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Editorial

Dr. Busharat Elahi Jamil - Assistant Editor



Unfortunately, Pakistani politics is now on the worst trajectory in history. Since 1947, the nexus of corrupt politicians and insensitive establishments has attempted to derail the advantages of democracy for their own aims and interests. Pakistani people have been denied their socio-political rights and the benefits of real contemporary democracy. The people were steadily led into a dead end by the political establishment's narrow-mindedness, even though the situation was dire and spiraling out of control. A state's legal system fosters and fortifies national consciousness, but the laws, institutions, constitution, and especially the legal system are in danger of collapsing due to the actions of self-serving political elites and individuals.

Pakistan is actually more in favor of a very antiquated political system than a contemporary democratic one. The customs of the old-school politicians have decayed and are incompatible with the values of the educated and awakened classes of today. The pivotal effort of current education and social media addresses the democratic and social demands of the citizens by giving the general public access to sufficient cutting-edge knowledge. In the near future, a movement for socio-political rights may be sparked by the people's growing awareness of the political elite's rude behavior. The establishment should face significant challenges in order to maintain its current position, especially given Pakistan's political landscape.

The nation has been split up into different religious groups, radicalism, provincialism, and strata by traditional politicians. Nearly all political movements have militant ties of their own. The establishment is said to be the source of the religious militias, which it uses for its own political ends. Law enforcement and paramilitary groups are equally accountable for perpetuating the existing quo of traditional rule and for bolstering this exploitative system. In these conditions, there is a strong intention of social instability due to socio-political and economic uncertainty.

In the modern state system, democratic forces (elected governments) have the hegemonic right to make decisions and operate a democratic state according to the wishes of the people with their explicit agreement. While since 1947, undemocratic and unelected reckless forces/stratums dictated the fate of the nation. People have no direct input or role in decision making. Politicians discuss electing a president in uniform, on the basis of Roti, Kapra, and Makaan exploiting the nation for decades, or attempting to gain public sympathy or support on the basis of religion. Without the support of the establishment, they are unable to participate in elections letting the undemocratic forces decide the fate of the nation in general elections.

The certain political comedy is going on since independence, consequently, the off beams outcomes of the wrong political decisions are ultimately borne by the common people. Because of this particular political farce, persisted since independence, the general public is ultimately responsible for the disastrous results of poor political judgments. Only when so-called decision makers give up pursuing their own interests at the expense of the goals of the general public can the democratic forces succeed. The state of affairs in the nation today indicates that no modern political force is doing its part to overthrow the status quo. Individuals must stand up for their rights, which is an incredibly difficult but worthwhile endeavor.



LILLEY: Trudeau says economy is great, Canadians can see truth

By Brian Lilley

There are few absolutes in Washington these days. America's politicians will drone on and on about guns, abortion and a host of other issues, but Democrats know their voices will be directed at their supporters; likewise, Republicans will target their messages to their own base.

However, when it comes to China, politicians from both parties line up one after another to affirm their contention that China is dangerous and poses a real threat to the US and to the world. Dubious legislation follows.

That brings us to what some US politicians have called "China Week," an event characterized by a barrage of bills emanating from the House of Representatives that lawmakers insist will keep America safe from China's "nefarious" aims.

The zeal to penalize China includes resurrecting one of the most unwise policies from the recent past: the China Initiative, a misguided effort deemed necessary to target the unknown number of Chinese scholars at US institutions, whom politicians claimed were sharing their discoveries with China or who had withheld alleged previous connections with Chinese military or government agencies.

A bill resembling the China Initiative passed the House of Representatives late Wednesday

(US time). Whatever happens in the coming days, we would be wise to remember that the original initiative had at least two corrosive elements.

First, it increased the number of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese acts throughout the US, and this animosity continues into 2024. A report released earlier this year found that 32 percent of Asian Americans reported a slur being used against them throughout 2023 and early 2024. 29 percent of Asian Americans stated that they have been verbally harassed or abused.

Second, the initiative instilled fear in scholars born in China and working at US colleges and universities. Quoting Inside Higher Ed, “half of Chinese scientists at US universities report concerns about being surveilled by the US government, fearing that a China-focused Department of Justice initiative to combat theft of trade secrets may be harming American science.”

Even though the chances are small that any revised China Initiative will become law, there is every reason to believe that the exodus of Chinese scholars from the US back to China will continue. US institutions suffer from this brain drain, and Chinese scholars also suffer by being excluded from some of the most prestigious universities in the world.

Meanwhile, politicians also want to punish America’s colleges and universities that engage in specific research with Chinese institutions. As a result, one US higher education institution - Georgia Tech - has chosen to end its partnership with Tianjin University.

Viewed another way, US politicians are determined to advance the idea that Chinese scholars cannot be trusted and any US institution that promotes international research with China should expect serious penalties.

You’d be hard-pressed to find an influential voice in Washington who can explain how such ideas are consistent with America’s most basic values.

“China Week” certainly looks like a major public relations campaign. There is an old adage in the US that the majority of American voters do not start paying attention to politics until after Labor Day. Therefore, the timing of what is unfolding in Washington appears to be a convenient use of the calendar, especially considering that a presidential debate just took place on Tuesday evening (US time).

Public relations stunt or not, we must not forget something important. The Center for Strategic and International Studies recently concluded that more than 600 anti-China bills have been unveiled over the past two years. It pointed out that “the 118th Congress has introduced more laws and regulations mentioning China specifically than in previous sessions. Moreover, concern about China has become so central to policy discourse in the US that China increasingly serves as the motivation for even nominally non-China pieces of legislation.”

The political discourse in the US when it comes to China lacks common sense, and the more mainstream media attention it gets, the more damage it does to public opinion across the country. Regardless of who wins the presidential election in November, there is no reason to expect a change in the rhetoric or its vicious tone.

Source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202409/1319721.shtml>

‘China Week’ a public relations stunt by US lawmakers

By Anthony Moretti



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Qazi Isa and the Effort to Undo the State



By saeed akhtar malik

In the year 2000, I was serving in the newly formed NAB. The cases I especially remember from that time were those against Mr Tiwana, ex-Chairman PIA, and Khawaja Asif, the gentleman who frequently stands up in parliament to broaden his chest and make emphatic statements, often based on lies. Lt Col Obaidullah was given the task of interrogating them, and he cleared them both. Before they left NAB custody, Chairman NAB, Gen Amjad, desired to see them. On his way to see the Chairman, who was busy, Khawaja Asif had to stop by in my office for a while. That was the first I met him. He was especially appreciative of how decently he was treated by Col Obaid.

On his way out, he saw me again and I also met Tiwana. Both told me that Gen Amjad had apologised to them on behalf of NAB for having put them through investigations on erroneous evidence. They were incredulous, but I was not. At that time, the conduct of most generals was informed by courtesy and decency. Sadly, those days seem so far away now.

But the case I most especially remember was that of Ishaq Dar, the biggest crook in the land at that time. He, too, was interrogated by Obaidullah who was a rare combination of high intelligence, winning courtesy, great integrity, and moral courage. He soon had Ishaq Dar eating out of one hand, while with the other he drew out from him such a comprehensive confession, that this would have been enough to put the entire Sharif clan behind bars. This was the first time that prospects of a great crook paying for his extortions shone bright.

But this brightness dulled when Malik Riaz Hussain of Bahria, the chief crook of his own era, began recommending names for NAB Chairmen to Zardari and Nawaz Sharif, the two other

mega crooks of the age. One of these recommendations was for Chaudhary Qamar Zaman, a civil service officer, to be made Chairman NAB, which was accepted. Zaman too had been under investigation for corruption by NAB when I was there. His protestations of innocence were accompanied by copious tears, but in the end, he was let off for lack of conclusive evidence. It was he who prepared grounds for a legal technicality, on the basis of which Dar and the Sharif family would eventually fly the coop.

It was Qazi Faez Isa as a justice of the Supreme Court, who made use of these technical grounds to help spring these crooks and to bury the proceedings of the case against them permanently. This was the first time I heard of Qazi, and I never took my eyes off him since. I was utterly convinced that the man had been paid off for the service rendered. And this payment soon showed itself in the shape of his three flats which were uncovered in London. His defence in this case truly exhibited his shamelessness. The crux of his argument was that though the average Pakistani must show both the money trail for such transactions, but also satisfy the Court how this money was earned, this rule did not apply to the judges. This was so much like the principal argument of the generals of today, emphasizing yet again that it did not really matter if the one wore a bemedalled uniform, and the other a black gown. What truly mattered was the blackness of the heart that beats under the black gown or behind the medals!

If there should be any doubt about the services Qazi Isa has rendered to the Sharif family, even where these militated directly against the cause of Pakistan and its people, one needs merely to examine his conduct as Chief Justice. The trail of his tenure is like the slime which marks the slithering progress of a caterpillar. After he is gone, he shall be remembered for his stench and his slime, and little else.

And he will also be remembered for his merciless bullying and badgering of Dr Sameena Malik, rector of the Islamic University, when he forced her to appear in her wheelchair in front of him on Sep 20, 2024, and the indignities he heaped on her while driving her out of his court. A rabid dog could not have done better.

In all ages, mothers have given birth to deformed children, but none was born so severely deformed as Qazi Isa. None was born with such consuming hypocrisy as him. And none with his shamelessness.

There is a peeve constantly settled on the Qazi's countenance. His smile, instead of spreading beatitude on his face, gives the impression that he is straining to break the sound barrier. Sarina Isa, often given to prowling like a rabid lynx, though, is much more relaxed now. Her sound barrier broke when she no longer had to account for how her funds were accumulated, or how these were transferred to London to buy their flats. Well-digested 'haram' rests well in the stomach!

