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Editorial



Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil - Assistant Editor

Horrifying state supported uncontrolled religious aggression, extremism and fanaticism is gradually representing the face of Pakistan. Islam, a religion of Peace and Love, is being used for demolition, hate, terror and blood-shed. Law enforcement agencies are playing lecherous and onlookers. The majority population of the Islamic state, the official Muslims, are religiously depressed but have strong religious sentiments which give extremists ample opportunities to misleading the illiterate and manipulate them towards killings of the innocents both Muslims and non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The incidents of brutal killings in the name of religion (Islam) are frequently occurring and mostly behind these incidents are fanatic Mullahs of Tahrik-i-Labaik are found to be the mastermind. The oblivious leadership of Tahrik-i-Labaik are openly instigating the ignorant people against certain stratus, communities and religious minorities. No doubt, now Pakistani 'official Muslims' have become awfully unrestrained and dangerous enough to make the state kneel before them.

In fact, in most of the cases; it is often proved that there is no religious issue behind the cases of blasphemy but only materialistic, financial, business, political or property matters registered in the name of religion to exploit the religious sentiments blindly subjecting to one's personal agendas. This is truly the worst form of religious authoritarianism in the so-called Islamic democratic state (Islamic Republic).

Like many other sects in Islam, Ahmadis also hold their beliefs believing to be the true face of Islam notwithstanding the state sponsored extreme opposition. The recent incidents of Sargodha against Christians, Ahmadis in Mandi Bahaudin and Swat are extremely miserable and alarming. Tahrik-i-Labak's gatherings and speeches particularly against Ahmadis before Eid-ul-Adha were not something should have gone unnoticed. Evidentially, the criminal negligence and silence by the Administration and actions against Ahmadis off-putting them to perform their religious obligations even within the boundaries of their homes, put question mark on the writ of the State and the rights of the citizens in Pakistan. Local and international human right agencies and individuals with conscience are also heavily condemning the above horrifying incidents.

Ahmadis are the most suffering community. Since April 1984, total 549 Ahmadis have been booked for posing as Muslims, 176 taken for using Islamic epithets, 862 arrested for preaching, 334 charged under blasphemy laws and generally 1273 Ahmadis prisoned on religious grounds. Overall minorities have a deep sense of insecurity and restlessness. Therefore, tiny communities and non-Muslims are fleeing the Country.

State should play its role to contain the situation and observe the writ of the State. Persecution, discrimination and injustice should be condemned and stopped. State should take solid steps towards improving the situation. Above incidents are also damaging the image of Pakistan. Islam is the religion of peace so it should be practised to observe the true teachings of Islam which only promote harmony among differences and educate the individuals to respect the humanity at its principal setting a proper and popular Islamic society.

Biden's Immigration Ping-Pong

Will Fail | Opinion

By: Mark Davis



For a foundering Biden administration, this is the season of triangulation. Attacked by the far-left wing of his party for seeming too pro-Israel, the administration began a campaign of hindering at every turn our ally's attempt to win a war. Criticized for targeting Donald Trump with a wave of political prosecutions, Team Biden launched ads claiming it is actually Trump who poses a danger to democracy.

And now, as our porous borders allow an influx of unvetted people constituting a social burden and ample criminal threats, the White House plays ping-pong with itself on immigration. First came an executive order that would temporarily block migrants from seeking asylum once crossings topped 2,500 per day. Open-borders activists loudly protested, as if allowing a large football stadium's worth of migrants per month is cruelly restrictive.

So, right on schedule, we now have Joe Biden's attempt to appease the extremists who guide his party and thus control his fate. Gathering a gaggle of allies in the White House's East Room Tuesday, the president announced a sweeping executive amnesty for as many as a half-million people who will no longer have to leave the country to begin their citizenship application process.

The change affects those who have been in America for at least 10 years and are married to a U.S. citizen. They are now free to remain, and to work, for up to three years while applying for a green card, which unlocks innumerable government benefits and a path to full citizenship.

The marriage requirement allows Biden to couch the move in pro-family rhetoric, but the

protections existed for a reason. Amid today's twisting of the normal definition of amnesty, the new executive order is a craven attempt to further erode any system featuring proper evaluation of those seeking to become American citizens.

Paying the thinnest lip service to his constitutional duty, Biden told attendees: "We can both secure the border and provide legal pathways to citizenship." But it is hard to identify any remaining shred of presidential intent to secure the border while the administration's citizenship process features flouting, not following, the usual legal means.

The strategy at play here features the Left's dream tactic—chain migration, by which unending streams of family members are brought onto American soil wrapped in warm familial sentiment. "Look at these supposedly pro-family Republicans," we will be told, in an attempt to condemn anyone who would stand astride the full family trees of millions sought by Democrats for their promise of grateful future voters.

Donald Trump's 2016 victory was fueled in large part by Americans fed up with years of unfulfilled border security promises from both parties. The 11 million additional voters who backed him in 2020 wanted more of the border security he delivered, which had the effect of dissuading multitudes of would-be migrants from even attempting the trip.

The world knows Biden is unserious about protecting our southern border, and the resulting flood has vindicated every warning Trump has been condemned for issuing. How many more Americans will suffer crimes at the hands of illegal immigrants before voters get a clue that these nations are in many cases "not sending their best," as Trump stated nine years ago?

One of the reasons Trump's poll numbers are surging in key states, and even among previously skeptical demographics such as young and nonwhite voters, is that the nation may be finally growing weary of open borders, sanctuary cities, and the litany of headlines featuring heinous crimes committed by people who should not be here in the first place.

On this issue as well as others not going his way, Biden has no basis for arguing that the facts are on his side, so he leans on the familiar default setting of insulting Trump—and with him millions of American citizens.

"The patience and goodwill of the American people is being tested by their fears at the border," Biden said Tuesday. "They don't understand a lot of it. These are the fears my predecessor is trying to play on."

Biden may be about to learn that voters understand all too well what is happening at the border, and that their votes on November 5 will be a reckoning, based not on fear but on resolve. A consensus is forming that we actually need an immigration policy that serves our national interest, and that for a while, we had one. That passion could be what makes Biden's predecessor his successor.

Mark Davis is a syndicated talk show host for the Salem Media Group on 660AM The Answer in Dallas-Ft. Worth, and a columnist for the Dallas Morning News and Townhall.

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

<https://www.newsweek.com/bidens-immigration-ping-pong-will-fail-opinion-1915332>

Labour would comply with ICC arrest order for Netanyahu, Lammy reiterates

By: Patrick Wintour



Shadow foreign secretary repeats belief in ‘rules-based order’ and also says UK would not seek EU membership

David Lammy has reiterated that Labour would seek to implement an arrest warrant against Benjamin Netanyahu if one was issued by the international criminal court. Speaking to CNN, the shadow foreign secretary said a Labour government would comply if an order was issued for the arrest of the Israeli prime minister, adding that he expected the response to be the same all over Europe.

Lammy has made the same commitment previously, but his remarks to the US TV channel’s Fareed Zakaria came at a time when the ICC is drawing closer to making a decision on the issue of warrants.

Labour has faced criticism from Israeli groups for making the commitment, which was previously made before the UK prime minister, Rishi Sunak, called a general election. Explaining his rationale, Lammy said: “The architecture that was created after the second world war, the rules-based order that we believe so much in, the international legal structure – one of the big architects of that was Churchill in our country.

“It’s something that has been a guiding light for the United Kingdom over many years, and that’s why we are signatories to the statute of Rome. We believe in the ICC and the ICJ. Now I’ve seen what the chief prosecutor has said about his desire for warrants.

“There is a process, a court process, that will determine whether they will be granted. But we have been very clear that in the Labour party we believe in the rules-based order. We believe

in international law. We also believe in the separation of powers.” Lammy added: “It is not for me, as a politician, to start quizzing or debating the determinations that are made by senior judges, whether domestically or internationally.”

Pressed by Zakaria on whether Labour would comply, he said: “Here in the UK we will comply, and that will be the same across Europe. I know that the United States is not a signatory to the statute. So there will be a different debate in the United States about these issues. I recognise that.”



The ICC prosecutor, Karim Khan, announced on 20 May that he was seeking applications for arrest from the pre-trial chamber. Under the procedure, the court’s judges decide whether they believe the evidence compiled is sufficient to issue arrest warrants – something that could take weeks or months. Joe Biden, the US president, described the ICC move as “outrageous”.

Warrants were also sought for the arrest of Hamas’s leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar; the Israeli defence minister, Yoav Gallant; Hamas’s political leader, Ismail Haniyeh; and the group’s military chief, Mohammed Deif. Netanyahu has been accused by Khan of the starvation of civilians, attacks directed at civilians, and wilful killing and causing great suffering.

Warrants may remain sealed until the time of arrest. This means that the suspects effectively are no longer able to travel to the 124 countries who are parties to the ICC’s statute and are therefore obliged to arrest them and turn them over to the court.

The ICC itself pointed out on social media on Sunday that the court could seek either a summons to appear, in which someone submits themselves to the court voluntarily, or a warrant for arrest that was enforced by national authorities. Lammy also said the UK would not reopen the issue of membership of the EU, and the EU itself would not be interested unless there was a settled opinion to rejoin in the UK.

He said such a settled opinion did not exist “because the Conservative party, the Reform party, a significant part of the electorate, has set its face against it. So this is not a debate that can be reopened, unless there were to be a groundswell of a change of view, and whilst I may have views, the truth is that the Conservative party is not in that position at this stage.”

Lammy also sounded optimistic about the impact of the re-election of Donald Trump on the war against Russia in Ukraine. He said: “Donald Trump actually upped American troops, to Nato and their presence in Europe. He sent the first Javelins, to Ukraine, actually, because he likes a deal, and he likes to get things done.

“He’s not going to want to see the United States, or its partners, lose any battles ahead. That is the truth of it.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jun/23/labour-would-comply-with-icc-arrest-order-for-netanyahu-lammy-reiterates>

Trump's second-term agenda:

Trade wars, mass deportations, destroying 'deep state'



Donald Trump plans to deport millions of migrants, reshape global trade with expensive tariffs and fill the government with loyalists if he wins a second four-year White House term in the November presidential election. Here is a look at some of the policies Trump has pledged to institute:

TRADE

Trump, a Republican, has floated the idea of a 10% or more tariff on all goods imported into the U.S., a move he says would eliminate the trade deficit, but critics say would lead to higher prices for American consumers and global economic instability. He has also said he should have the authority to set higher tariffs on countries that have put tariffs on American imports. He has threatened to impose a 200% tariff on some imported cars. Trump has targeted China in particular. He proposes phasing out Chinese imports of goods such as electronics, steel and pharmaceuticals over four years. He seeks to prohibit Chinese companies from owning U.S. infrastructure in the energy and tech sectors.

FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY

Trump would seek to decimate what he terms the "deep state" – career federal employees he says are clandestinely pursuing their own agendas – through an executive order that would reclassify thousands of workers to enable them to be fired. That would likely be challenged in court. He has vowed to fire what he terms corrupt actors in national security positions and "root out" his political opponents.

Trump has said he would require every federal employee to pass a new civil service test of his own creation, though his practical authorities to do so are limited. Close allies are also

vetting scores of potential hires who could be counted on to implement his policies, and Trump has suggested they must adhere to his belief that the 2020 election was fraudulent.

He would crack down on federal whistleblowers who are typically shielded by law and would institute an independent body to "monitor" U.S. intelligence agencies.

INVESTIGATING ENEMIES

Trump has pledged at times to use federal law enforcement agencies to investigate his political foes. Along that line, Trump has said he will consider appointing a special prosecutor to probe Democratic President Joe Biden, though he has not specified the grounds for such an investigation. He said he is waiting to see how the U.S. Supreme Court rules on his own claims of presidential immunity for guidance.

