny electrical impulse is generated and sent incredibly quickly from one neuron to another. Scientists have developed devices which can detect some of those signals - either using a non-invasive cap placed on the head or wires implanted into the brain itself. The technology - known as a brain-computer interface (BCI) - is where many millions of dollars of research funding appears to be heading at the moment.



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<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68622781>

Alicia Keys criticised for Women's Day event in 'misogynist' Saudi Arabia

By: Vanessa Thorpe

Performer Alicia Keys projects a powerful position on women's rights, hosting a regular Women to Women summit and posting inspirationally on Instagram on Friday for International Women's Day. But the singer-songwriter's message is undermined for some by the revelation that she is hosting the third edition of her summit this weekend in Saudi Arabia. The American performer and her guests, including Pharrell Williams, best known for his worldwide hit Happy, are to discuss "how



women are pushing the culture forward in Saudi Arabia and around the world", she has announced, before the get-together in the coastal city of Jeddah. "I am thrilled to be back on stage, this time in Jeddah, performing in a place I have never performed in before, and in a way I never have in this region," Keys said. "I'm also so inspired to connect in a meaningful way with the amazing women there to discuss cultural, creative and boundary-pushing narratives we are collectively and individually leading. In light of International Women's Day, it's the perfect time to discuss important issues affecting us." In response, human rights activists, including Peter Tatchell, have called on the 43-year-old star to boycott Saudi Arabia, a country that restricts women's activities and persecutes several minority groups. "No artists should be going to Saudi unless they speak out publicly to demand women's freedom and an end to other human rights abuses in the country, including the freeing of all political prisoners," said Tatchell. He added: "Alicia Keys and Pharrell Williams should not be performing in Saudi Arabia. It's a dictatorship that persecutes women, LGBTs and religious and ethnic minorities. Women are in jail because of the country's sexist laws. The regime murdered and dismembered the journalist Jamal Khashoggi." The women's event is staged in conjunction with the country's Formula One grand prix and is backed by Keys' husband, the rapper and record producer Swizz Beatz, and his Good Intentions creative agency, as well as the international music platform MDLBeast. Keys will also sing with Williams before the grand prix. "It is total hypocrisy for Saudi Arabia to host Alicia Keys for an International Women's Day event when the regime jails advocates for women's equality," said Tatchell. "I'm shocked that she is colluding with this whitewashing of Saudi misogyny." The singer, whose childhood is the subject of the hit Broadway musical Hell's Kitchen [<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2023/nov/19/hells-kitchen-alicia-keys-musical-review>], is making her third visit to Saudi Arabia. Last year, she also held the Women to Women summit there in the city of AlUla. Marking International Women's Day on social media Keys said: "I want you to remove any ideas in your mind that you are not going to create the destiny that you believe in for yourself. I want you to remove that from your vocabulary, the word "not" or "can't" or "won't", let's get rid of that."

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2024/mar/09/alicia-keys-criticised-for-womens-day-event-in-misogynist-saudi-arabia>

British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad

honoured with International Recognition

The recipient of national and international prizes, and recognitions and prestigious awards, British Bangladeshi Mansoor Ahmad has been honoured with European Commission recognition. At the invitation of the European Commission, Mansoor Ahmad, who has been contributing voluntarily to humanitarian services for nearly a decade and half attended the third edition of the European Humanitarian Forum 2024 (EHF 2024), which took place from Monday 18th to Tuesday 19th March 2024, held in Flagey, Brussels, Belgium. The EHF 2024 panels consisted of moderated discussions among the wider humanitarian-development community, including EU institutions, EU Member States, third countries, partner organisations, local humanitarian actors, UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent family, and academics. During his visit to Brussels to attend the European Humanitarian Forum 2024, Mansoor Ahmad, the holder of British National Honours, contributed to the various panel discussions of the EHF 2024 and met EU leaders, Belgian Ministers, Nobel Peace Prize (2018) winner Dr Denis Mukwege Mukengere, and representatives of European institutions and countries on the side-lines of the forum, exchanging views and ideas. The two-day humanitarian forum was attended by Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of Belgium. The discussion topics included 'Preventing and Mitigating Violence and Violations through Proactive Humanitarian Protection', 'The Ongoing Crisis in the Middle East, 'The Rohingya Crisis', 'Protecting Civilians in Conflict and Recovery: Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas', 'The Link to Landmines and Explosive Ordnance Contamination', 'Delivering Humanitarian Aid in Crime Affected Environments', 'A Humanitarian and Development Partnership to Scale up Anticipatory Action', 'Northwest Nigeria: Neglecting a Humanitarian Response in a Fragile Context', 'Halving Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030 in the Humanitarian Sector', 'The Role of Innovative Financing', and many more. Mansoor Ahmad is a life devotee of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK, currently serving as Manager of Accounts & Finance with 'Al Shirkatul Islamiyyah', one of the largest Charities in the UK.