That Qazi Isa, Bajwa, Asim Munir, Zardari, the Sharif Brothers, Sultan Sikander Raja, and Mohsin Naqvi were born in the same generation, may have been a coincidence, but the way they have worked in sync to take Pakistan down seems more the stuff of demonic design. There is a view that there was no such design to take down the state, and what was being mistaken for this was pure incompetence. However, time and again incompetence makes them fall flat on their faces, but the moment they are up, having dusted their clothes, they begin right where they

had left off. This seems more like resolve to me. Their list of egregious crimes is long, but the crimes themselves were simple, and anyone should have been able to conclude that these would do in the state. They began by overthrowing a legitimate government on instructions of a foreign power. Then they handed the state over to a gang of internationally acclaimed thugs and pimps. This alone would have been enough to bring down a tottering state, but they allowed their pimps to steal the little Pakistan had left, which was like them running off with the last tank of oxygen left to a dying man. And to keep them in power, they unleashed on the people a spate of abductions, torture, house break-ins, illegal imprisonments, and murders, such that we had never seen. They then resorted to election rigging so shameless that even the worst dictatorships would be ashamed of. And now they are trying to destroy the Constitution on the strength of members of the legislature illegitimately put in parliament by them. Surely, behind all this must be a design to undo the state and throw it on the ash heap of history?

No matter what the verdict on this may turn out to be, in purely venomous conduct, no one man in the history of Pakistan has done more harm to it than Qazi Isa. No one can touch him in his commitment to the vile and the wicked, and none can match him in sheer resolve to do harm to the state. Never did a snivelling little runt like him constitute such urgent and lethal danger to his country.

PS, Please forgive me for my last email. An unthinking moment led me to press a key and sent out my mail the way it was not intended to go.

Source: <https://saeedakhtarmalik.com/qazi-isa-and-the-effort-to-undo-the-state/>



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Sorry, AOC: Israel's Precision Attack Against Hezbollah Was Humane—and Legal | Opinion



This week, in a scene one would expect from a Hollywood thriller, thousands of pagers and walkie talkies exploded across Lebanon and the Middle East, killing, maiming, or severely injuring thousands of Hezbollah terrorists.

Although the attacks were immediately attributed to Israel, the Jewish state has so far not claimed responsibility. In the event that Israel did carry out the operation, it could only be understood as the most audacious and unprecedented counter-terrorism precision attack in military history, and one that was entirely justified and in full accordance with international law.

The attack not only disrupted Hezbollah's terrorist capabilities and infrastructure; it re-established Israeli deterrence and leveled psychological trauma on the entire terror organization, from its leader Hassan Nasrallah, to the most junior of Hezbollah foot soldiers, who now know that no-one is safe, and every terrorist can be reached at any time.

Lest you be swayed by the false and malicious narratives of those trying to defend Hezbollah or blame the Jewish state, some necessary context is in order.

First, Hezbollah is a Lebanese-based jihadist terrorist organization and a standing army that is funded, supplied by, and serves entirely at the behest of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Like Hamas, Hezbollah also has genocidal intentions to annihilate Israel and kill all the Jews, intentions which they have made repeatedly clear and have continuously sought to act on. Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah has said that the entire Middle East will not rest until the “cancerous gland” that is Israel is removed, and on October 8 last year, a day after the Hamas massacre, Hezbollah formally joined the war in the wistful hope that they might help eradicate the Jewish state.

Since then, Hezbollah has fired more than 8,500 rockets at Israel, each an unquestionable war crime, murdering 47 people, including 12 children who were struck while playing football in the Majdal Shams massacre in July. In the meantime, over 80,000 Israelis have also been displaced from their homes in the north of the country, as a result of the ongoing attacks.

By any stretch of the imagination, Israel is fully entitled under international law, including but not limited to Article 51 of the UN Charter, to exercise its right to self-defense.

Some so-called “experts,” like Ken Roth, former head of Human Rights Watch, and New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have immediately and reflexively rushed to condemn Israel for violating international humanitarian law, including by unlawfully using booby traps. But what does the law actually state?

Generally speaking, under Article 7 of the Amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the use of booby traps in communication devices are indeed prohibited in certain situations. There is, of course, an overriding caveat, which is that pursuant to Article 52 of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention I, such acts are permissible in circumstances where the objects in question are no longer used for civilian purposes.

In this case, the pagers and hand-held devices, which were distributed specifically to Hezbollah operatives, were being used for the purposes of communicating, planning and conducting operations. As such, they immediately ceased to be considered “civilian objects” and became legitimate military targets.

Accordingly, their destruction constitutes a clear military objective under customary international law (per Art. 52 of the Additional Protocols), and they are a lawful target of attack.

Under the Principle of Distinction, one of the cornerstone principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), parties to an armed conflict must also at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants.

In this case, the operation was also aimed solely at Hezbollah terrorists. Indeed, only Hezbollah operatives were known to be in possession of these devices, which were not widely or generally available, and were in fact ordered by Hezbollah and distributed by Hezbollah leadership specifically to circumvent Israeli intelligence.

Under the Laws of War, parties must also abide by the Doctrine of Proportionality, which requires that any anticipated loss of civilian life must not be excessive in comparison to the potential military advantage to be gained from such an attack and or action, as well as taking feasible precautions in planning and conducting attacks to reduce the risk of harm to civilians and other persons and objects protected from being made the object of attack.

In this case, the clear military advantage would be to stop the ongoing Hezbollah rocket fire, allow for the 80,000 displaced Israeli residents to safely and permanently return to their homes, and render a large part of an enemy army unable to fight.

Of the 4,000 reported Hezbollah operatives injured, only a handful of civilians were reportedly harmed. That is an extraordinary feat in modern warfare and the textbook definition of a precision and proportionate attack.

Lots of people like to claim Israel has the right to self-defense, and yet the moment the Jewish state lawfully exercises that right in an almost unimaginably targeted way, they are outraged, looking to cast Israel as an aggressor. For the record, 8,500 unprovoked and indiscriminate rocket attacks is what might be called an escalation, not the pinpoint accurate response to stop those rockets.

Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/sorry-aoc-israels-precision-attack-against-hezbollah-was-humane-legal-opinion-1957207>

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May Allah be with you - Amen

Opinion | Don't listen to the critics, Canada's new mortgage rules will make housing more affordable – eventually

By Mike Moffatt, Contributor

The federal government recently announced changes that will make it easier for Canadians to qualify for larger and longer mortgages. Reviews have been mixed, with many worrying that these measures will harm affordability by raising housing demand even further.

While these concerns are valid, the new measures should help drive long-run affordability, in particular by resurrecting the condo construction market.

The reform package contained two initiatives, which go into effect later this year. The first is raising the \$1 million price cap for insured mortgages to \$1.5 million. The 50 per cent increase was made to reflect the reality that Canadian home prices have more than doubled since 2012, making many home purchases in markets like the GTA uninsurable under the previous cap.

The second and likely more controversial change was to raise the maximum amortization



length from 25 to 30 years for all first-time homebuyers, in addition to all buyers of new builds. Coupled together, the changes will make buying a new home more accessible to families by lowering their monthly payments. The increased cap will make it easier to get an insured mortgage, which allows buyers to purchase a home with a 5-10 per cent down payment rather than the 20 per cent down payment required on an uninsured mortgage. That change will allow a family to spread their payments over 30 years rather than 25.

These mortgage reforms are being made under a backdrop of exceptionally weak new home sales, particularly in the GTA. In August, new home sales were 73 per cent lower than the 10-year average. The condo market is being hit particularly hard, with condominium sales in the GTA and Hamilton at their lowest level in 27 years. Worse, the pre-construction condo market has ground to a halt. Housing starts are down across the GTA, and the outlook for 2025 and 2026 is weak, as there are no condo starts without condo pre-construction sales.

If these mortgage reforms work as intended, they should help resurrect new home sales and the pre-construction condo market, increasing supply. Critics have suggested that relaxing mortgage regulations works against affordability, as more people can now qualify for mortgages, driving up demand – and prices – for homes..

But what that criticism misses is that if we have several years of low housing construction, there won't be the inventory available when market conditions improve, which will in turn cause prices to skyrocket. The goal for long-term affordability may, paradoxically, cause governments to enact policies that slow immediate price declines.

Governments across Canada are simultaneously trying to achieve two seemingly contradictory goals. On the one hand, they are trying to restore affordability through lower rents and home prices; on the other, they are trying to increase supply to house our surging population.

These can be at odds with each other, however, as lower rents and prices make more projects economically unviable, reducing new construction. Lengthening mortgage amortization is one solution to this contradiction, as affordability, at least for those with the means to save enough for a down payment, is created not through lower home prices but through lower monthly payments. The downside is that homebuyers are in debt for longer.

While changing mortgage rules can be beneficial, the only way to simultaneously have truly lower rents and prices and increased supply is through policies that tackle different ends of the market – that is, lowering costs both for for-profit and not-for-profit developers. One example is the recent federal government initiative opening surplus land for development, which lowers or eliminates land acquisition costs. Speeding up municipal approval processes would also significantly lower financing costs on projects, as would having development charges paid at the end of a project rather than at the beginning. It's a difficult needle to thread, but doing so is vital. Governments can and must do more to increase supply and lower rents and prices.

Source:https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/dont-listen-to-the-critics-canadas-new-mortgage-rules-will-make-housing-more-affordable-eventually/article_36050c82-7697-11ef-92d8-df1444ca7432.html



What's behind Germany's raging Islamophobia?