He has also said the Justice Department would investigate district attorneys on novel civil rights grounds, arguing that some local prosecutors are engaging in an unconstitutional form of selective enforcement.

And he has said he would consider firing a U.S. attorney who did not follow his directives - which would constitute a break with the longstanding U.S. policy of an independent federal law enforcement apparatus. Trump's allies are developing a plan that would curtail the Justice Department's independence and pack its ranks with more political appointees loyal to the president.

ENERGY

Trump has vowed to increase U.S. production of fossil fuels by easing the permitting process for drilling on federal land and would encourage new natural gas pipelines. He has said he will again pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accords, a framework for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, and would support increased nuclear energy production. He would also roll back Biden's electric-vehicle mandates and other policies aimed at reducing auto emissions.

ECONOMY

Along with his trade and energy agendas, Trump has promised to slash federal regulations that he says limit job creation. He has pledged to keep in place a broad 2017 tax cut that he signed while in office, and his economic team has discussed a further round of individual and corporate tax cuts beyond those enacted in his first term. He said as president he would pressure the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates.

IMMIGRATION

Trump has vowed to reinstate his first-term policies targeting illegal border crossings, roll back Biden's pro-immigrant measures and forge ahead with sweeping new restrictions. Trump has pledged to limit access to asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border and embark on the biggest deportation effort in American history, which would likely trigger legal challenges and opposition from Democrats in Congress.

He has said he will employ the National Guard, and, if necessary, federal troops, to achieve his objective, and he has not ruled out setting up internment camps to process people for deportation. Trump has said he would seek to end automatic citizenship for children born to immigrants, a move that would run against the long-running interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

ABORTION

Trump appointed three justices to the U.S. Supreme Court who were part of the majority that did away with constitutional protection for abortion. He likely would continue to appoint federal judges who would uphold abortion limits.

At the same time, he has said a federal abortion ban is unnecessary and that the issue should be resolved at the state level. He has argued a six-week ban favored by some Republicans is overly harsh and that any legislation should include exceptions for rape, incest and the health of the mother. He has also come out in opposition to an even stricter ban that a court allowed to be put in place in Arizona.

Even so, Trump has said that states, if they choose, could monitor women's pregnancies and prosecute them if they undergo the procedure beyond the period permitted.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Trump has been critical of U.S. support for Ukraine in its war with Russia and has said he could end the war in 24 hours if elected, although he has not said how he would do that.

Trump has also said that under his presidency, the U.S. would fundamentally rethink "NATO's purpose and NATO's mission." Though he has put forward few tangible policy proposals, he told Reuters in an interview last year that Ukraine may have to cede some territory to reach a peace agreement.

Trump objected to a \$61 billion aid package for Ukraine for months, and some Republicans in Congress refused to back it. Congress finally approved the package in late April, and Trump has since suggested Ukraine's security is an important U.S. interest.

Trump has supported Israel in its fight against Hamas but has criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's initial handling of the conflict. On the campaign trail, he has also floated sending armed forces into Mexico to battle drug cartels.

EDUCATION

Trump has pledged to require colleges and universities to "defend American tradition and Western civilization" and purge them of diversity programs. He said he would direct the Justice Department to pursue civil rights cases against schools that engage in racial discrimination.

On the K-12 level, Trump would support programs allowing parents to use public funds for private or religious instruction.

CRIME

Trump says he would institute the death penalty for human traffickers and drug dealers. He also has suggested that looters of retail stores could be shot while on site.

He says he does not believe federal statistics that show violent crime dropping in U.S. cities. He has said he will consider pardoning all of those who have been convicted of crimes in connection with the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/opinion/trumps-second-term-agenda-trade-wars-mass-deportations-destroying-deep-state>

Fragments of Gaza:

My journey of memory and loss

By: Shahd Safi

Nine months before October 7, I began learning photography under the guidance of my friend Mahmoud Abu Salama. Mahmoud owns a Canon camera, something I've always wanted. Whenever he didn't need it, he would let me use it, which felt like receiving a precious gift. I loved capturing moments, but being a perfectionist, I hesitated to use a camera until I felt skilled enough. I started watching online videos on how to take great photos and learned that symmetry enhances beauty. Whenever I saw something symmetrical, I felt an irresistible urge to photograph it. Mahmoud couldn't always lend me his Canon, and I didn't have the money to buy my own, so, I decided to get a Lumix as a temporary solution until I could afford a more expensive camera. With my new Lumix, I discovered that spiral patterns attract people's attention. Just a month into my photography journey, I received an Erasmus scholarship to study for one semester in Spain as a cultural exchange student from the English literature department at my university, Al-Aqsa. I traveled to Jaen on January 27, 2023. There, I learned that incorporating a human element makes photos more compelling and that the best photos tell a story. In Spain, I lost my Lumix, which made me feel frustrated. I think I left it somewhere, and when I went back to search for it, it had been stolen. The camera had a lot of memories that connected me with Gaza. However, I realised that while cameras can preserve some moments, we still carry the most important memories within us. For me, those are the memories from my beloved home, Gaza.



In August 2023, I returned home. By then, I had built a strong network of contacts. Many recognised my work with NGOs, which made job opportunities more accessible despite my not-so-high grades, affected by the challenges of the pandemic and my parents' unexpected separation. I had become financially stable, having secured freelance work that allowed me to pay for my education and support my family. My mother, burdened by debt, was relieved when I could help. Our relationship had improved slightly, and I felt proud of my achievements. Everything seemed to be falling into place, and I was ready to buy my Canon camera and a guitar, finally able to indulge in my passions. I wanted to relive my meaningful past, capturing every sentiment my photography had missed – from my passion for school and proving my intelligence, to my ambitions and intellectual pursuits. I yearned to grow wiser, kinder and more thoughtful. I wanted to process the sadness and anger caused by the systematically created poverty we, in Gaza, confront; the injustices we have been witnessing ever since Palestine was occupied; and the world's great betrayal of our human rights and its denial of our existence. All that has been accumulating over the years, from childhood through my early 20s, and I want to realise my dreams of travelling freely without facing obstacles.

On October 7, I was supposed to start my final year of university. I was eager to commit fully to my studies, but instead, I woke up to the sounds of bombardment. The internet was inter-

On October 7, I was supposed to start my final year of university. I was eager to commit fully to my studies, but instead, I woke up to the sounds of bombardment. The internet was inter-

mittent, but I received messages from my school announcing a pause in classes due to the attack on Gaza. My life turned upside down, shifting from excitement and ambition to sadness, worry and fear. I went from being a passionate student to someone documenting the injustices and human rights violations against my people. I was shocked by the world's double standards and the media's misrepresentation of Palestinians. Despite limited internet access, I wrote articles and pitched them to news outlets whenever possible. Life in Gaza before the war was already difficult. We struggled with unsafe water, limited electricity and restricted travel. After October 7, these struggles intensified. Water became scarce, electricity was entirely cut off, and travel required large sums of money that secured no guarantees for exit. We lived in constant fear, under bombardment, with no safe place to turn to. Most of the places I knew and loved were totally destroyed, including my home. Had I known this would be Gaza's fate, I would have taken more photos, capturing every moment. I would have said goodbye to every beautiful spot I experienced in Gaza.

The schools where I graduated and was awarded for being at the top of my class, the places where I forged the strongest friendships and laughed the most, and the places where I felt most at home – all gone. My heart aches with the memories of what once was and the stark reality of what remains. I wasn't able to capture the boredom that would overcome us when the TV would go silent after a blackout; the closeness we enjoyed when we chatted no longer distracted by the internet; the joy children felt when the lights flickered back on after a blackout; the relief mothers experienced, as clean laundry fluttered in the breeze; the delight one would get from a sweet nap after a long day at the university.

I wasn't able to preserve the moments of anger at our governments for the division they have maintained since 2007, the consequences that followed, and the unclear vision of our future. I could neither capture the contempt for those who marred our beautiful land, killed, dismissed, tortured, handcuffed, blindfolded or detained my people, nor the dark nights studying by candlelight that burned my forehead hair, which took time to heal. The fervent pride we felt when we named the Palestinian villages and cities we lost in 1948, the deep-rooted connection we have to a land stretching back to ancient times, and the tears that welled up when we remembered our ancestors' defeats – all these memories live within us. These are all things my camera could not capture but my heart could. I am fortunate to have escaped Gaza. On March 3, I left after a successful fundraising campaign, thanks to the support of kind people and connections made through my work teaching Arabic and freelancing.

My mother and some siblings are safe in Cairo, but my father stayed in Gaza with my other siblings. This left my heart broken apart – a piece of it is in Gaza with my father, other siblings, and friends; another is in Cairo; and yet another is with my sister in Algeria, where she is a university student on a scholarship in international law. There is also one piece of my heart that died when I left Gaza. My mother, siblings and I now face hardship in Egypt and the pain of uncertainty: What will happen if a ceasefire is announced? Will we return to Gaza, or will we be forced to stay in Egypt? Both options are equally frightening to us.

My heart is so overwhelmed that no therapy can help me heal. I will only be able to start healing when my camera can capture civilian planes in our sky, not Israeli warplanes. I will heal when I can safely travel the world and proudly say I am Palestinian, when I can pass through Palestinian airports, when my identity is never questioned, and when I am no longer called a refugee. Only then will I rest assured that my people will not witness injustices again and that the world has apologised, and stepped up for us. That is when our suffering in Palestine will end.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/6/21/fragments-of-gaza-my-journey-of-memory-and-loss>

Donald Trump really does embrace the America Democrats abandoned. Too bad he's completely lost his mind

By: Rick Salutin

I'd like to address mounting dread over Trump's possible return to office. It doesn't haunt Americans alone. Part of Trump Derangement Syndrome is trying not to think about it but that's also deranged.

I'll do this via a recent New York Times interview with Ohio senator J.D. Vance. He wrote *Hillbilly Elegy* (2016), an impressively empathic look less at Trump than those who voted for him in that election. Vance said they weren't all rightwing yahoos and even rightwing yahoos can have

legitimate beefs. Trump's call to make America great again spurned the neoliberal globalization that let corporations ship jobs to low-wage nations, leaving states like Ohio with abandoned factories and gasping, once vital, communities. The bosses roamed the world looking for deals while former union workers became Walmart greeters. Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama embraced that makeover. So did Republicans but Trump disowned them and transformed the party.

Trump's declaration of America First rejected sanctimonious crusades like invading Iraq, which unleashed forces like ISIS and chaotic migrations to Europe — and eventually the U.S. — causing downward pressure on wages and the rise of anti-immigrant racist demagogues like Trump.

In fact, Vance says the kind of Democrat he can identify with is Bernie Sanders, who counters Trumpism with left populism, an option Dems rejected.

So the trouble with Trump isn't mainly his ideas, which are often plausible; it's more that he doesn't intend to do anything with them except get elected and then tender benefits, like his tax cut, to other rich folk. Biden has done far more to restore the U.S.'s industrial base but won't admit it's party heresy.

The other problem with Trump is he's verifiably insane. You can verify that with a recent post that includes, "It is a Total and Complete American Tragedy that the Crooked Joe Biden Department of Injustice is so desperate to jail Steve Bannon, and every other Republican, for that matter, for not SUBMITTING to the Unselect Committee of Political Thugs, made up of all Democrats, and two CRAZED FORMER REPUBLICAN LUNATICS, Cryin' Adam Kinzinger, and Liz 'Out of Her Mind' Cheney." This is full-on Nero-Caligula. It's clear he'd readily scorch the planet (by way of nukes or warming) in a rush of rage and grandiosity.

