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# **Selections From Regional Press**

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## **I - FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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**THE STATESMAN, NEW DELHI 2-8-2022**

## **Stalemate in India's relations with China**

*Air exercises and violation of earlier agreements signals those tensions, on similar lines as Taiwan, will possibly remain the new normal.*

**Harsha Kakar**

There have been 16 rounds of India-China talks to resolve the standoff in Ladakh, but apart from withdrawal on both banks of the Pangong Tso, nothing else has been achieved. Each time, it is said that both sides 'agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of remaining issues at the earliest.' The implication is that China is prolonging talks with an agenda. The Ladakh intrusion by China breached all previous agreements. Occupation of Kailash Ridge, the first offensive manoeuvre by India, conveyed its intent of challenging China. Hence, Pangong Tso was resolved in initial talks. Subsequently, there has been no forward movement, with China procrastinating, ignoring verbal understandings given prior to withdrawal from the Kailash Ridge, an action now being questioned as possibly having been premature.

It is possible that Chinese stalling stems from India's insistence on clubbing Demchok and Depsang, which preceded the current standoff, in ongoing talks. Chinese aircraft have commenced flying close to the LAC, breaching the 1996 agreement which mentions that no military aircraft will fly within 10 Kms of the LAC. These are being conducted under the garb of an air exercise, again for the first time. India has responded in an equally offensive manner. No Chinese aircraft has crossed the LAC. India is in the process of deploying its second S 400 missile squadron along the LAC, displaying its ability to challenge Chinese aggressiveness. China, which had disputed Indian infrastructure development in Ladakh and claimed it to be a major reason for its intrusion, has announced plans for building new highways on disputed territory. Highway G 695 will pass close to the disputed Depsang plains, Galwan and Pangong Tso.

A bridge under construction on the Pangong Tso, will possibly be part of this highway. Another highway, G 684, is intended to link Xinjiang with Khunjerab Pass along the Pak-China border in Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan. Their completion schedule has yet to be announced. There were media inputs of China expanding its construction activities in Doklam, leading to the Indian

army chief visiting Bhutan. Reports mention China constructing villages close to the standoff location, possibly on Bhutanese territory. The Indian spokesperson mentioned, in response to a question, "The government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary steps to safeguard the same. We will take all possible steps for the security of the nation." He refused to answer specific queries on Chinese actions. India has also not been idle. In the past five years, India has constructed over 2,100 km of roads along the LAC alongside multiple airfields and helipads, ignoring Chinese criticism.

The airfields are capable of taking fighter as also transport aircraft. The Zojila Tunnel will provide all weather road connectivity to Ladakh. Chinese military activities are always part of a well-conceived long term plan. Chinese transgressions of Taiwanese airspace as also employing its naval militia to harass nations in contention with it over South China Sea islands are intended with a reason, mainly to project that these disputed regions belong to China, and it can transgress at will. Similarly, Chinese offensive manoeuvres along the LAC, ramping up infrastructure as also breaking the no-fly 1996 agreement are not random incidents but convey Chinese intent of this being the new status quo. There is a perception that with the Congress of the Chinese Communist Party scheduled later this year, the current leadership cannot be seen to be weak. Apart from facing global pressures it also has a sinking economy and its zero Covid policy is failing. It is thus displaying military aggressiveness in all its disputed regions, not only against India.

The Chinese defence minister, in his address at the Shangri La dialogue in Singapore accused India of being responsible for the standoff. Further, Chinese strategists are recommending that normalcy along the LAC should be its 1959 positions. While projecting military aggressiveness on one hand, China is displaying diplomatic niceties on the other. It never commented on the visit of the Dalai Lama to Ladakh, possibly for the first time. Xi Jinping also sent a positive message to President Murmu, stating that he attaches great importance to China-India relations and was ready to work to enhance political mutual trust, deepen practical cooperation, handle differences properly, and push bilateral ties forward. This is his first communication with India in over a year. India-China trade is also on the rise. The government recently permitted import of renewable energy components from China as also placed orders for 39,000 railway wheels with a Chinese

company. It is gradually permitting Chinese investments, post scrutiny, while cracking down on erring Chinese smartphone manufacturers. Currently Chinese 5G companies are banned but the government may permit import of Chinese manufactured 5G parts. India has also objected to the Pak-China call for third countries joining the CPEC on the grounds of it transiting disputed territory, eliciting no response from China. What appears to flow is that China is openly announcing its unwillingness to accept the Indian demand for April 2020 positions as the status quo. Delay of four months between the 15th and 16th round of talks as also no progress in talks thus far, substantiate this fact.