By Farid Hafez

It is not the first time the country fixates on demonising a racialised group and blaming it for its crises.

On September 16, Germany started extending temporary controls along all its borders, to the chagrin of its European Union neighbours. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser clarified that the move is meant to not only curb “irregular” migration, but also to stop what she called “Islamist terrorism and serious crime”.

The announcement came in the aftermath of a deadly knife attack that killed three people in Solingen, western Germany; the attacker, a Syrian refugee who had been denied asylum status and was supposed to be deported, was accused of belonging to the ISIL (ISIS) group.

Some may be surprised that such a draconian measure has been imposed by the liberal-left coalition made up of the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Liberals. But the reality is there is a shift to the right across the German political spectrum accompanied by raging Islamophobia.

Analysts have pointed to the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) as a driver of the rightward shift. Indeed, the party has been making significant gains at the national and state levels. At the start of the month, it won the elections in the eastern state of Thuringia with 32.8 percent. In the eastern state of Saxony, it came second with 30.6 percent, just 1.3 percentage points behind the centre-right Christian Democrats.

But the electoral successes of the AfD are not a driver; they are a symptom of a general tendency in German politics to normalise and engage in the demonisation and scapegoating of Muslims.

Members of the ruling coalition have repeatedly denounced “Islamism” in Germany. The leader of the Green Party in the Bundestag, Katharina Dröge, went as far as claiming in a recent statement that “the poison of Islam reaches people’s minds also here, not just abroad”; later correcting herself that she meant “Islamism” instead of “Islam.”

Words of warning about an “Islamist threat” are not just in the mouths of German politicians, they are also all over official documents and policy declarations of German institutions. For example, the website of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, a key domestic intelligence agency, warns: “Islamists aim to completely or partially abolish the free democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany by invoking their religion”.

The Bavarian branch of this federal office has gone even further and introduced on its website the notion of “legalist Islamism”, which it defines as a way to pursue “extremist goals by political means within the existing legal system”. It clarifies: “Legalist Islamists attempt to influence politics and society through lobbying [and] present themselves as open, tolerant and open to dialogue to the outside world, while anti-democratic and totalitarian tendencies persist within the organisations.”

Essentially, this concept can criminalise any group of Muslims who organise politically or socially and conduct their activities within the bounds of the law. It marks any expression of tolerance or openness by Muslims as suspect because it can be a “legalist Islamist pretence”.

Using these concepts as a framework, various institutions at the state and federal levels have created “de-radicalisation” programmes that have targeted only Muslims. While such initiatives have been criticised and opposed in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States by many social justice workers, in Germany, on the whole, they are perceived as well-justified and effective.

One such programme, the Bavarian Network for Prevention and Deradicalisation, recently produced a video about “Salafi radicalisation” featuring racist tropes about Muslim men exploiting Muslim women.

Earlier this month, the video was posted on social media by the Bavarian state government – currently controlled by the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) – and immediately sparked criticism of its hateful representation of Muslims.

The decision to publish made clear that the German authorities perceive the outwardly observing Muslims as a security risk and a danger to German society.

The clip was eventually taken down and the Interior Ministry issued a statement to the media, apologising for the “irritation and misunderstandings” and claiming the video attempted “to show the approach of Salafists and other Islamists to garner new, young followers”. It further said that some scenes of the video would be “revised”.

What probably hastened the Bavarian government’s decision to remove the video was the reaction of some commentators who saw parallels between its imagery and that of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. In particular, the scene of a bearded man with evil-looking features devouring a woman looks very close to Nazi representations of a Jewish man devouring ethnic Germans.

The anti-Semitic tint of Islamophobic imagery produced by German institutions is hardly surprising. As Israeli-German philosopher Moshe Zuckermann has written, Islamophobia is the projection of an unutterable anti-Semitism.

The sentiments reflected in Germany’s old anti-Semitism cannot be publicly expressed anymore due to the state’s official embrace of philo-Semitism. That is why they are channelled through Islamophobia. What cannot be done to the Jew anymore, can easily be done to the Muslim.

The historical parallel here is hard to miss: far-right forces are rising, as a racist hysteria targeting one racialised group of people spreads through the German state and society. History may not repeat itself fully. Mass extermination may be replaced by mass expulsion as the far-right concept of “remigration” is quickly gaining ground; it has long left the far-right fringe to become increasingly more mainstream.

As German politicians of various stripes and colours jump on the bandwagon of Islamophobia, they may do well to remember that their predecessors doing exactly the same almost a century ago did not end well for them. Hate is never a “winning” strategy.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/9/18/whats-behind-germanys-raging-islamophobia>



‘That will be it’: Trump says he won’t run again if beaten in US election

Polls suggest Trump and rival Kamala Harris are neck and neck in the key swing states where elections are usually decided.

Republican election contender Donald Trump has said that he will not run again for the presidency of the United States if he loses the November 5 election.

Asked if he saw himself running again in four years’ time if he is beaten by Democratic rival Kamala Harris, the 78-year-old former president told the news programme Full Measure: “No I don’t. I think that will be — that will be it. I don’t see that at all.”

The property tycoon added that he hoped he would be “successful” at the ballot box.

Polls suggest Trump and Harris, who became the Democrats’ candidate after 81-year-old incumbent Joe Biden withdrew in July, are neck-and-neck in the key battleground states likely to be decisive in determining the winner.

Trump lost to Biden in 2020 but refused to accept the defeat, claiming the election was “stolen” and fuelling conspiracy theories.

On January 6, 2021, fervent Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol in an attempt to stop the certification of the result.

The Republican, who was president from 2016 to 2020, faces criminal charges over efforts to overturn the election results.

He denies any wrongdoing and has cast the indictments as politically motivated.

He has refused several times in recent months to commit to unconditionally recognising the result of November’s election.

If he were to attempt a fourth campaign for the White House in 2028, Trump would be 82.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/that-will-be-it-trump-says-wont-run-again-if-beaten-in-november>



Saudi Arabia's new £4.6bn seaside resort 'almost finished' - tourists can visit in 2025

By Richard Ashmore

The desert kingdom has been ploughing billions into new infrastructure to off-set its need to rely on oil production in the future.

A 1,600-square-mile mega resort costing more than £4.6 billion is set to welcome its first tourists next year after an area of desert has been transformed into a luxury paradise.

The Amaala and The Red Sea project is part of a series of huge construction endeavours taking place across the arid oil-rich nation of Saudi Arabia.

Developers Red Sea Global are nearing completion of the exciting tourist destination which is located on the Red Sea coast of the Tabuk Province inside the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Royal Reserve.

According to the Global Construction Review, the project stretches along 42 miles of coastline featuring 30 hotels with a combined 4,000 rooms, as well as 1,200 homes.

More than 20 miles of roads have also been built, long with power, water, irrigation and communications infrastructure.

The publication reports that around 80 percent of the work is complete, with the "final touches" being added to the marina and yacht club.

There will also be a Four Seasons hotel in the Triple Bay central zone.

John Pagano, Red Sea Global's chief executive, said: "We have achieved remarkable progress across every aspect of Amaala, from our signature resorts and immersive experiences to essential utilities and infrastructure.

"Our unwavering focus is on infusing sustainability and regenerative principles into every facet of the development. Once complete, Amaala will present an extraordinary collection of assets and experiences that will elevate wellness, lifestyle and human connection."

Power for the huge amount of new urban buildings and businesses will come completely from solar energy, which the sunshine-rich desert climate of Saudi Arabia is perfectly suited for.

Elsewhere in the country, which is ruled as an absolute monarchy under the Al Saud royal dynasty, there have been several other eye-opening mega projects.

An enormous city dubbed NEOM has been championed by current ruler and heir apparent to the throne, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Part of the build for NEOM includes 'The Line', a city with 500-metre-tall walls of skyscrapers with a width of just 200 metres, that was supposed to stretch for a mind-boggling 105 miles.

But concerns over the £500 billion budget quadrupling have now limited 'The Line' to just under two miles long.

Another developments includes plans for an entertainment city in the capital Riyadh, which has increased its global appeal in recent years by hosting prestigious sporting events, such as that between British heavywight boxer Tyson Fury and Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk.

Source: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1949852/saudi-arabia-new-seaside-resort-amaala-red-sea-project>

I drew attention in a previous article to the inadequacy of the international community's response so far to the war of aggression being waged by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia and its external sponsors against the Sudanese people and state. Here, I would like to explain how international law provides a firm foundation for the peaceful resolution of this crisis.

A state's right to defend itself and its citizens is a core principle of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter. For states, self-defence is not a mere privilege but a duty – they have an obligation to safeguard their sovereignty and the wellbeing of their people.

In modern times, however, states are often forced to defend themselves not against other states, but against non-state actors such as terror groups, criminal organisations and militias. The RSF militia currently waging war on the Sudanese state is one such non-state actor.

International law is clear on a state's rights and responsibilities in conflict – whether the said conflict is against another state or a non-state actor. Yet, institutions tasked with upholding international law often inadvertently undermine state sovereignty when responding to a conflict between a state and a non-state actor, like the one in Sudan. They do this by affording non-state actors the same legitimacy as states and their institutions, and politicising their approach to issues relating to justice, human rights and humanitarian law.

The latest report of the UN Human Rights Council's Fact-finding Mission on Sudan is



International law is key to the peaceful resolution of the Sudan crisis

To end the suffering in Sudan and across the region, global community should ensure all state and non-state actors uphold the law.