Vance is Trump without the crazy but he's caught the White House bug and is angling to be Trump's veep. For that, he must buy some of the crazy like a stolen 2020 election, on which



he sounds unconvinced. He's easily the smartest contender so Trump surely won't choose him. I wouldn't vote for the guy but with him on the inside I'd sleep better. Not blissfully, better.

Willie Mays has died at 93. I count it an unmerited blessing that I saw him play when I was very small in his first season with the Giants at the Polo Grounds in New York. The biggest thing for me was the basket catch. He didn't invent it but made it his. It was cool but I doubt he did it for that, he just liked it. It was more fun — and intimate the way he sort of looked it almost into his pants pocket — than the overhead catch. It made sense, since you never lost sight of the ball, but it's interesting no one else took it up fully. You see it only occasionally. That's like a show of respect for what he alone did so artfully.

I also saw DiMaggio, the other greatest centre fielder that year, the only one when they both played — but on TV. Till then I'd known him only as a mythical figure in my baseball books, like Ruth or Gehrig. One day as I watched a game on the neighbour's black and white set, he loped into view from the top of the screen to gather in a fly ball. It was like seeing Moses descend with the tablets. It's the only thing TV still does better than other media: live sports. When you watch games online, they're like second-rate TV.

https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/donald-trump-really-does-embrace-the-america-democrats-abandoned-too-bad-hes-completely-lost-his/article_6e2e0ece-2f1b-11ef-90a0-db86afc5609d.html

The brand-new £6bn railway linking 3 major countries and bringing Asia and Europe closer

By: John Varga

After three decades of negotiations, a major new railway line linking East Asia with southern Europe has finally been given the green light. An agreement was signed on June 6 between China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to build a new rail line that will connect all three countries.



The line will be 523km (325 miles) long, of which 213km (132 miles) will run through China, 260km (162 miles) through Kyrgyzstan and 50km (31) through Uzbekistan. More than 50 tunnels and 90 bridges will be built in Kyrgyzstan as part of the project. It is estimated that the ambitious plan will cost around six billion pounds.

The line will shorten the route from East Asia to southern Europe by 900km (559 miles), saving one week of delivery time and significantly increasing the volume of cargo transport.

The railway corridor will follow the route from Kashgar in China, crossing Kyrgyzstan through Torugart, Makmal and Jalalabad, to Andijan in Uzbekistan. In the future the line may be extended to Western and Southern Asia. However, it will not be linked to the Trans-Siberian railway route across Russia.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1914035/china-kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-railway-line-belt-and-road/amp>

MONASTIRIAKOS:

Canada has abandoned Israel with regard to Hezbollah

By: George Monastiriakos

Like the international community, Canada has abandoned Israel with regard to Hezbollah. If and when the full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah breaks out in Lebanon, it will be nothing like the Israel Defence Force's urban warfare campaign in Gaza. Not only was this conflict avoidable, but the international community has made it almost inevitable.

Before Oct. 6, 2023, some 18,500 Palestinians from Gaza would cross into Israel to work in Israeli communities where they earned higher wages and enjoyed better working conditions than their peers on the other side of the fence.

On Oct. 7, roughly 3,000 militants from Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas initiated a war against the Jewish state by invading Israel, massacring 1,200 Israelis, and taking 252 hostages back to Gaza.

Instead of asking permission from the Palestinians whose collective interests Hamas claims to represent or consulting with the other Palestinian factions based in the West Bank, the terrorists launched this operation unilaterally.

On Oct. 8, the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah initiated its own war against Israel in solidarity with Hamas by attacking the Jewish state from the sovereign territory of Lebanon. At least 80,000 Israelis have since been displaced from the north.

The democratically elected Lebanese government did not authorize Hezbollah to initiate this war against Israel. This decision was not debated in the Lebanese parliament. Citizens of Lebanon were not consulted either. It seems likely that one person, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, took this decision unilaterally by the direct order of Iranian dictator Ali Khamenei.

Israel has since been fighting a war on its southern border against Hamas and on its northern border against Hezbollah, while also defending itself from swarms of drones, rocket attacks and missile barrages fired by Iran and Tehran-backed terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Canadian media has barely covered the conflict on Israel's northern front. The narrative has been dominated by devastating footage from the IDF's urban warfare operation against Hamas in Gaza and the aggressive global propaganda campaign against the Jewish state instead. Both of these have radicalized many Canadians and turned most of the international



community against Israel.

As the war on the northern front spirals further out of control, Hezbollah's aggression against Israel is treated not only as normal, but also as justified by "progressives" in the West.

First, this is anything but normal. Hezbollah is by far the world's most powerful terrorist group. It is the only major faction in Lebanon that did not disarm after the Taif Accords ended the Lebanese Civil War in 1989. Despite having its own army, Hezbollah continues to operate from the sovereign territory of Lebanon in violation of Lebanese laws and multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Second, this is anything but justified. In 2006, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 ended the last Israel-Hezbollah war. Among other things, this stipulated that Hezbollah must withdraw north of the Litani River, the main natural border between Israel and Lebanon.

About 13,000 "peacekeepers" with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), there since 1978, have been unable to enforce this legally binding UNSC resolution. Neither have the international community, the government of Lebanon or the Lebanese Armed Forces.

To put this colossal failure into perspective: In 2006, Hezbollah had roughly 15,000 rockets. Its arsenal has since grown exponentially to more than 150,000. Hezbollah's foot soldiers once operated as little more than guerrillas against Israel.

They have since served as infantrymen alongside Bashar al-Assad's army and mercenaries like the Wagner Group in Syria, while Russian and Syrian fighter jets turned Syrian cities such as Daraa into rubble.

Hezbollah is the elephant in the room that nobody in Canada wants to talk about.

Searches of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly's and Global Affairs Canada's Twitter accounts revealed that the words "United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701" and "Hezbollah" have never been used. They haven't referred to any of these in their official communications with Canadians since Hezbollah initiated its war against Israel either.

Despite receiving less coverage than the Gaza front, parts of northern Israel are on fire as we speak. Rest assured that Hezbollah will continue escalating the conflict as Israel gets closer to Hamas chief Yahyah Sinwar's bunker in Gaza. This will also coincide with calls for Jerusalem to engage in unilateral and unconditional ceasefires on both fronts growing louder, too.

Though the IDF pursued a "clear and leave" military strategy against Hamas, Israel is likely to invade and occupy southern Lebanon to enforce UNSC 1701 in the final confrontation with Hezbollah. Not only was this war avoidable, but the international community has made it almost inevitable.

— George Monastiriakos is a part-time professor at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law. He writes about geopolitics and foreign policy. His opinions are his own and don't reflect the views of his employers. Follow him on X @monastiriakos.

<https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/monastiriakos-canada-has-abandoned-israel-with-regard-to-hezbollah>

‘O Canada’

is everything that’s wrong with this country

By: Nadia Khan

Our national anthem is inoffensive to the point of being offensive. Even from a purely musical standpoint, it’s melodically stagnant, without ever really rising or falling until the final repetition of “O Canada, we stand on guard for thee” toward the end — and right when the song starts to gain steam and inspire anything close to patriotism, it’s already over.

When I was 8-years-old, I nearly fell asleep during my Canadian citizenship ceremony. It was during the playing of “O Canada” when I began to get a little droopy-eyed and even now, reflecting on the maple cookies I was given that day inspires more national pride in me than our national anthem ever will.

Let’s face it: “O Canada” is boring. It’s inoffensive to the point of being offensive. Even from a purely musical standpoint, it’s melodically stagnant, without ever really rising or falling until the final repetition of “O Canada, we stand on guard for thee” toward the end — and right when the song starts to gain steam and inspire anything close to patriotism, it’s already over.

Say what you want about our neighbours to the south, but at least “The Star Spangled Banner” can be sung with conviction. The vocally demanding anthem lends itself to distinct creative interpretations whether it’s sung well (think Whitney) or not so well (think Fergie), and in turn, speaks volumes on America’s love of rugged individualism.

The best national anthems are those that tell us something vital about the country they were made to represent. “O Canada” tells you nothing about Canada — and, in the process, everything wrong with it too.

The chief issue with “O Canada” is that it’s too self-consciously polite to say anything concrete about its heritage. Our anthem’s current lyrics seem to recognize that our borders extend “far and wide.” Is that really the best selling point our country has — that we’re big?

The unofficial English anthem that preceded “O Canada” by over a decade, “The Maple Leaf Forever,” was a far more cogent — if imperfect — illustration of our nation’s beauty. It tied together the Scottish thistle, Irish shamrock and English rose into the single powerful image of the maple leaf.



Imagine a new anthem that once again paid homage to our vast natural sights, from Saskatchewan’s waving wheat fields to Maritime waters. We’re bound by nothing except our imaginations here — so why not pen an anthem that meaningfully explores reconciliation?

Rather than merely talking about our First Nations communities in the context of national wrongs and guilt-laden land acknowledgments, perhaps we ought to create a new anthem that fuses together traditional Indigenous chants and the organ sounds of a Quebec church in the 1600s. I can't think of a better way to represent our rich history both domestically and abroad.

With the rising cost of living and a big federal election around the corner, it might seem as though having an uninspiring national anthem is the least of our problems right now. But on some level, "O Canada" is just one more illustration of our country's collective inability to define who we are, both on the international stage and to ourselves. If the song meant to unite us during sports games and symbolic ceremonies can't get the job done, then maybe it's time we give it another look. Nadia Khan is a 21 year-old writer interested in the intersections between the personal, political, and pop culture.

https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/o-canada-is-everything-thats-wrong-with-this-country/article_7d2f89cc-2e56-11ef-91d9-2729dec05440.html

Saudi Arabia remains committed to serving Muslim pilgrims, MBS says

By: Ghinwa Obeid

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said on Sunday that the Kingdom will remain committed to serving Muslim worshipers while hailing state efforts behind ensuring a smooth Hajj pilgrimage. The Crown Prince's comments came during a meeting with several princes, the Kingdom's Grand Mufti, senior scholars and sheikhs, GCC senior officials, ministers, and the commanders of the military sectors and scouts participating in this year's Hajj. "Your significant contributions



and tireless efforts undertaken in service of the pilgrims have demonstrably facilitated the Hajj and enabled worshipers to perform their sacred rituals with ease and tranquility," MBS addressed the visitors at the Royal Court in Mina Palace, wishing them a blessed Eid al-Adha on behalf of King Salman. Over 1.83 million pilgrims made their way to Saudi Arabia to mark this year's Hajj season that began on June 14. The Hajj, one of the world's biggest religious gatherings, is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must perform it at least once. Ahead of the pilgrimage, Saudi Arabia's various agencies and officials exert efforts to ensure a smooth and safe journey with enforcing Hajj regulations and guidelines. Authorities also raise awareness against fake Hajj advertisements warning of strict penalties against such fraudulent acts. "The state, through all its relevant sectors, remains steadfast in its commitment to providing all necessary resources to serve those who visit the Two Holy Mosques," MBS said, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). "We strive to ensure a secure and reassuring environment for the fulfilment of their worship. May Allah Almighty bestow upon us continued success, prosperity, and perpetual blessings."

<https://english.alarabiya.net/amp/News/saudi-arabia/2024/06/17/saudi-arabia-remains-committed-to-serving-muslim-pilgrims-mbs-says->

With defence pledge,

Putin makes shift towards N Korea

By: Guy Faulconbridge And Josh Smith

Vladimir Putin, on his first visit to North Korea in 24 years, signed a mutual defence pledge with Kim Jong-un on Wednesday, underscoring just how far Russia has recast its relations with the only country to test a nuclear weapon this century. Putin, who is locked into a major confrontation with the West over Ukraine, cemented his pivot to North Korea after nearly two decades of supporting UN sanctions against Pyongyang.