It is compounded by China ramping up its development activities along the LAC. Air exercises and violation of earlier agreements signals those tensions, on similar lines as Taiwan, will possibly remain the new normal. Any laxity by India, anywhere along the LAC will be exploited. The Indian government may be aware but is downplaying it. China is also propagating what its foreign minister, Wang Yi, has been stating about 'putting the boundary issue in an appropriate place in bilateral relations,' ignoring Indian foreign minister S Jaishankar's comment that restoration of the LAC is a 'pre-requisite for normalisation of ties.' Prime Minister Modi and Xi are expected to be in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in September for the SCO summit. Will normalcy flow post their meeting or will tensions continue to guide India-China ties? We may not have to wait long to know. Till then, we need to remain alert.

### **THE TELEGRAPH, KOLKATA 5-8-2022**

#### **Jaishankar, Blinken discuss pressing global issues and bilateral ties ahead of ASEAN meet**

*US and India are strong proponents of the Association's centrality in the Indo-Pacific: US Secretary of State*

**PTI | New Delhi**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday held talks on pressing global challenges, amid rising tensions between China and Taiwan following US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's high-profile visit to Taipei.

In his opening remarks at the meeting that took place on the margins of an ASEAN conclave in Phnom Penh, Blinken referred to concerns over "challenges" in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and the situation in the Indo-Pacific.

It is understood that the escalating tension between China and Taiwan, especially in the Taiwan Strait, following Pelosi's visit to Taipei figured in the talks.

China has launched a major live-fire military exercise in the waters around Taiwan in response to Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island, triggering global concerns.

The Jaishankar-Blinken meeting also came days after the US killed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the al-Qaeda leader and a key plotter of the 9/11 attacks, in a drone strike in a Kabul safe house.

"A warm conversation to start meetings on the sidelines of ASEAN Ministerial in Phnom Penh. Discussed the ever strengthening India-US relationship and the global situation with US Secretary of State @SecBlinken," Jaishankar tweeted.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, Blinken said the US and India are strong proponents of the ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific, according to the US State Department.

"We're both strong proponents of ASEAN centrality. We have a shared vision together for a free and open Indo-Pacific that we work on in so many different ways every single day," he said.

"And of course, we have some immediate challenges that we're both concerned with, to include the situation in Sri Lanka, Burma, and a number of other hot spots," he said.

"So I very much look forward to once again being able to go through a number of these issues with my friend, and then we'll both head over to our meetings," Blinken added.

Last month, Sri Lanka witnessed massive political turmoil following mass protests that forced President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country.

Veteran leader Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in as Sri Lanka's new president amid hopes for recovery from economic distress.

The western powers were anguished over the execution of four pro-democracy activists by Myanmar's military government last month.

### **THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 5-8-2022**

#### **Maldives President Solih's visit came in a fraught moment in ties between the two countries**

*Over the last four years, India has provided financial assistance for a slew of projects, both as grant and in credit lines. The biggest of them, the \$500m Greater Male Connectivity Project, was inaugurated during*

*Solih's visit. India*

The visit of the Maldives President, Ibrahim Solih, to Delhi gave both sides the opportunity to reiterate the

importance of the bilateral relationship. For India, which has been Maldives's first responder for decades but saw itself being edged out by the proximity of its previous government to Beijing, the Solih presidency has been crucial to restoring relations with the strategically located Indian Ocean neighbour. For the Maldives, the realisation is acute, especially after seeing Sri Lanka become convulsed by crisis, that China's large pockets are a trap best avoided.

Over the last four years, India has provided financial assistance for a slew of projects, both as grant and in credit lines. The biggest of them, the \$500m Greater Male Connectivity Project, was inaugurated during Solih's visit. India also provided a further credit line of \$100m for the completion of unfinished infrastructure projects. Under its Neighbourhood First policy, as well as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), defence and security co-operation between the two countries has grown — bilaterally, as well as in concert with the Colombo Security Conclave, a grouping of three nations that is now growing to encompass other Indian Ocean and South Asian countries. The cyber security pact signed between the two countries during the visit also underlined concerns over the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in the archipelago. Maldives came face to face with this when some 300 of its citizens joined ISIS back in 2014. The Maldivian police blamed Islamist extremists for the April 2021 attempt to assassinate the former president, Mohamed Nasheed.