By Jeromy Farkas

a case in point. The report documents the unprecedented atrocities and very serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by the RSF militias, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, sexual violence, enslavement, and child recruitment. The Mission, however, in defiance of logic and justice, calls for imposing an arms embargo not only on the RSF, but also on the Sudanese Armed Forces, the national army that defends the people of Sudan against the savage militia. In other words, the Mission calls for the Sudanese state to be deprived of its most fundamental right, and responsibility: self-defence against a vicious enemy threatening its sovereignty.

Violence and atrocities

The RSF militia shares major traits with the most extremist and dangerous non-state actors around the globe. It follows an extremist ideology, conducts deadly cross-border operations, and employs indiscriminate brutality, harming defenceless women and children. While the ethnic and gender-based violence of the militia is well-documented, less attention has been paid to its other problematic traits.

Like some of the most deadly armed groups the international community has had to deal with in recent years, the RSF militias' extreme violence stems from an ideology of racial supremacy. The militia seeks to create an exclusive homeland in Sudanese territory for Arab tribes from Darfur and the Sahel. To achieve this, the militia pushes out local populations from fertile regions like Darfur, Kordofan, Al-Gezira, and Sennar, and settles Arab nomads in their place.



Racist extremism

Recently, several international media outlets have highlighted the dangers of this project. Notable Sudanese writer Osman Mirghani, formerly the deputy editor-in-chief of the pan-Arab Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper, among others, has warned in various articles and news reports of the far-reaching consequences of this scheme. Earlier this month, a joint investigation by Sky News, Lighthouse Reports, The Washington Post, and Le Monde exposed the RSF's systemic efforts to ethnically cleanse large areas of Darfur. A video published as part of the investigation showed RSF militiamen and allied Arab fighters chanting "victory for the Arabs" while surrounded by the bloodied bodies of the civilian victims of their latest massacre.

Social media, meanwhile, is flooded with videos of young Arabs from the Sahel celebrating the RSF's perceived military successes in Darfur and other regions, with prominent figures from these communities publicly praising the militia's "rising leader", Hemedti (Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo).

As renowned Horn of Africa expert Alex de Waal noted early on in the conflict, "the RSF is now a private transnational mercenary enterprise" capable of turning Sudan into a subsidiary of this venture if left unchecked. The militia itself has become heavily dependent on support from mercenaries and Arab tribesmen following significant losses against the Sudanese military.

International response and accountability

The international community, which has dealt with similar armed groups with force and determination in the past, has largely underestimated the threat the RSF (previously known as the Janjaweed) militia poses to Sudan, the region, and to global stability. In fact, certain state and non-state actors continue to provide military support to the militia, allowing it to perpetrate violence against the people of Sudan with impunity.

The RSF is no longer a threat only to Sudan but to the entire international community, and as such it demands a unified and principled response.

Criminals do not voluntarily submit to the law. States enforce the law on them to protect themselves. These days some scholars describe the international order as "anarchic" due to the absence of a globally recognised supreme authority. However, there are still mechanisms and tools that aid states in protecting their people and imposing law and order on rogue actors. These mechanisms include international law, the UN and similar regional organisations. They may not be perfect, but without them, we risk descending into lawlessness.

Values vs political expediency

It is troubling to see many nations prioritising their narrow national interests over universal values when it comes to condemning crimes against civilians and preventing the recruitment of mercenaries. This selective approach erodes the foundations of international justice and human rights. The world must not ignore the suffering of the Sudanese people for the sake of political convenience or economic gain. Finding a path to lasting peace in Sudan requires a new approach to dealing with the RSF. The international community must take action through not only vocal condemnation but also concrete measures that hold the militia's leaders, financiers, and sponsors accountable. Priority must be given to cutting off the militia's supply of weapons and mercenaries.

Furthermore, the global community should support Sudan in establishing a comprehensive peace process. This includes promoting dialogue among all stakeholders, strengthening state institutions, and fostering respect for human rights and the rule of law. The Sudanese people deserve a future free from violence and oppression, achievable only through genuine commitment to peace and justice. It is time for the world to stand with the Sudanese people and demand accountability for those who commit atrocities. Only through a united and principled effort can lasting peace and stability be achieved in Sudan. The country's future depends on our collective resolve to uphold justice, human rights, and the rule of law.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/9/20/international-law-is-key-to-the-peaceful-resolution-of-the-sudan-crisis>

Bangladeshi Professor proposes Nuclear Treaty with Pakistan and Installation of Medium Range Missile in Country

Professor Shahiduzzaman of Dhaka University has called for a nuclear treaty between Bangladesh and Pakistan as a means to counter the perceived threat posed by India. The professor has suggested that Bangladesh could deploy Ghaury missiles in North Bengal to deter India from any aggressive actions. Professor Shahiduzzaman, who is known for his close ties to the Pakistan-backed Jamaat-e-Islami party, has been vocal in his criticism of India's policies towards Bangladesh. He has argued that a nuclear treaty with Pakistan would provide Bangladesh with a powerful deterrent against India and ensure its national security. The proposal for a nuclear treaty with Pakistan has raised significant concerns among many in Bangladesh. Critics argue that such a move would destabilize the region and increase the risk of nuclear proliferation. They also point out that Bangladesh's pursuit of a nuclear deterrent would likely face opposition from the international community, particularly the United States and its allies. While Professor Shahiduzzaman's proposal has garnered attention, it remains to be seen whether the Bangladeshi government will consider pursuing a nuclear treaty with Pakistan. The country's foreign policy priorities and the prevailing political climate will play a crucial role in determining the feasibility of such a move.

Source: <https://idrw.org/bangladeshi-professor-proposes-nuclear-treaty-with-pakistan-and-installation-of-medium-range-missile-in-country/>



The words of the master Persian poets carry a mystical power – and can create serious transformation

By Ali Hammoud



There are few poetic traditions in the world that have entrenched themselves so deeply in their respective societies as has the Persian poetic tradition. This presence, however, is not limited to discussions within literary circles or the adornment of public monuments. Nor is it strictly a source of aesthetic beauty. Within Persian speaking societies, people from all walks of life consult poetry for profound spiritual instruction or genuine guidance for the big decisions in life. This is particularly the case with Hafez.

Within the pantheon of Persian poets, perhaps none is as cherished and revered as Hafez, and with good reason. Reading the poetry of Hafez induces fragmented moments where one oscillates between body and soul; indeed, Wheeler Thackston writes that Hafez “sang a rare blend of human and mystic love so balanced, proportioned, and contrived with artful ease that it is impossible to separate the one from the other”. Within his poetic lines are levels and layers, each unfolding simultaneously upon the page and within the reader. Ethics, aesthetics and philosophy are all intertwined, and all possible meanings

simmer simultaneously beneath the surface.

I became acquainted with Persian poetry through learning Persian for my PhD. Alongside its utility as a research language, reading these poetic works has inspired a great deal of joy and spiritual contemplation. Leaning on the perspectives of well-known commentators, I present below an analysis of a verse to demonstrate the multi-layered and rich understanding of Hafez, with the hope that it will also inspire introspection, wherever stage you may be at in life, as it has for Persian readers for generations upon generations.

In Shiraz I am famous for my love's lively ways

My eyes have not been polluted with an evil gaze

On first reading, the meaning of the verse – in the original Persian – is apparent. Hafez is famous – or infamous – in Shiraz for his exuberant love and does not attune his eyes to see the faults of others. This is an admirable trait, particularly prominent within Malamati Sufism, that one should busy oneself with one's own faults instead of the perceived faults of others. The key principles of the Malamati worldview include exuberant love; being open with one's beliefs; concealing the faults of others; persevering through sneers and censures of others; and a perpetual struggle against self-centredness.

The second level takes a step further. The evil gaze can also be interpreted as one infused with desire; not desire in and of itself, but a base desire motivated by deceit and duplicity that festers within the lower parts of the human soul and incites one to evil. Hafez informs us that he does not gaze upon others with such a fraudulent eye, instead opting to look upon others with genuine care and compassion.

But beyond these levels is something else; a perspective that offers a radical rethinking of how we view the relationship between God and creation. In the first line, when Hafez says that he is renowned in Shiraz for his audacious expressions of love, he is speaking to the idea that love is not something that can remain concealed. A lover may be able to conceal their love for a brief period of time, but if it is a true love, it will eventually burst forth; every glowing glance and minor motion will sing songs of their love. In this respect the lover mirrors God, as not even God could conceal his love, weaving it seamlessly into the tapestry of the cosmos.

The second line explains the result of this manifest love. The lover does not pollute their eye with seeing bad because a lover only sees beauty in existence. A gaze that is infused with love, purity and sincerity is incapable of seeing any evil in the world. The world's beauty comes to the fore in all that they see, radiating from the mundane. The hidden hand of God becomes visible, the artist and artwork become one, and the Qur'anic verse "And God's is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God's countenance" manifests before one's eyes.

The aim of this piece is not to convince anyone that my reading of Hafez is correct, but to inspire others to delve deeper into Persian literature. Words possess a quasi-mystical power and, in the hands of the master Persian poets, can engender serious transformation: long-buried emotions are stirred, long-forgotten memories are retrieved and long-lost truths are found again. All that is left for us is to read them.

Source: <https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/sep/23/persian-poetic-tradition-hafez>



Mayor of only Muslim-run city in US endorses Trump for election

Amer Ghalib, who leads city in battleground state of Michigan, says the Republican is the ‘right choice’, despite disagreements.

The mayor of the only city in the United States with an all-Muslim government has endorsed former President Donald Trump for November’s presidential election.