Depending on the exact wording of the pact, which was not immediately released, it could be a dramatic shift in the entire strategic situation in Northeast Asia, said Artyom Lukin, at Russia's Far Eastern Federal University. "If Russia provides security guarantees to North Korea, then the DPRK becomes an analogue of Belarus, Russia's main ally in Eastern Europe," Lukin said, using the initials for North Korea's official name. "It will be an open challenge to the system of US-centric alliances in Northeast Asia. And, of course, it will be a huge problem for Seoul and Tokyo." While North Korea has a defence treaty with China, it does not have active military collaboration with Beijing like it has developed with Russia over the past year.

China, by far North Korea's largest trading partner and an increasingly important ally for Russia, has reacted cautiously to their burgeoning ties, avoiding any trilateral arrangement that might complicate its relations elsewhere. The courting of Kim, which includes gifts of limousines, a tour of Russia's new space launch centre and a "strategic partnership" pact including a mutual defence clause, has alarmed the US and its Asian allies.

Their spy agencies are trying to work out just how far the 71-year-old Kremlin chief will go — and what missile or even nuclear technology Russia might pass to North Korea in exchange for munitions to fight in Ukraine. "The first visit by Putin in 24 years shows this is about what Russia can get from North Korea — and that is driven by the war in Ukraine," said Ramon Pacheco Pardo, professor of international relations at King's College in London.

Pacheco Pardo, who has written books about both Koreas, said that he expected Russia to share some knowledge and expertise for the development of North Korea's missile and nuclear programmes, though not Moscow's most advanced technology. "I think this is a big change in relation to North Korea," he said. "Without the invasion of Ukraine, I don't think Russia would have felt compelled to share such technology." Four diplomats who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity said they expected deeper ties with North Korea but said that Russia, as the world's biggest nuclear power, would be highly selective about what technology it shared with Kim.

Another Western diplomat, based in Seoul, said the extent of Russia's co-operation with North Korea was injecting a sense of urgency in Europe's engagement with countries such as South Korea and Japan and may lead to more shifts in global alliances. Russia says its relations with Pyongyang will accord to international agreements and that it will not be told how to conduct its relations by any other power, least of all the US.

Both Russia and North Korea have denied accusations by US and allied officials, and UN sanctions monitors, that Pyongyang is sharing weapons for use in Ukraine. Putin said on Wednesday that Russia did "not exclude developing military-technical co-operation" with North Korea due to Western support for Ukraine.

"The deepening co-operation between Russia and the DPRK is something that should be of concern, especially to anyone that's interested in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," Major General Patrick Ryder, a Pentagon spokesperson, told reporters. Putin's move towards North Korea is seen by diplomats as a major turning point in the international sanctions regime against North Korea, which was formed in 1948 with the backing of the then-Soviet Union.

In March, Russia vetoed the annual renewal of a panel of experts monitoring enforcement of longstanding UN sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes. China had abstained. The next day, Russia said that major powers needed a new approach to North Korea, accusing the US and its allies of ratcheting up military tensions in Asia.

"The North Korea-Russia relationship started out as a marriage of convenience focusing on arms and tech transfers, so very transactional, but is now moving into payment systems, research collaboration and exchanges of different types," said Niklas Swanstrom, Director of the Institute for Security and Development Policy in Sweden. "It seems to have a depth that we have underestimated." There are, though, limits to the relationship, say analysts. Russia, the world's biggest nuclear power, is not interested in major nuclear proliferation, especially by a neighbour.

Nor is China, which despite growing clashes with Washington on foreign policy and trade issues is far from the international pariah that Russia and North Korea have become. Both Moscow and Beijing, while ready to needle the US and its Asian allies with public support for North Korea, have in the past criticised Pyongyang in public for its displays of missile or nuclear might.

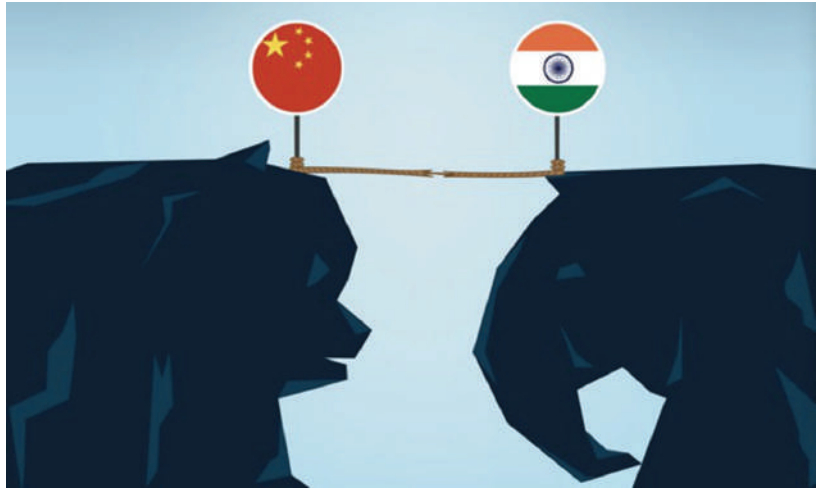
Russia is due to outproduce all of the Nato military alliance on ammunition this year, so Putin's reliance on Kim is limited. And while the Soviet Union helped North Korea build a research reactor at Yongbyon, the Soviet-era Kremlin was always wary of the nuclear ambitions of Kim Il-sung — the state founder and Kim Jong-un's grandfather — and found Pyongyang a provocative difficult partner, especially when it tried to nudge Moscow by deepening ties with China.

Russia has also historically balanced its approach to the North with its relations with South Korea, a US ally but economic powerhouse, said Anthony Rinna, a specialist in Korea-Russia relations at Sino-NK, a website that analyses the region. "By siding up to North Korea, especially by upgrading their relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership, Russia risks undermining its policy of diplomatic equidistance," he said. — Reuters

<https://www.gulf-times.com/article/685241/opinion/with-defence-pledge-putin-makes-shift-towards-n-korea>

New Delhi should do correct math on direct flights between China, India: Global Times editorial

Direct passenger flights between China and India have been suspended for four years and have not yet been restored. A Reuters report on Thursday said that several times over the past year or so, China's government and airlines have asked India's civil aviation authorities to re-establish direct air links, but India has shunned the call. The report cited a senior Indian official as saying that "unless there is peace and tranquility on the border, the rest of the relationship cannot move forward." The Times of



India reported that India remains hesitant due to ongoing tensions over a border dispute. As the two most populous countries in the world as well as neighbors, not having direct flights is obviously extremely abnormal. At present, India still imposes strict visa restrictions on Chinese citizens. Chinese people applying for business visas are faced with all kinds of difficulties. Most Chinese students admitted to Indian universities fail to obtain Indian visas. Chinese journalists in India have also encountered discriminatory treatment such as rejection of visa renewal applications and forced departure within a time limit. There are no permanent journalists between the two countries and media exchanges have been thwarted. In addition, since India tightened restrictions on investment from China in 2020, about 200 investment applications from Chinese companies are still waiting for approval by the Indian government.

The reason why India does this is related to its current complicated mindset toward China. First of all, some Indian politicians insist that "as long as border differences are not resolved, bilateral relations will not return to normal" when handling many specific bilateral affairs, and "border problems" seem to have become a convenient excuse for India to avoid carefully considering the pros and cons of its own interests in specific affairs. Second, some people in India are still obsessed with the idea of "decoupling" from China and have adopted "decoupling" policies in a number of fields. They believe that the more they rid themselves of dependence on and reduce exchanges with China, the better, as if India can develop faster that way.

In fact, seeking decoupling from the Chinese economy is neither economical nor realistic, and even less possible. In recent years, China-India trade has grown against this trend, reflecting the genuine needs of both countries. According to Indian statistics, bilateral trade reached \$118.4 billion in the fiscal year 2023-24. A survey report by India's "Business Today" in December last year showed that over half of Indians purchased "Made in China" products during that year. Some Indian scholars admit that bilateral trade is destined to increase. BBC also quoted Indian experts as saying that India's efforts to reduce import dependence on China have failed. There were approximately 1.0674 million trips between the two countries in 2019, and approximately 869,600 Indian citizens entered the Chinese mainland. Whether viewed from an economic perspective or in terms of personnel exchanges, resuming direct

flights benefits China, but even more so India. India seems to be dominated by a mindset of "demanding" and "coercion" in its relations with China, using bilateral reciprocal actions and even its own commitments as leverage to gain advantageous positions in border issues or bilateral relations. Recently, a series of statements and actions from India on the Taiwan question have reflected this mentality. Some Indian experts, based on distorted facts about border issues, believe that India should not adhere to its commitments on the Taiwan question, and even claim they could use the "Taiwan card" in negotiations with China on border issues.

Due to its optimistic view of its own position in the international arena and China-India bilateral relations, the Indian side always seems to believe that China needs India and is eager to ease relations with the country. At the very least, New Delhi believes it can get something from Washington by keeping China-India relations in a state of tension. In reality, whether it's the border issue or other matters, India has very few bargaining chips with China, which is far from what New Delhi imagines. Indian media has repeatedly hinted at easing visa restrictions for Chinese technical personnel, which is a manifestation of how its visa policy restrictions undermine its own interests.

The Chinese side has consistently believed that China-India relations concern the well-being of the 2.8 billion people in both countries, and that their common interests outweigh their differences. This is an objective statement of fact. Whether China-India relations should be boosted is determined by the objective realities of both countries, not by the subjective wishes of some political figures. It is estimated that this year, 130 million outbound trips will be made from China. While countries like Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asian nations warmly welcome Chinese tourists, India seems content to shut its doors to them. By continuing to refuse visas and resist resuming direct flights, India risks losing Chinese business and tourism to other destinations. New Delhi should take this into account and resolve it wisely.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202406/1314620.shtml>

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May Allah be with you - Amen

PARIS 2024:

How is France preparing for the Olympics and Paralympics?

The organisers of Paris 2024 say the parliamentary elections called by French President Emmanuel Macron will not disrupt preparations for the Games.

However, the mayor of the French capital says holding elections less than a month before the Games begin is "extremely unsettling".

When are the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games?

The summer Olympics run from 26 July to 11 August, with 10,500 athletes competing in 329 events. The Paralympics take place from 28 August to 8 September, featuring 4,400 athletes in 549 events. There will be 206 countries represented at the Olympics, and 184 at the Paralympics. More than 15 million tourists are expected in Paris during the Games.

How could the French elections affect the Olympics?

Parliamentary elections will be held on 30 June, with run-off elections on 7 July. They could result in a new government. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo says she has "difficulty understanding" why President Macron has called the elections so close to the event. "A dissolution just before the Games... is extremely unsettling," she says. However, the head of the Paris 2024 Organising Committee, Tony Estanguet, insists his team is ready to deliver the Games. In a statement to the Reuters news agency, he said: "All the major decisions have been taken a long time ago."

Where will Olympic and Paralympic events take place?

The main athletics events will be held at the Stade de France, on the northern outskirts of Paris. However, there will be 15 Olympic and 11 Paralympic venues in the city centre. For example, the Pont d'Iena will host cycling events, and the start and finish points for the marathon will be at the Hotel de Ville and Les Invalides. Games venues in the centre of Paris will be cordoned off to the public and there will be extensive traffic restrictions. Swimming events are due to take place in the Seine in central Paris, but some could be delayed or even cancelled if heavy rain affects the river's water quality.

How are France's security forces preparing for the Olympics?

Worried about threats such as a drone attack, the government has cut spectator numbers for the Olympic opening ceremony. The event is expected to see the national teams parading in boats along a 6km (3.8 mile) stretch of the River Seine through the centre of the capital. The original plan was to give free tickets to 600,000 members of the public to watch from the banks. Now, however, tickets will go to only 300,000 invited guests. French President Emmanuel Macron has said the ceremony could be moved from the Seine to an enclosed stadium if the security risk seems too great.