The Solih government's India First policy has been a real game-changer in bilateral ties, but keeping with a pattern in the neighbourhood, it has had an inevitable domestic political fallout. The impact of this cannot be underestimated, particularly in the light of next year's presidential election. The disruption of the Yoga Day event in Male shows the lengths that some elements are willing to go to in order to undermine the government and its ties with India. The Solih government has robustly countered former president Abdulla Yameen's "India Out" campaign that has targeted defence ties in particular. It has even gone so far as to ban anti-India protests. But the pressure is starting to tell, as is evident from the statement the government issued, almost reluctantly, on the BJP spokesperson's remarks on Prophet Mohammed recently. The infighting in the Maldivian Democratic Party which has pitted Solih against Nasheed in an unseemly battle is also not a good sign. Against this fraught background, India must tread with caution and ensure that there is no room for misinterpretation of its actions in the Maldives.

## **THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 12-8-2022**

### **Parsing the two statements after foreign minister's visit to China**

*The Chinese and Nepali sides in their official statements have mentioned—and omitted—issues that were discussed, which observers call unusual.*

**ANIL GIRI**

**KATHMANDU**, Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka returned home after completing his three-day visit to China on Thursday.

A slew of understandings were signed during Khadka's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, who is also the state councillor of China.

After delegation-level talks between Khadka and Wang in Qingdao, both sides came up with separate statements late on Wednesday.

But there was a stark difference. Some points mentioned by the Chinese side in their statement were missing in the statement issued by Nepal's embassy in Beijing—and vice versa.

One important takeaway of the visit is the announcement of 800 million RMB (Rs15 billion) grant assistance to Nepal for the year 2022. The economic assistance pledged by Wang during his meeting with Khadka is mentioned in the statement released by the Embassy of Nepal in Beijing, but there is no single word about it in the statement issued by the Chinese foreign ministry.

The Nepal statement is silent on the Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious infrastructure project spanning several continents, which was initiated by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.

Nepal signed up to the BRI in May 2017, but no single project has started under it here. The statement issued by Beijing categorically mentions the BRI, saying the Chinese side is willing to work with Nepal for high-quality construction of the projects under the initiative.

"The two sides will negotiate and sign the implementation plan for the joint construction of the 'Belt and Road' as soon as possible," reads the statement issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

On Thursday afternoon, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi posted a tweet, particularly mentioning the BRI.

“The two sides reached broad consensus on bilateral cooperation including jointly uphold the ‘golden rule’ of non-interference in internal affairs and build the BRI with high quality,” Hou wrote on Twitter. The present establishment seems to have a paranoia with the letter “B” when it comes to China, a senior Foreign Ministry official said.

“The current dispensation does not want to discuss BRI in detail. We do not know the reason for this fear psychology among the current leadership in Kathmandu,” the official told the Post, seeking anonymity because he feared retribution. “We could have mentioned that projects under the BRI are in the consultation phase. We signed up to the BRI after national consensus so there was nothing to hide. If we try to hide such things, what kind of impression will the Chinese make about us?” Earlier in March also when Wang visited Nepal, the statement issued by the Nepali side was silent on discussions on the BRI. But the Chinese side did mention it.

Pradeep Gyawali, a former foreign minister and CPN-UML leader, said that the incumbent Deuba government has taken a negative approach to the BRI since the beginning which could jeopardise Nepal’s credibility.

“Some people in the government think the BRI is about loans and even the prime minister is guided by this psychology,” said Gyawali. “The main issue is once we select the project and start negotiations, then the funding mechanism comes.”

Yet another issue that the Chinese mentioned but the Nepali side omitted is the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI).

“Nepal agrees with the concept of the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, and is willing to actively study and participate in the connection,” reads the Chinese statement.

Nepal did not mention the issue was discussed.

On the GSI, Nepali officials, however, have long expressed their reservations.

“China is trying to push us into the GSI. Due to our stated policy that Nepal does not take part in any security or military related alliance, there is no chance of agreeing to the GSI,” said the Foreign Ministry official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. “We may listen to their ideas and concepts but we will not be part of the GSI even if Western countries become its part.

The Foreign Ministry is also planning to raise the issue with the Chinese side over Beijing constantly linking Nepal with the GSI, according to the official.

In her opinion piece published in the Post on July 6 also, Hou, the Chinese ambassador, had mentioned GSI and Nepal. “The Nepali side actively supports and responds to the Global Development and Security Initiative. China and Nepal share the same or similar views and propositions in adhering to the priority of development, the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, and the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security,” she wrote.