Amer Ghalib, who leads the city of Hamtramck in the crucial battleground state of Michigan, said on Sunday that the Republican candidate is a “man of principles” and “the right choice”, despite their disagreements on some issues.

“President Trump and I may not agree on everything, but I know he is a man of principles,” Ghalib said in a post on Facebook.

“Though it’s looking good, he may or may not win the election and be the 47th president of the United States, but I believe he is the right choice for this critical time. I’ll not regret my decision no matter what the outcome would be, and I’m ready to face the consequences.”

“Now, let the Caravan begin its journey,” Ghalib added. “This is just the starting point.”

Trump reposted Ghalib’s endorsement on his Truth Social platform shortly after the announcement.

Hamtramck, which has a population of about 28,000 people, made headlines in 2021 when it became the first US city to elect an all-Muslim City Council and a Muslim mayor.

Ghalib, who immigrated to the US from Yemen when he was 17, offered his support to Trump a little less than a week after meeting the Republican candidate before a town hall in the Michigan city of Flint.

Ghalib told The Detroit News last week that the pair had discussed the concerns of Arab and Muslim Americans and that Trump had requested his endorsement.

Michigan is one of seven key swing states expected to decide the outcome of November's contest between Trump and his Democratic Party rival, Vice President Kamala Harris.

Opinion polls suggest a tight race between Trump and Harris both nationally and in battlegrounds such as Michigan.

In the most recent average of polls compiled by The New York Times, Harris leads Trump in Michigan by 50 percent to 47 percent.

Trump won Michigan in the 2016 election against Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, becoming the first Republican to prevail in the state since George HW Bush in 1988.

President Joe Biden flipped the state back to the Democrats in 2020, beating Trump by a margin of about 150,000 votes.

Muslim-American anger over the Biden administration's support for Israel's war on Gaza has become a concern for Democrats as they face razor-thin races in the battleground states.

In a poll released by the Council on American-Islamic Relations in August, just 12 percent of Muslim voters in Michigan expressed support for Harris, with 18 percent backing Trump and 40 percent supporting the Green Party's Jill Stein.

On Thursday, the Uncommitted National Movement, a grassroots campaign aimed at pressuring Democrats to end their support for the war, announced that it would not endorse Harris after her team failed to meet a September 15 deadline to respond to a request for a meeting with families of Palestinians killed in Gaza.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/23/mayor-of-only-muslim-governed-us-city-endorses-trump>

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Saudi economic growth to outstrip global average in 2025: IMF

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's economic growth is expected to outpace the global average in 2025 according to the latest International Monetary Fund study.

The IMF's World Economic Outlook update puts the Kingdom's output increase at 4.7 percent next year – above the 3.3 percent forecast for the planet as a whole.

The figure for Saudi Arabia is down from an estimate released in April which anticipated a 6 percent growth rate for 2025.

The IMF also scaled back its 2024 projection for the Kingdom, shifting from 2.6 percent in its earlier forecast to 1.7 percent in its most recent report.

The Washington-based institution described the global economy as being in a “sticky spot,” although it maintained its earlier calculation that worldwide output would increase at a rate of 3.2 percent in 2024 and 3.3 percent in 2025.

“The growth forecast for 2024 in Saudi Arabia has been revised downward by 0.9 percentage point; the adjustment reflects mainly the extension of oil production cuts,” the IMF said.

“Varied momentum in activity at the turn of the year has somewhat narrowed the output divergence across economies as cyclical factors wane and activity becomes better aligned with its potential. Services price inflation is holding up progress on disinflation, which is complicating monetary policy normalization,” the July update stated.

The IMF added: “Upside risks to inflation have thus increased, raising the prospect of higher-for-even-longer interest rates, in the context of escalating trade tensions and increased policy uncertainty. To manage these risks and preserve growth, the policy mix should be sequenced carefully to achieve price stability and replenish diminished buffers.”

Global economic snapshot: divergent paths ahead

Across major economies, contrasting trends defined economic forecasts heading into 2024 and beyond.

Earlier in the year, the US confronted a sharper-than-anticipated slowdown, driven by easing consumer spending and adverse net trade dynamics.

Growth projections for 2024 have been revised to 2.6 percent, 0.1 percentage point lower than projected in April, with expectations for 2025 further declining to 1.9 percent.

Tightening fiscal policies and cooling labor markets are poised to exert further pressure. Inflation remains stubborn, particularly in services, delaying potential monetary policy adjustments. Therefore, it is lagging behind other advanced economies in easing measures.

Europe's recovery hinges on robust performances in the services sector, with growth expected to reach 0.9 percent in 2024, rising to 1.5 percent in 2025.

Strengthened consumer demand, bolstered by higher real wages and improved financing conditions, supports this optimistic outlook. However, persistent weaknesses in manufacturing, notably in Germany, suggest a nuanced recovery across sectors.

China's economy continues to exhibit resilience, with a revised growth forecast of 5 percent for 2024, driven by a resurgence in domestic consumption and robust export performance.

Yet expansion is anticipated to moderate to 4.5 percent in 2025 and beyond as the country grapples with demographic shifts and slowing productivity gains.

Emerging markets and developing economies are projected to grow by 4.3 percent in 2024, driven by a strong performance in Asia, particularly China and India.

India's growth forecast has been revised upward to 7 percent for 2024, higher than April's projection of 6.8 percent reflecting improved private consumption and positive carryover effects from 2023.

The UK anticipates modest growth of 0.7 percent in 2024, expanding to 1.5 percent in 2025. Economic prospects are shaped by ongoing fiscal restraint and residual impacts of earlier inflationary pressures on consumer and investment activities.

Japan's revised growth forecast for 2024 is 0.7 percent from 0.9 percent in April, influenced by transient supply disruptions and subdued private investment.

Nevertheless, robust wage settlements are anticipated to fuel a resurgence in private consumption by the latter half of the year.

Regional impact and global trade

The IMF report noted that oil production and regional conflicts continue to weigh heavily on economic prospects in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Alongside Saudi Arabia, Sudan's economic outlook has been markedly revised downward due to persistent conflict.

Conversely, there have been upward revisions in other regions, such as Brazil, where reconstruction efforts buoy growth prospects following recent flooding and structural factors like increased hydrocarbon production.

"World trade growth is expected to recover to about 3.25 percent annually in 2024–25 and align with global GDP growth again," the IMF added.

The initial increase seen in the first quarter of this year is likely to slow down due to ongoing subdued manufacturing activity.

Despite a notable rise in cross-border trade restrictions affecting it between distant geopolitical blocs, projections suggest that the global trade-to-GDP ratio will remain stable.

Inflation and monetary policy

Global disinflation efforts are facing headwinds, with services price inflation complicating monetary policy normalization.

The report highlighted the persistence of higher-than-average inflation in services costs, which has tempered the disinflation in goods prices.

“The revised forecast for advanced economies is for the pace of disinflation to slow in 2024 and 2025. That is because inflation in prices for services is now expected to be more persistent and commodity prices higher,” the international organization said.

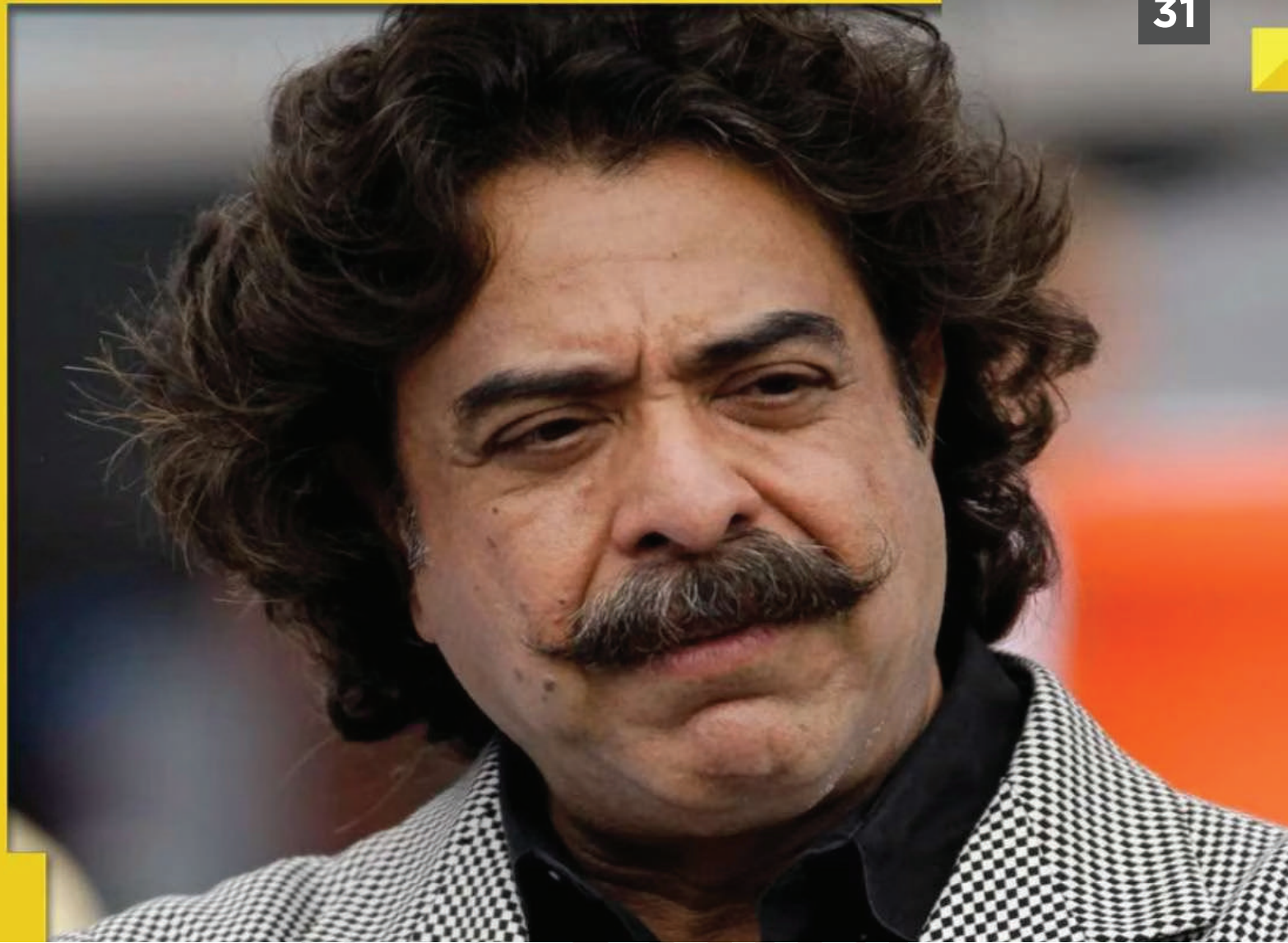
It added that the gradual cooling of labor markets and an expected decline in energy costs should bring headline inflation back to target by the end of 2025.