The French government is using about 20,000 soldiers and more than 40,000 police officers to provide security. It will also have support from about 2,000 troops and police officers from other countries. In May, a man was detained on suspicion of planning an attack on the torch relay in Bordeaux, and another man was arrested in the south of the country over a plan to attack a football stadium which is an Olympic venue. Mr Estanguet previously said

that the "unprecedented" security operation in place means that participants and spectators "can have confidence" in the Games.

Has Russia been banned from Paris 2024?

Neither Russia nor Belarus is allowed to send teams, because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Belarus's support for it. Competitors from those countries can only compete as neutral athletes. They will not be allowed to take part in the opening ceremony and will not have their national anthems played, or their national flags raised, if they win medals. Russia has said it is "outraged" at its athletes' treatment and has announced a "World Friendship Games" in Moscow and Yekaterinburg in September. The Soviet Union held a similar event in 1984, after boycotting the summer Olympics in Los Angeles.



Has Israel been banned from Paris 2024?

Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov criticised the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for not also barring Israel from taking part, because of its military operation in Gaza. However, IOC president Thomas Bach rejected the demand and confirmed Israel's participation.



What is the Olympic Refugee team?

There are more than 36 million refugees in the world, according to the UN, and since 2016, an international team made up of refugees has competed in every Olympics. The 2024 IOC Refugee Olympic Team is made up of 36 athletes living and training in host countries, having fled their own. Members come from 11 different countries - including 15 from Iran and five from Syria - and they will be competing in 12 sports.



Are the Games popular in France?

One opinion poll suggested that 44% of Parisians think hosting the Olympics is a "bad thing", with many planning to leave town. Bus and metro fares will double in the capital during the Games. The Olympic and Paralympic Village and a new aquatics centre are in a region north of Paris called Seine-Saint-Denis - one of the poorest parts of France. Charities complained after hundreds of squatters were evicted from buildings close to the new sites. Many Parisians are irritated at the security restrictions which will be imposed in the city centre. "Paris will be unbearable," one resident told the BBC. "Impossible to park; impossible to move around; impossible to do anything."



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68018536>



Saudi Arabia's economy

seven years after Crown Prince Mohammed's appointment

By: Sarmad Khan



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has pushed forward with an expansive fiscal policy since his appointment on June 21, 2017, helping to turn the Saudi Arabian economy into one of the fastest growing in the G20.

The Crown Prince, who served as the chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs, has helped spearhead groundbreaking moves such as the listing of Aramco, the world's biggest oil producing company, and the launch of the futuristic city of Neom. The kingdom's Council of Ministers tasked Ceda with identifying and monitoring the mechanisms and measures that are crucial for the delivery of the country's Vision 2030.

Expanding the country's industrial base, creating jobs, increasing women's participation in the labour force, boosting foreign direct investment and broadening the kingdom's financial markets are among the main pillars of the vision. The National Centre for Performance Measurement, the Delivery Unit, and the Project Management Office of the Ceda are the bodies overseeing the delivery of vision-related schemes, which according to public estimates could cost Riyadh at least \$1 trillion to complete.

The kingdom has delivered on many aspects of the agenda and opening new sectors for FDI is among the major achievements. In the tourism sector, Saudi Arabia is ploughing \$800 billion in investments and has set a revised target of attracting 150 million visitors by the end of the decade. Economists say Saudi Arabia, which has the world's second-largest oil reserves, began diversification away from hydrocarbons years ago.

"Saudi Arabia is still going to be dependent on oil and its public sector in 2030 but the transformation already made and still to come is undeniable and would not have happened without the Crown Prince," says Hasnain Malik, head of emerging markets strategy at Tellimer, an

investment research firm in Dubai.

Tax income adds to non-oil revenue

The kingdom implemented 15 per cent sales tax and 20 per cent tax on corporate income, however it offers tax incentives to companies that set up headquarters in the kingdom. Tax revenue last year reached an estimated 352 billion riyals (\$93.8 billion), an increase of 8.9 per cent on an annual basis. Taxes on income, profits, and capital gains climbed almost 46 per cent year-on-year to 36 billion riyals at the end of December, while taxes



on goods and services rose by 5 per cent to 264 billion riyals. Fuel subsidies represent a significant burden for the budget, according to the International Monetary Fund, which earlier this month told the kingdom to step up efforts to remove subsidies. Though still not where the kingdom intended to be in terms of the subsidy reforms, wheels are clearly in motion. Non-oil exports have increased by 1.5 percentage points of non-oil GDP to 14.5 per cent compared to the target of 50 per cent and much of that has been service-led, says James Swanston, Middle East and North Africa economist at Capital Economics.

Going forward, policy continuity is anticipated. “We do not see any significant change in direction [of the economic policy] in the future as what we are seeing currently, and over the last few years, is a very gradual and smooth transformation benefitting the overall Saudi population,” says Junaid Ansari, director of Investment strategy and research at Kuwait-based Kamco.

Mega projects galore

One of the main pillars of the Vision 2030 is the development of new sectors of the Saudi economy including healthcare, sports, renewables, technology and automotive, real estate, aerospace, defence, entertainment, leisure, retail and mining. The push, mainly powered by the Public Investment Fund and its related entities, to expand the non-oil sector has led to a flurry of megaprojects in the kingdom. From giant cubes to luxury seaside resorts the list of projects has grown quickly over the past eight years.

Some of the projects are of such scale and ambition that they are defined as giga-projects, considered “once in a generation” undertakings. “This is evident in the projects market with contract awards seeing consistent growth since 2018 [excluding 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic],” Mr Ansari at Kuwait’s Kamco says. “Contract awards in the Kingdom reached a record high of \$102.1 billion in 2023 up 64.5 per cent from 2022 ... [and] these contracts are spread across industries, indicating an all-round development process in the kingdom.”

The futuristic city of Neom alone has awarded contracts \$237 billion in contract, while mega tourism development The Red Sea Project has awarded contracts worth \$21 billion since 2017 when it was announced, according to Meed data.

PIF: driver of change

The Public Investment Fund in Saudi Arabia, one of the world’s largest sovereign wealth funds, will remain vital to the degree of success the Crown Prince will ultimately achieve in delivering his vision. The fund with \$925 billion in assets has been instrumental in carving the new path of growth. In 2021, the PIF launched a five-year strategy, with aim of doubling assets to \$1.07 trillion, invest a minimum of \$40 billion a year into the domestic economy until 2025 and help create 1.8 million jobs.

Yasir Al Rumayyan, the governor of PIF at the time, said the fund will contribute \$320 billion to the kingdom's non-oil economy through ten new investment sectors and setting up companies in Saudi Arabia to boost economic activity and solidify government holdings. In March, Saudi Arabia transferred its 8 per cent shareholding in Aramco to the PIF to boost its assets. The stake was worth roughly \$163.6 billion based on Aramco shares price at the time.

The market expects Riyadh to further sell down its shareholding in the world's biggest oil producing company to continue funding its ambitions. Recalibrating the vision Although there is strong commitment to delivering key projects, changing economic realities and the sheer scale of the financial commitment needed have required Riyadh to revisit its strategy. In April, Saudi Arabia's Finance Minister Mohammed Al Jadaan said the kingdom would adapt to current economic and geopolitical challenges and "downscale" or "accelerate" some of the projects.

Saudi Arabia had to "mark-to-market" its expectations regarding the goals of the 14-year long programme, the minister said. There is no clarity as to which elements of the vision will be scaled down or if the government plans to delay the delivery of projects such as the 170km-long The Line. Riyadh aimed to accommodate 1.5 million residents within The Line, the linear smart city under construction in Neom, in the kingdom's Tabuk province. Officials now expect only 2.4km of the project to be completed by 2030.

"A lot of the targets have been overdelivered, there are challenges obviously, and this is why I said we don't have any ego. We will change, we will adjust or extend some of the projects. We will downscale some projects and accelerate others," Mr Al Jadaan said. The change in the country's social fibre is already palpable. From a buzzing entertainment industry with rapid growth in the network of cinemas and music festivals across the kingdom, to women allowed to drive, the easing of female travel restrictions and a sharp increase in the rate of their participation in labour force – these are all signs of the change that the Crown Prince has led.

"Social and cultural changes have probably seen the far more dramatic changes," says Mr Swanston. Analysts say the transformation in the kingdom was a necessary and perhaps long overdue. There are still a few years left before the turn of the decade and there is room to improve more but the progress achieved so far, especially on the social front, has reached all sectors of society.

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/economy/2024/06/21/saudi-arabias-economy-seven-years-after-crown-prince-mohammeds-appointment/>

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What To Make of the Kim-Putin Meeting? | Opinion

By: Daniel R. DePetrìs



What to make of Russian President Vladimir Putin's short stay in North Korea this week, where he greeted North Korean leader Kim Jong Un like a long lost brother and left Pyongyang with what the Russian leader termed a comprehensive strategic partnership?

The commentary thus far borders on the surreal. Victor Cha, a former National Security Council Asia policy director currently with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote that the summit "presents the greatest threat to U.S. national security since the Korean War." Others have suggested the confab was a direct assault on the integrity of the international order.

I view it less dramatically. In essence, this week's meeting between Kim and Putin was the culmination of a series of geopolitical circumstances that have brought the two together. Whether their bromance lasts over the long-term is still to be determined.

By simply looking at the footage run by North Korea's state-run propaganda outlet, you can't be blamed for concluding that Moscow and Pyongyang are now the best of friends. Kim pulled out all the stops for his important Russian guest. He met Putin at the airport at roughly 3:00 in the morning, warmly hugging the Russian leader after he de-boarded. The two drove together through the wide thoroughfares of the North Korean capital, where Putin's face was strategically placed on street-lamps. During a gala concert, Putin received a loud, standing ovation from the people in attendance. Warm words were exchanged—Putin thanked Kim for supporting his war in Ukraine; Kim lavished praise on Putin and alleged that bilateral relations between Moscow and Pyongyang reached the level of an alliance.

As far as deliverables go, the two men ended their meetings after signing a bunch of docu-

ments that have yet to be released to the public. According to the Kremlin's press statement, the strategic partnership agreements consisted of clauses on trade and investment, culture, and humanitarian affairs. Russia and North Korea also reportedly agreed to "mutual military assistance" in the event of aggression on either of them.

It's this last item—mutual assistance in the military realm—that will cause the most heartburn in Washington. There is already a budding assumption in U.S. policy circles that Russia and North Korea are well on their way toward some kind of quasi-alliance. South Korean officials have stated that Pyongyang has sent approximately 10,000 containers of military equipment to Moscow, shipments that include nearly 5 million artillery shells—critical supplies at a time when Russian forces in Ukraine are preparing for their third summer fighting season. In return, the Russians have delivered the North Koreans much needed food and oil supplies, the latter of which is restricted by the very U.N.

Security Council resolutions Moscow voted for years earlier. Speaking of sanctions, the U.N. monitoring committee that was designed to ensure compliance is no longer in existence courtesy of a Russian veto at the Security Council. There are also suggestions, albeit unconfirmed, that Russian technology was key in getting North Korea's first military satellite into orbit last November. It's tempting to assume the current state of affairs between Putin and Kim will persist long into the future. Both, after all, have several interests in common—building an alternative power center to what they view as U.S. hegemony, undermining U.S. sanctions regimes, and ensuring their respective security needs are taken care of.

Even so, it's important to note that there is no alliance between Russia and North Korea, nor have the two (as far as we know) agreed to a mutual defense pact similar to what the United States has with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. For one thing, Russia is no position militarily to offer it given the fact that hundreds of thousands of its troops have been killed and grievously wounded in Ukraine over the last two and a half years. The vast majority of Russian ground forces remain tied up and Russia's entire defense-industrial complex is now busy serving the war effort there. How much force could Moscow spare?