Stamps On Ahmadiyya Centenary Celebration

By: Rashed Ahmad Bangali - Canada

As prophesised by the Holy Prophet Mohammad (sa) the advent of a Messiah who would make Islam the predominant and universal religion of the world, and the promised time of advent goes no further than the commencement of the 14th century of Hegira. Accordingly, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (Kadian) in his own words claims "The work for which Almighty God has appointed me, my function as the Promised Messiah, is that I should remove the estrangement which has taken place between God and man, and re-establish man's connection of purity and love with his Divine master. I have been raised that I should put a stop to religious wars and lay the basis of peace" As you know, in our Community today is known as Masih Maud Day the Promised Messiah Day! It was indeed One Hundred and Thirty Five years ago, - Saturday 23rd March 1889 was the momentous day when Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (a.s.), as ordained by God Almighty, accepted the hands of forty faithful disciples in the city of Ludhiana allegiance to the Ten Conditions of Bai'at (initiation) and founded the community which he called 'The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community'. This was a revolutionary yet a very modest beginning to a new chapter in the history of Islam. We Celebrate Messiah Maud Day on March 23 to remind the importance of this day and refresh our allegiance to the Promised Messiah (a.s) and Ahmadiyya Muslim Community through his successor's (Khalifa tul Messaiah) according to the Ten Conditions of Bai'at (initiation) prescribed by the Promised Messaih (a.s) , with our utmost humility and determination.

Conditions of Initiation (Bai'at)

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (peace be upon him)

1. That he/she shall abstain from Shirk (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.
2. That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty,

**AHMADIYYA MUSLIM CENTENARY
1889 - 1989
THE FIRST EVER STAMP
JAMA'AT AHMADIYYA**



dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they might be.

3. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajud (pre-dawn supererogatory prayers) and invoking Darood (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask for giveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.
4. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.
5. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trial; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.
6. That he/she shall refrain from following un-islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Quran; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the guiding principle in every walk of his/her life.
7. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.
8. That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.
9. That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.
10. That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allah, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connections demanding devoted dutifulness.

In his own words, The Promised Messiah says:

"This is not a mere wish but Almighty God has given me the glad tidings which make me entertain this hope. The manifestation of this heavenly ordinance has been brought about in this country and far flung areas so that different people may soon be seen gathering into one flock, and that the night of disagreement and enmity may soon be changed into the bright morning of peace and concord. The sun and the moon would eclipse on specified dates in the lunar month of Ramadhan. All these signs of the mercy of God would be followed by another which is indicative of the wrath of heaven, i.e. the raging of a destructive plague which would affect every town and village, utterly laying waste some and leaving others in a partially desolate condition. God would then be in great wrath because the signs which He manifested at the hands of His Messenger were denied, and the Apostle whom He had sent was rejected and called an impostor. Moreover, Almighty God does not assist an impostor." As you are well aware that our beloved Khalifatul Massih V Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aa) in his last UK Jalsa Salana 2020, gave us the glad news that, by the Grace of Almighty Allah the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at has been established in 211 countries and territories. Alhamdulillah! As the different people will be ultimately made one nation, is the universal hope of all religious sects will come under one umbrella, "Ahmadiyyat The True Islam" On this Massih Maud Day 2024, my dearest Bangladesk Canada members, I pray earnestly and fervently that you become heirs to all the supplications made by the Hadhrat Massih Maud, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). Ameen, Summa Ameen.