Price increases are anticipated to persist at elevated levels in emerging markets and developing economies, falling more gradually compared to advanced countries.

Due in part to declining energy costs, inflation has nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels for the typical emerging market and developing economy.

Source:<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2551276/business-economy>





Meet Pakistan's richest man, worked as dishwasher, now owns football club, no match for Mukesh Ambani, Adani, his net worth is Rs...

By Joy Pillai

The richest man in Pakistan has the net worth of Rs 1,11,674 crore. He owns UK's Fulham football club and American football team Jacksonville Jaguars. Here is his story.

Pakistan's Richest Man: Looking at the current crisis-ridden economy of Pakistan, it is clear that the people are suffering from inflation and a scarcity of essential products. Notably, the neighbouring nation is also considered one of the poorest countries in the world. Due to sluggish growth, several international organizations have raised alarms about the rising poverty there. But have you ever wondered how rich the richest person in Pakistan is? How much net worth does he have? Well, surprisingly, the wealthiest person in the neighbouring

country has an astounding net worth of Rs 1,11,674 crore. Not only that, he owns a football club in the United Kingdom and an American football team, the Jacksonville Jaguars. The billionaire businessman wasn't born with a silver spoon in fact, he once worked as a dishwasher. Here is his story.

Pakistan's Richest Man

74-year-old Shahid Khan is a Pakistani-American billionaire businessman. He owns auto parts supplier Flex-N-Gate. His real time net worth, according to Forbes, is USD 13.3 billion or Rs 111674 crore, as of September 12. Khan is also a sports tycoon and owns NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars.

Pakistan's Richest Man: Who is Shahid Khan?

Shahid's origins are rooted in a typical middle-class household that earned their bread through the construction business. In 1967, at a tender age of 16, he took the grand step of moving to the United States, armed with nothing but \$500, a heart full of ambition, and dreams of attaining higher education. During his collegiate years, he managed his expenses by working as a dishwasher. By 1971, he had not only achieved his Bachelor of Science degree in industrial engineering from the reputable Grainger College of Engineering but had also become a proud alum of the prestigious University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Pakistan's Richest Man: From Working To Owning Flex-N-Gate Corporation

Khan was juggling his job at Flex-N-Gate Corporation with his studies at the University of Illinois. Upon graduation, he climbed up the ladder to become the company's engineering director. In 1980, he seized the opportunity and bought Flex-N-Gate from his ex-boss. Now, the company has gone global with 76 facilities and provides employment to over 27,000 individuals.

Pakistan's Richest Man: The First Success

Shahid Khan kicked off a prosperous career on account of his creative single-piece truck bumper design. In the year 2012, he became the proud owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars, an NFL team, and just a year later, he seized the opportunity to own Fulham football club in the UK. Apart from football, he boasts a majority stake in All Elite Wrestling (AEW). As per Forbes, he also owns Toronto's Four Seasons Hotel and has ambitious plans of establishing a new branch in Jacksonville come 2026. Khan leads a blissful life with his wife Ann Carlson and their two children, Shanna Khan and Tony Khan, add joy to their world.

Source: <https://www.india.com/viral/meet-pakistans-richest-man-worked-as-dishwasher-now-owns-football-club-no-match-for-mukesh-ambani-adani-his-net-worth-is-rs-shahid-khan-7266876/amp/>

Fatal distraction

By Maleeha Lodhi

AT a time when the country is facing mounting economic, political and security challenges, the government has been expending most of its energy on either countering the opposition or trying to arbitrarily amend the Constitution. This has become a fatal distraction from governance. It is also counterproductive. Far from weakening the opposition, it is injecting greater resolve in opposition ranks to push back against the government's actions.

On the constitutional amendment, the government beat a hasty retreat as it failed to muster the necessary parliamentary numbers for the sweeping changes it sought.

Earlier this month, the PML-N government and its allies made a frantic attempt to push a controversial constitutional package through parliament in a politically motivated move. It kept the contents of the amendment under wraps, allowed no debate, yet expected lawmakers to blindly support what they had not even seen.

The aim of the judicial re-engineering was to undermine the independence of the superior judiciary and subordinate it to the executive. Members of the legal fraternity rightly condemned this as an assault on the Constitution. The proposed establishment of a constitutional court packed with judges and headed by a judge chosen by the prime minister will denude the Supreme Court of its jurisdiction in constitutional cases.

Another provision was designed to ensure the continuance of Qazi Faez Isa, who

is due to retire in October, as chief justice. The move came after a series of clashes between the government and judiciary and official frustration with judgments seen as advantaging the opposition. But for all its frenetic efforts, the government faced a setback and was compelled to 'postpone' tabling the constitutional amendment for lack of the needed two-thirds majority. But it is now set to defy the Supreme Court order on reserved seats.

Meanwhile the government's efforts to contain Imran Khan's PTI have continued. It was exemplified by the restrictions and obstacles placed in the path of the party's public rally in Islamabad and arrests of several of its leaders. Its Lahore jalsa encountered similar impediments. This was only the latest coercive measure taken against PTI, which over the past year has involved innumerable cases against its leaders.

Aggression, however, begets aggression. The opposition sought to resist such actions by becoming more combative. PTI lawmakers are adamant on continuing their protests in parliament and outside.

The PML-N-led government has failed to see it has more to lose from unremitting confrontational politics. The political calm needed for the country to solve its fundamental problems is obviously being upended by escalation in political tensions. This has fuelled uncertainty and left the public in a state of despondency. No surprise, then, that a recent opinion survey conducted by Ipsos found 89 per cent of people felt the country was headed in the wrong direction. Nine out of 10 Pakistanis lacked confidence in the country's future.

This may seem like a rerun of an old movie but it heightens risks for the country's stability.

Parliamentary proceedings have been reduced to theatrical displays of unseemly conduct and slanging matches between the treasury and opposition benches. Instead of debating the issues that confront the country and worry the public, parliamentarians on both sides of the aisle seek to demonise each other. Talk of a dialogue between the government and opposition has remained just that — talk about talks, with neither side showing any seriousness.

Every so often, statements in parliament by government leaders about a dialogue have not led to any outreach to the opposition. For their part, PTI leaders have reiterated they will only talk to the establishment as they see the government lacking any power or legitimacy. In any case, the constitutional amendment attempt, vigorously opposed by PTI, only widened the government-opposition divide.

All this has familiar echoes of the past — a government unwilling to engage with the opposition, jailing opposition leaders, trying to steamroll legislation and a desperate opposition in constant protest mode against a backdrop of economic gloom, weak governance and ubiquitous establishment pulling the strings from

behind the scenes.

This seems like the rerun of an old movie. But it doesn't minimise the risks for the country's stability. The risks are even greater than in the past because of the intensely polarised state of the country and unprecedented confluence of challenges.

The economic challenge is, of course, the most consequential. The government might think that with the IMF expected to soon approve a \$7 billion bailout package, the worst of the country's economic troubles will be over. But the real task lies ahead to implement a tough Fund programme and take other difficult measures to stabilise an economy that is not yet out of the woods.

What the government seems unwilling to acknowledge is that political turmoil and uncertainty puts any sustainable economic recovery at risk. It also makes it harder to implement necessary but unpopular measures. An economic rebound can only be sustained by building a high level of confidence which requires a stable and predictable political environment.

The country's deteriorating internal security situation also merits greater attention from the government. In the first eight months of the year, 757 people were reportedly killed in violent incidents. August was a particularly deadly month, with over 100 people killed in a fresh wave of militant attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On one day alone — Aug 26 — terrorist violence claimed the lives of over 50 people across Balochistan as militants stormed police stations, executed passengers on a bus, blocked roads and blew up railway tracks.

This should have prompted an urgent meeting of the National Security Committee. But the government did not convene one, while the interior minister made the astonishing claim that only one SHO (station house police officer) was enough to handle terrorism in the province. As terrorist activities continue in KP, with 29 attacks last month, the federal government and law-enforcing agencies need to address the mounting challenge in close collaboration with the PTI-run KP government, not in opposition to it. The KP government, headed by a volatile chief minister prone to verbal excess, also needs to show responsibility.

The test of the government is how it deals with these pressing challenges, what it delivers to the people and whether its actions earn the public's respect and confidence. The PML-N coalition is falling short on all these counts.