Kim Jong Un, in turn, is unlikely to believe Russian promises even if Moscow made such a pledge. This has much to do with Russia's own actions as it does with the Kim dynasty's internal calculus, which is highly skeptical of outsiders, sees any promise by a foreign power as thin, and concluded long ago that the best way to keep the U.S. and South Korea at bay is by building up its own military capacity. Self-reliance is in the Kim dynasty's DNA. While Pyongyang would no doubt welcome Russian military technology, it's not going to out-source its security to a foreign power, whether it be Russia, China, or anybody else.

There is another player in this story as well—China. Although China shares Russia and North Korea's opposition to U.S. policies in Europe and East Asia, Beijing is also wary of watching as its dominant position on the Korean Peninsula undermined. The Chinese are frankly used to being the big dog in that region, and they are perfectly happy with the North Koreans relying on them for everything from food and oil to diplomatic support.

Russia making headway in the North gives Kim with more flexibility and another great power to mooch off, akin to how his grandfather, Kim Il Sung, did business during his nearly five decades in power. Putin, however, needs to be careful about irritating China—with doors to the West shut for the foreseeable future, Putin can't afford to alienate his most important strategic partner. Not to put too fine a point on it—everybody should sit down and take a breath.

<https://www.newsweek.com/what-make-kim-putin-meeting-opinion-1915415>

Red heifers:

Another great disappointment!

By: Masood Ashraf - USA



Baptist preacher William Miller was a man from Massachusetts who had not originally believed in anything divine, but his ideology changed after surviving tragedies in the war of 1812. From that day forward, he dedicated 7 years to intricately studying the bible and all its prophecies, finding explanations for all the information he read. Eventually, by the end of those 7 years, Miller not only had a deep faith in the Bible, but had claimed that he knew when the Second Coming of Christ was going to take place. He had “solved” the puzzle that the Bible had presented and had predicted that Jesus would descend to the



earth sometime between March 21st, 1843 and March 21st, 1844. How did he come up with these dates? Well, Miller had calculated the arrival based on a particular line in the Bible referred to as Daniel 8, which stated “And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Miller had then converted the 2,300 days into years because it is a widely accepted theory of the Bible that days are used to symbolize years, as supported by another verse Ezekiel 4:6 stating “I have appointed thee, each day for a year.” Now, Miller just needed a start date to count the 2,300 years off from. Through other verses in Daniel, Miller had interpreted that date to be the time period from which the temple in Jerusalem was officially rebuilt, which was in 457 BC. Miller could now simply add 2,300 years to 457 BC and end up in the year 1844.

With a solid number in mind, Miller was ecstatic and he had eagerly displayed his mathematical calculations on a detailed poster and paraded through various areas, speaking publicly, and publishing his work internationally, convincing people that the second coming of Christ was soon to come. Many individuals could not find a genuine reason to argue against Miller’s claims, and soon enough, he had earned himself a significant following of people who referred to themselves as Millerites. They all excitedly waited for that day to arrive, hoping that their Lord and Savior would be revealed to them. However, as you might predict, it never happened. Thousands of individuals were upset at the lack of a coming and sought to blame Miller for his incorrect claims. One of his followers in particular, Samuel Snow, had taken up Miller’s work and claimed that he had not been entirely wrong, just a little off in regard to specific calculations. Snow calculated the arrival himself and rode horseback through town, exclaiming “October 22nd” as the new day in which Jesus would arrive. The people who had been so greatly let down in March suddenly had hope and something to look forward to again, so just like in the past months, they waited longer. Over 100,000 people gathered in various places, waiting for the coming of their Lord on October 22nd, but as midnight rolled in, doubt settled deep into the bones of the believers, a disappointment too great to allow for any other possible predictions in the near future. Thousands of people were left feeling empty, some abandoning their faith entirely, others refusing to let go of hope and creating their own denominations, and many attempting to forget the event ever happened and go back to their normal lives. However, regardless of how people had

responded to the event, the one thing they all shared was a deep unsettling feeling of disappointment.

Although Miller's unfortunate circumstance was a major upset to many people, it was not in its lonesome. In fact, many other groups predicted the coming of Christ along similar lines. Theologian Johann Jacob Zimmerman claimed Jesus would return in 1694. The Irvingites in England and Scotland had predicted 1835, 1838, 1864, and 1866. S.S. Brewer and A. Decker predicted it would occur in 1867. Charles Taze Russell claimed it could occur in 1874. Sun myung moon offered a time between 1917 and 1930. And countless others made various different predictions around the 1800s and 1900s. Claus Epp, a leader of the Mennonite Brethren in Russia predicted March 8, 1889. Yet, during each of these events, everyone stood, eyes plastered to the sky in anticipation, waiting for a man to descend from the heavens, only to be met with an unblemished skyline. Were they wrong? Were all the calculations they had done beforehand baseless? Was Miller, Snow, and the many others that had tried to predict the coming of Christ incorrect? No, in fact, they were right, and they were very close to the truth. The only simple thing these groups never considered was the metaphor lying in the Messiah's prophecy. Never was it meant by the books that a man would physically drift his way to the earth, but that a person would be born and his teachings would descend into the hearts of those around him.

Even in the bible itself, where Miller and others had made their predictions from, it states that the Messiah everyone is waiting for will "come like a thief in the night." All of the signs that these groups were looking for were correct, the calculations they had all made were close, yet the only thing that prevented them from realizing the truth in their own words was the lack of focus on the aforementioned line. The Messiah was never meant to physically ascend, but to be born into this world without divine circumstances, and spread the message of peace and love to the far corners of the world. Yet, countless individuals still look to the sky for his return. And until people realize that the Messiah has indeed, already come, the searching and hatred will never cease. In fact, the situation occurring in Israel and Palestine directly reflects this idea. The violence we hear about in Palestine and Israel is related to these religious misconceptions, and the Jews of Israel, like many others, are still awaiting the Messiah's descent and are preparing to do anything they can to make it happen.

Currently, the Jews of Israel have been inspecting 5 red heifers to be used in a potential ritualistic sacrifice in Jerusalem. They aim to build a "Third Temple" in order to bring upon the coming of the Messiah and according to their beliefs, the temple must exist on Al-Aqsa grounds and cannot be built until the mosque is destroyed and purified. The purification process involves the sacrifice of the special red heifers, who must not have more than 2 non-red hairs, can never have worked, never been milked, never given birth, and must be raised under strict circumstances until they are 2 years and one day old. Once the red heifers have been sacrificed, they will be burnt to ashes and combined with red yarn, cedar wood, hyssop, and fresh spring water collected by spiritually pure children born and raised under specific conditions. Although many Jewish scholars explain that a "Third Temple" can only be constructed after the coming of the awaited Messiah and not to bring about his return to Earth, this group of Jews believes that the destruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the ritualistic sacrifice of the red heifers will bring the Messiah down from the heavens and onto the Earth regardless. Once again, all of this effort will lead to yet another Great Disappointment and the date will simply earn itself a place in the growing list of false predictions made by individuals who have misunderstood the metaphor lying within the prophecy. People will never learn, and they will continue partaking in increasing amounts of violence in the name of sacrifice, looking for a way to bring about a spiritual cleansing that will never happen.

The Israelites have no problem slaughtering thousands of people and committing mass genocide because they believe that once their Messiah returns, he will kill all others who are

not of their people anyways, so they claim that it is a necessary sacrifice in order to achieve a cleansed sanctuary. They believe that their beliefs are in the right, and all others will be killed for not sharing them. This idea is not specific to the Jews, however. Strangely enough, the Evangelical Christians are actually helping the Jews in their attempt to make this sacrifice because they believe that the person who the Jews are waiting for is actually going to be the Antichrist and that Christ will then follow in his descent soon after to kill him and everyone who is not of Christian faith in the final battle of Armageddon. Then, in the rubble of the aftermath, Jesus will set up his throne in the city of Jerusalem. Even with Muslims, they await their Messiah's return although not in Jerusalem but east of Damascus and expect for him to kill all the Christians and Jews for being non-believers. Each religion is waiting for their respective Messiah to descend to earth and lay waste to everyone whose belief does not match theirs. But what dignity and faith can there be in a Messiah who is built on the blood of others? Are all the previous teachings about peace only reserved for those within a person's respective religious communities? What happened to "love thy neighbor," to "whosoever kills one person, it shall be as if they killed all mankind." to "you shall not murder?" What religion can take pride in its triumph if its foundation lays on the deaths of the innocent? Is such a religion worth following? No, it cannot be. There is no compulsion in religion and belief should be based on love and compassion. It is time for people to recognize this and investigate the idea that the Messiah everyone is desperately looking to, is not one that is worth waiting for, and that the real Messiah has already arrived. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a person who was born in 1835 and claimed to be the Messiah in 1889; someone who does not build their faith on cruelty, but on the concepts of mercy, humanity, and companionship. Maybe it is time to investigate his life and his claim of being the promised Messiah. For more on his life

<https://www.reviewofreligions.org/1599/my%E2%80%88claim-to-promised-messiahship/>



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Disputes about Shakespeare's authorship are much ado about nothing

By: Oliver Kamm, Adrian Blamires and Rik Edwards

Sir Derek Jacobi is a giant of stage and screen. That is no reason for giving credence to the baseless conspiracy theory, which he and Margo Anderson advance in their letter, that William Shakespeare did not write the works that bear his name (The Merry Wives of Windsor offers strong evidence that Shakespeare was not its author, 13 June). The proposition that the true author was Edward de Vere, an aristocratic wastrel and minor poet, is intrinsically absurd. Why, after all, would a concealed author not just leave their name off the title page rather than adopt an allonym, with all the risks of exposure? In the 175-year history of this bogus controversy, no one has yet offered even a plausible theory for this notion, let alone a shred of documentary evidence to associate De Vere or any other putative authorship candidate with Shakespeare's works. Jacobi and Anderson rely on the ahistorical notion that a literary work must be an expression of the life story of the author, and on a strained and completely imaginary interpretation of The Merry Wives of Windsor as reflecting De Vere's autobiography. Scholars of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature almost unanimously treat such denialism with derision. So should a responsible newspaper. Oliver Kamm London

• I revere Sir Derek Jacobi, who starred as a superb Benedick in the first Shakespeare production I ever saw, but in claiming that Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, wrote The Merry Wives of Windsor, he is denying one of his own. Merry Wives, Much Ado and the rest were written by a man of the theatre, someone who knew his company and its resources intimately through working with them day in, day out, for 20-plus years, as attested by his friends and fellow players John Heminges and Henry Condell in the First Folio – not some hobbyist aristo dialling it in from the court. That idea is strictly for the Ninky Nonk. Adrian Blamires Reading, Berkshire

• I was interested to read the letter from Derek Jacobi and Margo Anderson. I fully expect that long after the Beatles have passed from living memory – perhaps around the year 2250 – similarly qualified academics will be explaining how the songs credited to John Lennon and Paul McCartney were written by Prince Charles or some other suitably high-born person, on the grounds of some slight similarities in their biography to themes in the songs, and that, surely, no one of such modest origin could have wrought such beautiful music. Rik Edwards Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

• In The Winter's Tale, Autolycus sings: "another ballad of a fish, that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the four-score of April". If 1 May is 31 April, then fourscore April is 80 April – or 19 June. This week, we had Wednesday 19 June, the fourscore April. This date comes around on average once every seven years. The probability of a given date being Wednesday 19 June is less than 1/2,500. Why would Shakespeare be interested in this date? King James I of England was born on Wednesday 19 June 1566. Why should he chose to mention the king's birthday in this way? That's a big question, and I invite others to answer it. Another question is why has anyone failed to spot something so simple until now. Peter Nockolds London

<https://amp.theguardian.com/culture/article/2024/jun/20/disputes-about-shakespeare-authorship-are-much-ado-about-nothing>

The UAE approves

a new system for residency and entry visas

By: Hadi Khatib

The UAE Cabinet, headed by Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has approved regulations for the entry and residence of foreigners, formalizing a process aimed at giving expatriates a greater share in the economy.

The Emirates News Agency (WAM) stated that the new entry and residence system aims to attract and retain global talent and skilled workers from all over the world. It also sought to enhance competitiveness and flexibility in the labor market, and create a sense of stability among residents of the UAE and their families.

It also comes in line with the 50's principles and aims to enhance the UAE's position as an ideal destination for living, working, and investing.



Details of the new residence and entry permits

1- The Golden residency

It simplified the criteria and expanded the categories of beneficiaries. The 10-year residency is awarded to investors, entrepreneurs, exceptional talent, scientists, professionals, students, outstanding alumni, humanitarian pioneers, and early class leaders.

The Golden residency is also granted for approval of a pilot project idea. The amendments allow the holder of a golden residence to sponsor family members. There are no restrictions regarding the maximum duration of stay outside the UAE in order to keep the golden residency in effect.

Real estate investors can obtain a golden residency when purchasing a property valued at no less than 2 million dirhams (\$544,500).

2- Green residence

5-year residency for self-employed without the need for a sponsor or employer in the UAE. Green residency is given to investors or partners, providing a 5-year residency for those who are establishing or engaging in commercial activities. It replaces the previous residence that

was valid for two years only. The amendments approved by the Council of Ministers included new types of residency and entry visas:

1- 5-year residence visa to attract talent, skilled professionals, freelancers, investors, and entrepreneurs.

2- New types of visas were approved without the need for a host or sponsor for the first time. In addition, all entry visas are available for single or multiple entries and can be renewed for a similar period, and are valid for 60 days from the date of issuance.

3- Entry visa to search for work, which does not require a sponsor or host. It is granted to those who have been classified at the first, second, or third skill level according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization, provided that the minimum educational level is a bachelor's degree or its equivalent.

4- Business entry visa: entry without the need for a sponsor or host to encourage investors and businessmen to explore business and investment opportunities in the UAE.

5- Tourist visa: a multi-entry tourist visa is offered for a period of 5 years and does not require the presence of a sponsor. It requires proof of a bank balance of \$4,000 or its equivalent.

<https://economymiddleeast.com/news/the-uae-approves-a-new-system-for-residency-and-entry-visas/>

Meghan Markle's '£6k gift from Victoria Beckham' had 'zero effect'

By: Catherine Meyer-funnell

Meghan Markle was once given over £6,000 worth of designer clothes from Victoria Beckham but it had little effect in boosting the sales of her brand, claimed royal author Tom Bower. David and Victoria Beckham had long been friendly with Prince Harry and the rest of the royals, however over the last few years their relationship with the Sussexes seems to have soured. In his new release *House of Beckham*, Mr Bower wrote: "Victoria agreed to provide a coat, dress, boots and a handbag worth £6,000 to Meghan for the Royal Family's traditional Christmas Day parade in Sandringham. "Later, Meghan wore a Beckham custom-made pregnancy outfit and a white coat and dress for a service in Westminster Abbey." However, he pointed out that it did not translate into great publicity for the Beckham fashion brand, adding: "The financial benefit was nil. The only success in 2019 was a £1,400 handbag that had been displayed by Meghan." The author also claimed Meghan was "irritated" that Victoria had more wealth than her and that the two had "little in common" when they first met.



https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1914914/royal-family-live-meghan-markle-victoria-beckham?int_source=nba

An Underwater Rail Tunnel

May Link Europe With Africa By 2030

By: Everett Potter



In just over five years, there's a good chance that you will be able to board a high-speed train in Madrid and travel from Spain to the Moroccan city of Casablanca in five and a half hours, hurtling through a new tunnel under the Strait of Gibraltar. This may sound like something from a Jules Verne novel, but it was first discussed by Spain and Morocco in 1979. They even did feasibility studies through 1981, but the project failed to progress beyond that point.

Spain and Morocco are now reconsidering this ambitious undertaking, spurred in large part by the approaching 2030 FIFA World Cup. It will mark the centennial World Cup competition, and for the first time, three countries from two continents will host the competition: Spain, Morocco, and Portugal. Fans will want to travel between these countries for matches as quickly and efficiently as possible. They might as well do so on a 21st century engineering marvel.

The Moroccan National Company for Strait Studies (SNED) has announced that it has begun researching the project's viability, called the Euro Africa Gibraltar Straight Fixed Link. Spain commenced such studies in 2023 under the aegis of the Spanish Society for Fixed Communication Studies across the Strait of Gibraltar (SECEGSA).

Some of the impetus for rethinking this project came after Morocco completed its first high-speed rail project, a train that connects Casablanca with Tangier, in 2023. It's now not only the fastest train on the African continent, but it demonstrated that the country was ready for another significant rail challenge.

The Strait of Gibraltar, at its narrowest point, is just a nine-mile gap between the European and African continents. Now, imagine the convenience of a high-speed underwater rail tunnel connecting Spain and Morocco. It's projected that this tunnel could reduce travel time from Madrid to Casablanca to just five and a half hours, a significant improvement from the

current 12-hour journey by car and ferry or the two-hour flight, the latter much longer when you factor in travel time to and from airports.

Departing Madrid, there would be a stop in the Spanish city of Algeciras, at the southern end of the Iberian Peninsula, near the Strait of Gibraltar. The train would then head into a tunnel under the Strait of Gibraltar, running between Punta Paloma in Spain and Punta Malabata in Morocco. Its next stop would be the city of Tangier in Morocco before reaching its final destination, Casablanca. Between Algeciras and Tangier, the distance would be about 26 miles, with 17 miles of track in the undersea tunnel. At its lowest point, the tunnel would lie about 1,550 feet below sea level, with a maximum gradient of about 3%.

This would be the first-ever rail link between the two continents, and the primacy of the World Cup aside, it would connect and open up existing rail routes in both countries and far beyond. SECEGSA suggests it could carry up to 12.8 million passengers between continents annually. The construction costs are unknown, but estimates are between \$7 and \$8 billion.

There is currently no deadline or project start date. Financing will presumably come from the host countries, Spain and Morocco, with additional support from sources such as the European Union. Yet, at a time when high-speed rail has become more popular than ever across Europe, it's an inventive, imaginative, and exciting project that appears to have a decent chance of succeeding.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/everettpotter/2024/06/23/an-underwater-rail-tunnel-may-link-europe-with-africa-by-2030/>

Critical incident

declared at Surrey hospital

By: By Stuart Maisner

A critical incident has been declared at a hospital in Surrey due to a "loss of operating system". The incident, which is affecting the radiotherapy department of the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford, is said to be due to a "telecoms issue". Also affected is the radiotherapy unit at East Surrey Hospital in Redhill, which is managed by the Guildford-based hospital. "Our teams are working hard to fix the issue but unfortunately we have had to cancel a number of planned appointments," a hospital statement said. The incident is affecting patients at the hospital's cancer centre, a hospital spokesperson said.



"All patients affected have been contacted and will have their appointments rescheduled as soon as possible," the statement said. The hospital has apologised for the disruption. Any patients concerned about their treatment should contact the radiotherapy department, the spokesperson said. The spokesperson was unable to clarify when services were likely to return to normal.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cmmmg1l3e7mo>

The Largest Economy

in the World by 2050

By: Mashaid Ahmed



We recently compiled a list of the Top 20 Largest Economies in the World by 2050 and in this article we will take a look at the country that's expected to be the largest in 2050.

Global Economic Forecast: Emerging Markets Set to Dominate by 2050

According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) by 2050, the global population is anticipated to grow to over 9 billion, which is likely to increase pressure on natural resources essential for energy and food production. You can also take a look at the 25 Biggest Food Companies in the World by Revenue. Despite the recent recession, the world GDP is expected to almost quadruple by 2050. However, GDP growth rates in China and India are predicted to decelerate over the coming decades, whereas the African continent is forecasted to achieve the highest economic growth rate globally between 2030 and 2050.

The global energy demand is also forecasted to increase by 80% however, the global energy mix is expected to remain largely unchanged, with fossil fuels still making up around 85%, renewables just over 10%, and the remainder being nuclear energy. To accommodate a growing population with evolving dietary preferences, global agricultural land is projected to expand in the coming decade to meet rising food demand, although this expansion will occur at a decreasing rate. Consequently, intense competition for land resources is expected in the decades ahead. China and India will also face substantial population aging, with China's workforce expected to decrease by 2050. Urban areas are set to accommodate nearly 70% of the world's population projected to reside in cities by then. According to The World in 2050 report by PwC,

China is projected to be the world's largest economy by 2050, contributing approximately 20% of global GDP. China has already surpassed the United States to become the world's largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). Moreover, China is expected to emerge as the world's largest economy before 2030, with India becoming the third-largest by 2050. Both China and India are likely to surpass the United States, which is currently the

largest economy in the world. The EU's share of the world's GDP is projected to drop below 10%. The Emerging Seven, or E7, economies are projected to grow almost twice as fast as the advanced G7 economies due to a negative growth of -0.3% per annum on average in the working-age population of the G7 economies between 2016 and 2050. Vietnam, India, and Bangladesh are projected to be among the fastest-growing economies. While Poland is expected to be the fastest-growing EU economy.

Although today's advanced economies will maintain higher average incomes, emerging markets are set to narrow the gap significantly by 2050. This shift presents substantial opportunities for businesses willing to invest long-term in these regions, despite recent economic challenges in countries like Brazil, Nigeria, and Turkey, which still hold significant potential. For emerging markets to achieve this growth, governments must implement structural reforms to enhance macroeconomic stability, diversify economies, and strengthen political and legal institutions.

One of the Key Companies Driving Growth in Asia

The long-term economic outlook highlights the potential dominance of Asian countries. One of the biggest companies in Asia, Alibaba Group Holding Limited (NYSE:BABA), has been a key driver of economic growth in the region.

Alibaba Group Holding Limited (NYSE:BABA) specializes in e-commerce, logistics, retail, internet, and technology services. The company has over 228,000 employees and has a business presence all around the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and various European and Asian nations.

Alibaba Group Holding Limited (NYSE:BABA) operates a range of online marketplaces and offers logistic services as well as online payment services. The company also provides comprehensive cloud services and has a significant presence in digital media and entertainment. On May 14, Alibaba Group Holding Limited (NYSE:BABA) reported that its revenue increased by 8% year on year to \$267.34 billion. Digital Commerce revenue increased by 45% and order volume grew 20% year over year due to a focus on expanding cross-border retail operations and enhancing the consumer experience.

The company's Public Cloud Offerings revenue increased double-digit whereas AI-related revenue increased triple-digit year over year. Alibaba Group Holding Limited (NYSE:BABA) repurchased 1.25 billion shares for \$12.5 billion and outstanding shares decreased by 5.1% in fiscal year 2024.

Alibaba Group Holding Limited (NYSE:BABA) is also expanding in the luxury retail market. In May, the group announced a partnership with LVMH Moët Hennessy - Louis Vuitton, Société Européenne (OTC:LVMHF) to enhance the luxury retail experience in China by integrating its Cloud generative AI to create innovative applications and services to enhance its offerings.