Source:<https://www.dawn.com/news/1860551/fatal-distraction>



China's YanChang Petroleum considers Pakistan entry

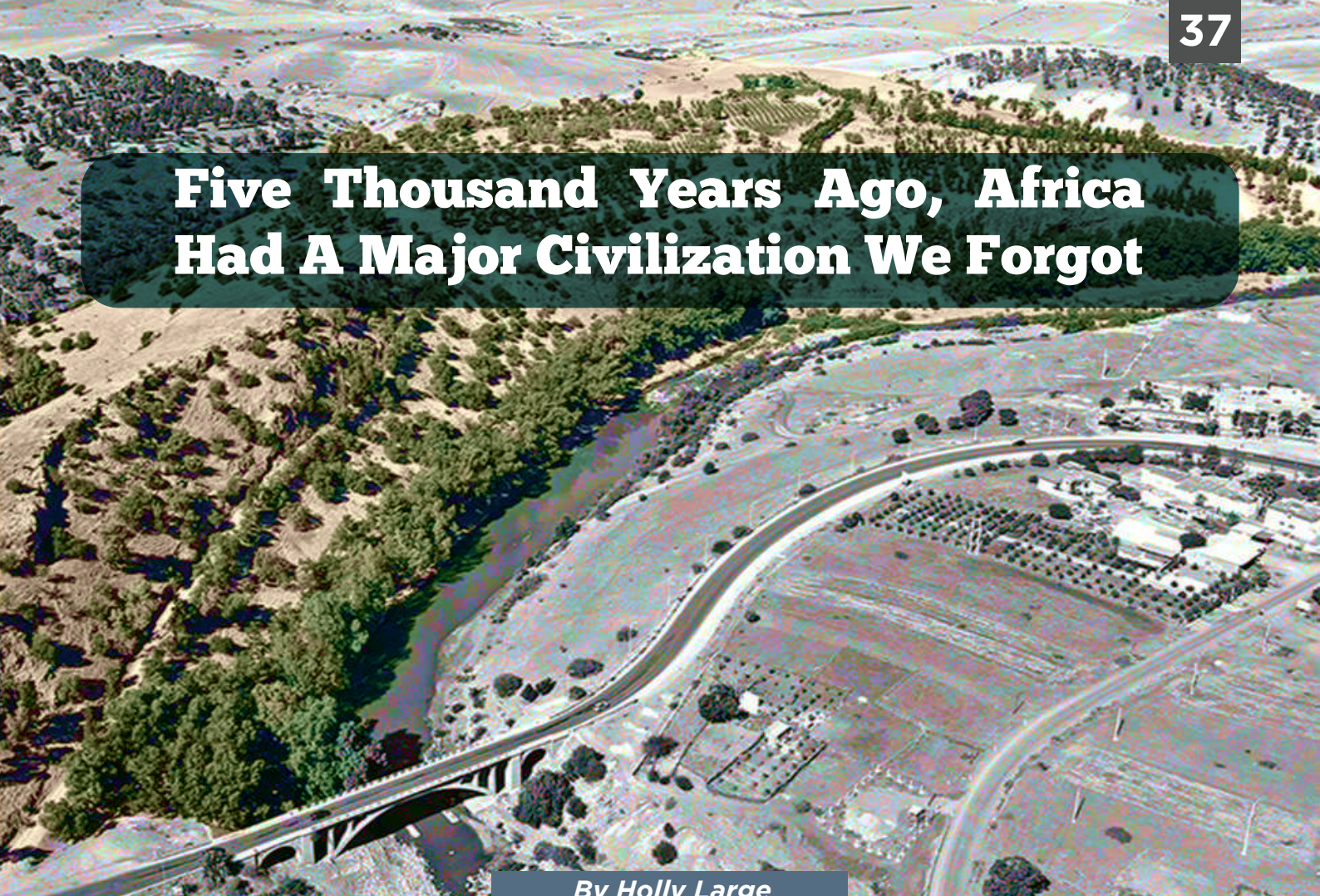
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Federal Minister of Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik has visited YanChang Petroleum, a leading Chinese energy company, on the sidelines of the 8th Silk Route Expo to foster international cooperation in the energy sector.

The visit underscores both nations' commitment to enhancing strategic partnerships in the fields of energy exploration, innovation, and sustainable development. During the visit, Dr Musadik Malik was received by YanChang Petroleum's senior leadership team, led by the Deputy Chief manager, who provided an in-depth overview of the company's ongoing projects and future growth strategies.

YanChang Petroleum is one of China's leading energy companies with a diversified portfolio spanning oil and gas exploration, production, and refining, pipelines, integration of coal, electrification, as well as significant investments in the production of sophisticated chemicals like ethanol.

The discussion focused on several key areas, including oil and gas exploration, refinery cooperation, integrated coal industrial complex, and technological innovations. The minister highlighted the importance of international collaboration to meet the growing energy demands.

Source:<https://arynews.tv/chinas-yanchang-petroleum-considers-pakistan-entry/amp/>

An aerial photograph showing a wide river valley. A large concrete bridge with multiple arches spans the river. To the right of the bridge, a small town or village is visible, surrounded by fields and some trees. The landscape is a mix of green vegetation and brown, arid-looking soil.

Five Thousand Years Ago, Africa Had A Major Civilization We Forgot

By Holly Large

Its influence on better-known ancient civilizations is unknown, but may well have been an important missing piece in our understanding.

Evidence has been revealed of a city existing 5,400-4,900 years ago in what is now Morocco, that its discoverers claim was the era's largest in Africa outside of the Nile Basin. There are signs the region had extensive trading links with settlements across the Strait of Gibraltar in Iberia, and its influence may well have stretched much further afield around the Mediterranean.

Morocco houses what some consider the oldest fossils of our species, *Homo sapiens*, as well as the oldest shell beads and a shift in stone technology. The Maghreb, the region that combines Morocco with areas east as far as Libya, was home to Carthage, the power that most threatened the Roman Republic.

However, between 6,000 and 3,000 years ago, there is a vast hole in our knowledge of the area. Perched as the Maghreb is between the Sahara Desert and the ocean, it's possible to wave this away by imagining the coastal strip becoming temporarily too arid to support many people. However, Professor Cyprian Broodbank of Cambridge University has been resisting this idea for a long time.

"For over thirty years I have been convinced that Mediterranean archaeology has been missing something fundamental in later prehistoric north Africa," Broodbank said in a

statement. “Now, at last, we know that was right, and we can begin to think in new ways that acknowledge the dynamic contribution of Africans to the emergence and interactions of early Mediterranean societies.”

Broodbank has been conducting a dig at a site known as Oued Beht with researchers from Moroccan and European institutions. Now, they are reporting that in around 3000 BCE, this was a city similar in size to Troy during its Bronze Age peak.

“This is currently the earliest and largest agricultural complex in Africa beyond the Nile corridor,” the authors write.

Besides many of the items familiar from other Neolithic civilizations, the archaeologists have dug up pits similar to those found in what is now Spain, thought to be used either to store food or for waste disposal. The Spanish pits had already provided major hints that the inhabitants of the era had an African trading partner in the form of ivory and ostrich eggs, neither of which they could have obtained locally.

Oued Beht lies on a river of the same name about 100 kilometers (62 miles) inland of Rabat. The Atlantic Ocean would have been fairly accessible downstream, but reaching the Mediterranean other than by passage through the Strait would have required crossing the Atlas Mountains, which may have impeded interactions with most of the ancient world. Nevertheless, the similarities with Iberian sites of the same era make it likely there was considerable interchange, perhaps indicating the development of ships capable of reliably sailing the open ocean.

Many stone axes and the remains of stone walls were found at Oued Beht in the 1930s, and more than a thousand axes have been found there since. However, it took 70 years for systematic archaeology to start in the area.

This has now revealed an abundance of pottery – some heavily decorated – and stone tools unmatched in Africa outside the Nile Valley. There are also signs of domesticated goats, sheep, cattle, and pigs. No tools for harvesting crops have been found, but the authors think this indicates collection with bare hands, rather than a lack of cereal production, given the large grinding stones that were found.

The objects overwhelmingly date to a 500-year period, suggesting much less intensive use of the site before and after.

“It is therefore crucial to consider Oued Beht within a wider co-evolving and connective framework embracing peoples on both sides of the Mediterranean-Atlantic gateway during the later fourth and third millennia BC,” the authors write. “For all the likelihood of movement in both directions, to recognize it as a distinctively African-based community that contributed substantially to the shaping of that social world.”

Source: <https://www.iflscience.com/five-thousand-years-ago-africa-had-a-major-civilization-we-forgot-76094>

US-UK airstrikes have not seriously hurt Houthis' capability, says Yemeni leader

By Patrick Wintour

Yemen government vice-chair fears strikes intended to end shipping chaos are instead helping Houthis rally support

US-UK airstrikes in Yemen designed to end the Houthi disruption of commercial shipping have not seriously degraded the group's military capability, the vice-chair of the UN-recognised government in Yemen has said.

Aidarous al-Zubaidi told the Guardian in an interview he feared the Houthis were using the strikes to rally support behind their cause by portraying the west as the aggressor in Yemen.

Calling for a change to a better coordinated strategy between the west, the region and the Yemeni government, he said it was time to accept that the Houthis were not interested in a power-sharing deal in the country – an offer made to them more than a year ago, first by Saudi Arabia and then the UN.

Zubaidi heads Yemen's separatist Southern Transitional Council, which holds three seats on the eight-strong Presidential Leadership Council, the Aden-based coalition government opposed to the Houthis.