LVMH Moët Hennessy - Louis Vuitton, Société Européenne (OTC:LVMHF) has successfully introduced around 30 maisons who are using Alibaba's digital capabilities for engaging experiences such as 3D product displays, virtual try-on, and livestreaming. Commenting on the event Eddie Wu, Chief Executive Officer of Alibaba Group, said:

"Alibaba is pleased to enable a transformation of the high-end consumption experience with retail leaders like LVMH through our world-class technologies in cloud computing and AI. This comprehensive partnership has elevated the retail experience for LVMH's customers worldwide, including China-based consumers on Tmall. We look forward to continuing to build on the strong partnership and innovation journey with LVMH."

The global economic landscape is going through a significant transformation, driven by the rapid growth of emerging economies and the decline of developed economies. Despite the current economic hurdles emerging markets present opportunities for investment and expansion, with that in context let's look at the 20 largest economies in the world by 2050. An expansive view of the cityscape, showing the impact of the company's activities in China.

Our Methodology

To compile our list of the 20 largest economies in the world by 2050, we consulted 'Economics in the Year 2100' by Fathom. It provides data for the estimated percentage share of countries in the global GDP in 2100. It also reports the GDP PPP of the top ten economies. We utilized the data for the GDP PPP value of the top countries and percentage share to calculate the total global GDP value in 2050. Our calculation yielded that the global GDP is projected to be approximately \$224.96 trillion by 2050.

After calculating the global GDP in US dollars, we estimated the GDP PPP for the remaining countries to provide insight into their projected values. Our list ranks the 20 largest economies in the world by 2050 in ascending order of their GDP. We also used the population projections for 2050, by the United Nations.

By the way, Insider Monkey is an investing website that uses a consensus approach to identify the best stock picks of more than 900 hedge funds investing in US stocks. The website tracks the movement of corporate insiders and hedge funds. Our top 10 consensus stock picks of hedge funds outperformed the S&P 500 stock index by more than 140 percentage points over the last 10 years (see the details here). So, if you are looking for the best stock picks to buy, you can benefit from the wisdom of hedge funds and corporate insiders.

The Top Economy in the World by 2050

1. China

GDP Forecast (2050): 42.96 Trillion

Estimated Share in the Global GDP (2050): 19.10%

Population Forecast (2050): 1.31 Billion

China's economic miracle is indeed one of the most successful developments in middle-income countries. China is forecasted to be the largest economy in the world by 2050. China's GDP is expected to reach a staggering \$42.96 trillion and will command a 19.10% share of the global economy by 2050.

China has already surpassed the United States to become the world's largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). Moreover, China is expected to emerge as the world's largest economy before 2030, and its population is projected to be 1.31 billion by 2050.

Curious to learn about which other countries will have the largest economies in the world by 2050? Check out our report on the Top 20 Largest Economies in the World by 2050.

https://finance.yahoo.com/news/largest-economy-world-2050-195820500.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAAAnEPCbTYdQgfZqq93-xr1SWTNdL6AYf9NFG8k6Ro5W53Hr1lkLTqLopZUKy88-19OX1mPusocPXc3o8v4yUVBjbCz5ZxZcuaisBakkljuJwMOMyvE2O_R1Q2A58LF3COS4tdBQAC60N1YXitZ5nyuPzfIFrv8v4nLe-EsWomGWq

68 Indians Among 600 Dead

During Hajj Pilgrimage, Says Saudi Diplomat

The new toll comes after two Arab diplomats told AFP on Tuesday that 550 deaths had been recorded during the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam that all Muslims with the means must perform at least once.

A diplomat in Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday that 68 Indian nationals died during the hajj pilgrimage this year marked by searing heat, bringing the overall tally to more than 600.

"We have confirmed around 68 dead... Some are because of natural causes and we had many old-age pilgrims. And some are due to the weather conditions, that's what we assume," the diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP.

The new toll comes after two Arab diplomats told AFP on Tuesday that 550 deaths had been recorded during the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam that all Muslims with the means must perform at least once.

That figure included 323 Egyptians and 60 Jordanians, the Arab diplomats said, and one specified that nearly all the Egyptians died "because of heat".

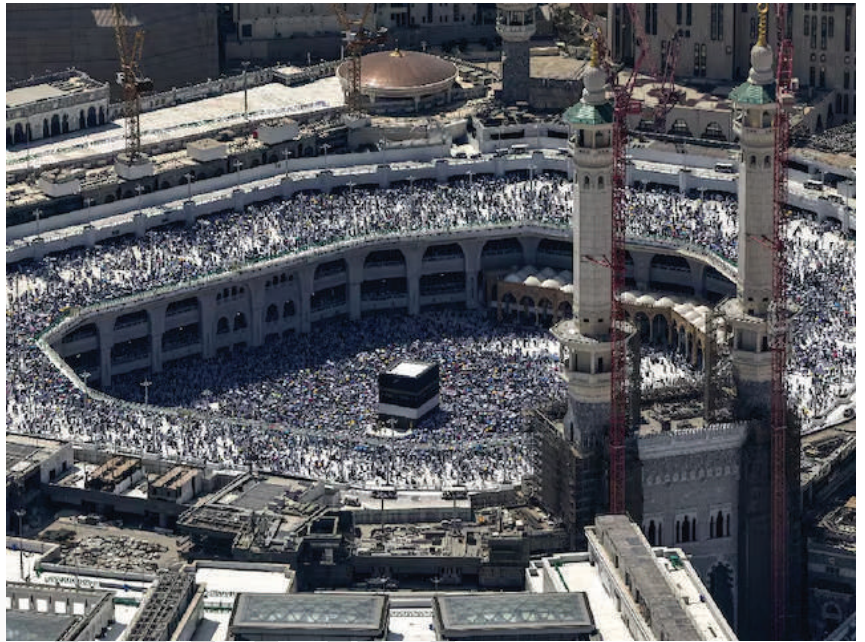
Fatalities have also been confirmed by Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, though in many cases authorities have not specified the cause.

The total reported dead so far is 645, according to an AFP tally. Last year more than 200 pilgrims were reported dead, most of them from Indonesia.

Saudi Arabia has not provided information on fatalities, though it reported more than 2,700 cases of "heat exhaustion" on Sunday alone. The diplomat who confirmed the Indian fatalities said there were also some Indian pilgrims missing, but he declined to provide an exact number.

"This happens every year... We can't say that it is abnormally high this year," he said. "It's somewhat similar to last year but we will know more in the coming days."

<https://www.news18.com/amp/world/68-indian-pilgrims-among-600-dead-during-hajj-pilgrimage-says-saudi-diplomat-8938195.html>



'Bling bishop'

US pastor sentenced to nine years

By: Max Matza

A flamboyant Brooklyn pastor known as the "Bling bishop" has been sentenced to nine years in prison for schemes that included preying on the bank account of one of his own followers.

Lamor Whitehead, a New York preacher known for his flashy lifestyle, was found guilty in March of wire fraud, attempted wire fraud, attempted extortion and making false statements to federal investigators. Prosecutors argued that Whitehead, 45, used his position as a religious leader to fleece people out of money to fund his lavish lifestyle.



Whitehead made headlines in 2022 after he was robbed at gunpoint during a live-streamed sermon. The thieves made off with \$1m (£840,000) in watches, diamonds and emeralds.

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, called Whitehead a "con man" and said the sentence marks the end of his "various schemes".

Officials say Whitehead, who led the Leaders of Tomorrow International Ministries in Canarsie, New York, deceived people with false promises and stole their money to purchase items including fancy clothing and cars.

One of his victims, a member of his church, gave him \$90,000 - her life savings - believing that the money would go towards purchasing a home for her. It was instead spent on clothing and car payments.

He also doctored documents in order to secure business loans and attempted to extort a Bronx businessman by falsely claiming to have access to New York Mayor Eric Adams.

"Bishop Whitehead is in my prayers," the mayor said on Monday ahead of the sentencing, according to the New York Times.

Lawyers for Whitehead said they plan to fight his conviction.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c97722yny4no.amp>

Should you take a vitamin B12 supplement?

You may need a little or a lot of B12, but it's worth investigating.

Annie Oakley, the larger-than-life sharpshooter and star of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, was cut down by an invisible foe: a deadly form of anemia caused by a lack of vitamin B12.

Back in Annie's day, we didn't know B12 existed or that deficiency could lead to dangerous consequences (for Annie, it was death in 1926). It wasn't until later in the 20th century that scientists discovered B12 and how to use it as a treatment.



Today, B12 supplements are available at every drugstore and supermarket. They're promoted for warding off deadly anemia as well as neuropathy, memory loss, depression, and more. Should you consider taking them?

An essential vitamin

B12 (also known as cobalamin) is essential for keeping your brain and nerves healthy and for making DNA and red blood cells. B12 also helps lower levels of homocysteine, an amino acid linked (in high levels) to dementia, heart disease, stroke, and osteoporosis.

We typically get B12 through diet. Rich sources include beef, liver, clams, poultry, fish, fortified cereals, eggs, cheese, yogurt, milk, and fortified plant milks (like soy, almond, or rice milks). For us to digest B12, we first have to shake it loose from these foods.

Stomach acid helps do that. The freed-up vitamin then binds to a protein (intrinsic factor, produced by cells in the stomach lining) and makes its way to the small intestine, where it's absorbed into the bloodstream.

B12 deficiency

An estimated 3.2% of adults ages 50 or older have very low B12 levels, and up to 20% may have borderline deficiency. Aging is often the cause. "We tend to produce less stomach acid as we get older. That makes it harder to extract B12 from food," says Dr. Meir Stampfer, a professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Other causes of B12 deficiency include

- taking heartburn medications that suppress stomach acid
- eating a diet that does not include animal products
- weight loss surgery
- autoimmune diseases that attack the stomach lining or gastrointestinal tract.

How can you tell if you're low in B12? "The first signs of deficiency can be present but so subtle that they are not recognized," Dr. Stampfer says. For example, you may have muscle weakness that you chalk up to other causes.

Symptoms of full-blown B12 deficiency include

- balance problems
- depression
- extreme fatigue or muscle weakness
- memory loss or confusion
- numbness or tingling in the hands and legs (due to nerve damage)
- anemia.

Should you get checked?

Checking B12 levels in the blood is not routine, but it may be a good idea in our older years. "I usually check patients starting at age 65. After that, I'll check every three or four years," says Dr. Suzanne Salamon, associate chief of gerontology at Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Blood tests look for markers of anemia, low levels of B12, and high levels of homocysteine and methylmalonic acid (MMA). "MMA is the best indicator of deficiency," Dr. Stampfer says.

Treatment

Treating B12 deficiency could be as simple as eating more B12-rich foods or avoiding heart-burn medication. Or you may need a B12 supplement. "I may recommend an over-the-counter B12 pill of 1,000 micrograms daily if B12 is borderline low or MMA is borderline high. After the level is back to the normal range, I will often decrease the dosage," Dr. Salamon says.

If you take a B12 pill, Dr. Stampfer recommends taking the natural form (methylcobalamin), not the synthetic form (cyanocobalamin). "Studies suggest cyanocobalamin may impair kidney function in people with borderline kidney problems, so it's better to stay on the safe side," he says.

What if you have reduced stomach acid? "In supplement form, B12 isn't bound to the food, so you don't need stomach acid to extract it," Dr. Stampfer notes.

Annie Oakley suffered from a rare condition called pernicious anemia. In this condition, people don't make enough intrinsic factor and therefore have great trouble absorbing any B12 from the intestine. For people with this problem, B12 pills may not work, and injections of B12 may be required.

Is a supplement warranted if you're not deficient? "It surely is if you don't eat animal products," Dr. Stampfer says, "and it's a good idea for all older individuals. Deficiency can be prevented at a very low cost and low hassle by taking a multivitamin with the average daily recommended amount of 2.8 micrograms of B12."

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/should-you-take-a-vitamin-b12-supplement>