The Houthis are an Iran-backed group that swept to power in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, a decade ago, driving Saudi-backed forces south towards Aden where they set up their headquarters. They began aerial drone and missile strikes on the Red Sea in November in what they said was solidarity with Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

Commercial shipping companies that normally use the Red Sea have been forced to take long and expensive detours around the Cape of Good Hope and to accept higher insurance costs. Operation Prosperity Guardian was established in December largely by the US and UK to protect shipping and strike back at the Houthis.

Zubaidi said: "The airstrikes, instead of deterring the Houthis, are having the opposite effect. In a way, it is helping the Houthis and making them stronger. The local popular perception is that the Houthis occupy the high ground because they are mobilising people around the idea they are being attacked by the UK and the US, and the Houthis are mounting a defence.

"What is more, these operations are not really effective militarily. The Arab coalition, one way or another, has been attacking Houthi rocket launchers for the past eight years, but the Houthis have been able to adapt and find new solutions on how to hide their capabilities. They have built up resilience. The problem is [there is] no joined up approach involving the region and Presidential Leadership Council. It is a US-British operation alone.

"It's clear that at the Red Sea ports of Hodeidah and Salif, ships have been arriving without inspection containing high quality weapons from both the Iranians and Russians."

The deliveries had given the Houthis the capability to target Israel, he said.

The negative assessment of the impact of Operation Prosperity Guardian from a Yemeni group so opposed to the Houthis will not be easy to dismiss.

"Events over the past year require a shift in thinking. The past peace process is no longer viable," said Zubaidi, who is in New York as a member of the Yemen government delegation to the UN general assembly. "The Houthis now regard themselves as the state in Yemen and do not recognise the government in Aden, and say they only want to talk to the west."

He said that after a decade in power the Houthis had indoctrinated a younger generation into its narrow sectarian ideology. "There is not likely to be an internal counter-revolution against the Houthis soon," he said.

A coordinated international, regional and local strategy to contain and weaken the Houthis was needed, requiring political, military and economic tracks, he said. That must include a strategy to start re-exporting oil and building national revenues independent of Saudi grants, he said.

He conceded that the Presidential Leadership Council assembled by the Saudis in April 2022 was politically divided, lacked proper procedural rules and needed reform.

Source: <https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/24/us-uk-airstrikes-not-hurt-houthi-military-capability-yemen>



Germany and France call for Europe-wide deal with UK on migration

By Jennifer Rankin

Letter sent to EU said Brexit had gravely affected ‘the coherence of policies’ on asylum and migration

Germany and France have called for a Europe-wide deal on migration and asylum with the UK government, to capitalise on Labour’s more “constructive” approach to EU-UK relations.

In a letter to the EU home affairs commissioner, the German interior minister, Nancy Faeser, and her former French counterpart, Gérald Darmanin, said Brexit had gravely affected “the coherence of migration policies”.

“The absence of provisions governing the flow of people between the UK and the Schengen area,” they wrote, was “clearly contributing to the dynamics of irregular flows and to the danger posed to people using this route in the Channel and the North Sea.”

Darmanin and Faeser urged the European Commission to “rapidly” present “a draft negotiating mandate” for talks with the UK on asylum and migration.

“The arrival in office of a new British government, demonstrating its intention to cooperate

constructively with the EU, seems to us to be conducive to concrete progress on this issue,” stated the letter, first reported by AFP.

France has long sought an EU-wide asylum pact with the UK, but Germany has never signalled such strong support until now. Darmanin, who was replaced last week during the French government reshuffle, called for a migration treaty between the EU and UK in 2021 but failed to win support from other member states.

The politics of an EU-UK migration deal could prove sensitive for Starmer’s government, which has been accused by refugee charities of adopting the Conservatives’ harsh language and policies on asylum and migration. France has wanted British officials to process asylum claims in the areas around French ports, a position rejected by previous Conservative governments, who feared this would encourage more people to seek entry to the UK.

The absence of legal routes to the UK “feeds smuggling networks”, the letter states.

This month alone, at least 20 people have died attempting to cross the Channel in two separate incidents. British officials estimate that more than 22,000 refugees and migrants have arrived in England via irregular Channel crossings so far this year.

The European Commission, which has previously rebuffed proposals to negotiate an EU-UK agreement, declined to comment on the letter. Under the last Conservative government, when EU-UK relations were at a low point during tensions over the Northern Ireland protocol, the EU home affairs commissioner, Ylva Johansson, signalled that a migration deal with the UK was not a priority, citing “limited appetite” from EU member states.

Asked to comment on whether the commission had moved on from Johansson’s previous comments, a commission spokesperson said: “Our positions on [EU-UK] relations are indeed well known,” without elaborating further.

Despite the support of the EU’s biggest member states, the prospects of an EU-UK deal on migration any time soon appear slim. The EU executive is preoccupied with the transition to a new team of commissioners, who are not expected to take office until 1 December.

An EU-UK summit is pencilled in for next spring, after the changeover of leadership at the EU’s main institutions.

The spokesperson said the “commission is fully working” and would issue a reply to the letter “in due course to the appropriate authorities”.

Source:<https://amp.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/sep/24/germany-and-france-call-for-europe-wide-deal-with-uk-on-migration>

What is vitamin B12 and who should take the supplements?

By Zoe Griffin

As we enter the colder and darker months, it's common to feel more tired and sluggish. At this time of year, it's more important than ever to make sure your body isn't deficient in any vitamins linked to your energy levels. Deficiency can make symptoms like tiredness and low mood worse, especially when it comes to essential nutrients like B12.

B12 isn't stored by the body, so it's something you need to ensure you're getting enough of every single day. Found in meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dairy products, it's not too hard to consume the daily recommended amount of 2.4mg if you're an omnivore – one tin of tuna provides more than your daily needs and two boiled eggs gives you 50 per cent of your daily B12 target.

But if you don't get enough B12, symptoms can include extreme tiredness, pins and needles and nausea. Vegetarians and those following a plant-based diet might find it much harder to get the recommended daily amount of B12, and this can mean you'll feel much worse during winter months. But B12 deficiency can also be a concern for children and elderly people, making it hard to focus, impacting growth and muscle development and affecting memory and cognition too.

Read on to find out more about the role of Vitamin B12 in the body and why a supplement might be useful for certain people.

What is vitamin B12?

Vitamin B12 is involved in the metabolism of every cell in the body, particularly DNA synthesis and fatty acid and amino acid metabolism.

One of the key benefits of vitamin B12 is its impact on energy levels. It helps convert carbohydrates into glucose, which the body uses as energy. Low levels of B12 can lead to reduced energy production, causing fatigue and weakness. A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that vitamin B12 deficiency can result in significant fatigue and cognitive impairment.

B12 deficiency can also lead to anemia, a condition where the body doesn't have enough



healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen to tissues, resulting in tiredness and weakness. A review in *Nutrients* highlighted that vitamin B12 supplementation can alleviate symptoms of fatigue in individuals that are deficient.

Moreover, B12 is essential for neurological health. Deficiency can cause neurological symptoms such as numbness, tingling, and even mood disturbances like depression and memory problems. This can be worsened during winter months when we're less likely to get the Vitamin D we need from sun exposure and issues like seasonal affective disorder become more prevalent.

Who is at high risk of vitamin B12 deficiency?

Since vitamin B12 is primarily found in animal products like meat, dairy, and eggs, individuals who follow a strict vegetarian or vegan diet may not get enough from their daily meals alone. Fortified foods and supplements are often necessary to top up the body's stores of B12 so that you have enough energy to go about your day.

A supplement can be even more useful if you're someone who uses a lot of energy. There are plenty of vegan bodybuilders out there, however, people who train hard or are particularly athletic when following a plant-based diet often supplement vital nutrients like B12 to ensure their muscles can grow and recover adequately and they have enough energy to train.

Vitamin B12 also helps regulate reproductive hormones, so a deficiency can lead to irregular menstrual cycles or even amenorrhea – the absence of a period. Some studies also suggest that heavy periods can affect B12 levels and many people who struggle with menstrual cramps and heavy periods also experience anemia. Taking a supplement to support your health throughout your cycle, regulate periods and top up nutrient stores could help you to feel better if you struggle with menstrual health issues.

There is also evidence that the elderly could benefit from B12 supplementation. As people age, their ability to absorb Vitamin B12 decreases due to reduced stomach acid production, which is necessary to separate B12 from food. Taking a supplement can ensure that more B12 reaches the body alongside the levels provided from your diet that might not be absorbed as effectively.

Each of these Myvitamins B12 capsules contains 1000Qg of vitamin B12, providing a potent dose to support energy levels and overall health. With just one capsule a day, these capsules provide an easy and effective way to maintain optimal levels in groups most at risk of a deficiency, including vegetarians, vegans, and older adults who may struggle to get adequate B12 from their diet alone.

This particular supplement contains vitamin B12 from cyanocobalamin which is easily absorbed by the body. Once ingested, cyanocobalamin is converted into active forms of B12—methylcobalamin and adenosylcobalamin—that the body can use for essential functions, such as red blood cell production and maintaining healthy nerve cells. Several studies have proved that cyanocobalamin is effective in raising B12 levels in people with a deficiency.

At £3.16 for 60 servings, this is a low cost way to prevent unpleasant side effects from a vitamin B12 deficiency and avoid symptoms such as tiredness, weakness and cognitive impairment, especially during the months where these symptoms might hit you harder.

Source: <https://www.independent.co.uk/health-and-fitness/vitamin-b12-supplements-b2615597.html>