China has not yet released the blueprint of the GSI, so there is no clarity on what it entails and how it works.

The GDI and the GSI are two different concepts forwarded by Beijing in September 2021 and April 2022, respectively, at the Boao Forum.

“We have supported the development initiative idea at the highest political level but neither has there been any proposal or discussion about the security initiative,” said another senior Foreign Ministry

official. “We are not going to be a part of any security alliance which is our stated policy. Binoj Basnyat, a retired Nepal Army major general, said that Nepal should be extra careful about joining any kind of security or military alliance, no matter who proposes it—the West or any other country.

“As far as the GSI is concerned, we don’t know how it works,” said Basnyat. “It seems to be China’s countermeasure against the West.” Nepal recently saw a ruckus over the United States government’s State Partnership Program. Politicians across the political spectrum called on the government to reject Nepal’s participation in the SPP, saying it entails security and military components. Foreign Minister Khadka on July 29 told the House that Nepal wrote to the US on July 25 that it won’t become part of the SPP as per a June 21 government decision to that effect.

Khadka’s visit to the north took place just as US-China tensions reached a new high following the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan early this month. After Pelosi’s visit, China aggressively started seeking support to its claim over Taiwan and called for nations and organizations to support the one-China policy. Nepal’s Foreign Ministry stated that it is following the developments in the Taiwan Strait while committing to one-China policy.

“During the meeting, Foreign Minister Khadka reiterated Nepal’s unwavering commitment to the one-China policy and assured that Nepali territory will not be allowed to be used for any activity against China,” reads the statement issued by the Nepali embassy in Beijing.

But the Chinese statement said more.

“Khadka reiterated that Nepal firmly adheres to the one-China policy and will never allow the use of the Nepali territory to engage in any activities that oppose China and harm China’s interests,” said the Chinese foreign ministry statement, “[Khadka said].. this firm commitment will never waver. Nepal supports China’s legitimate position on internal affairs such as Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong.”

“The Nepali side has always maintained that the UN Charter should be upheld, and believes that no country has the right to impose its will on others. Nepal adheres to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, especially the basic principles of respecting sovereignty and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, and will continue to stand firmly with China and safeguard and practice multilateralism,” the Chinese statement added. After arriving in Kathmandu, Khadka told reporters that he assured Chinese officials that Nepali territory will not be used against China and reaffirmed Nepal’s firm commitment to the one-China policy. Another Foreign Ministry official said that both sides issued statements for the consumption of their peoples.

When there is no joint statement, then each side wants to please their respective domestic constituencies, according to the official. The statement issued by the Nepali side mentioned the opening of Hilsa-Pulang port for one way trade, claiming that it will resume as soon as the fresh wave of Covid-19 in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China is controlled. But the Chinese statement has no mention of it. The Chinese statement is also silent on the opening of Rasuwa-Kerung and Tatopani-Khasa ports for two-way trade which Nepal has been looking at since the pandemic began.

Another important matter for Nepal during the talks was to revive the existing boundary mechanisms between Nepal and China in order to settle the border row. The bilateral mechanisms have been dormant since 2006.

The Nepali side has been continuously pushing for the revival of the existing boundary mechanisms at three different levels. Both sides agreed to resume talks during the virtual talks between senior officials last month.

“Both sides agreed to form a bilateral technical committee to do necessary preparation towards the functioning of the existing mechanism of Nepal-China Joint Boundary Inspection Committee,” said the Nepali statement.

However, the Chinese side is silent on it and has not mentioned a single word on the agreement. “This was one of the crucial items on our agenda for the meeting,” one Nepali official who participated in the meeting told the Post. “However, it appears the issue was not a priority for them, and they must have refrained from mentioning it in their statement.”

Former officials who have handled several such bilateral visits said that in case both sides need to use separate statements, there is a general understanding about what to mention including what was agreed upon, what was signed, what was announced and what was discussed.

They say such different statements with crucial points missing have left them startled. Yagya Bahadur Hamal, a former ambassador who retired last year as Foreign Ministry joint secretary, said that such a huge difference in the statements by the two countries after bilateral talks is quite unlikely as there’s usually some kind of understanding between two sides on what to mention or what not to mention. “In the case of a joint statement, there’s no issue at all. But when the two sides come up with their separate statements, at least ahead of the visit or during the course of the meeting, officials from both sides do negotiate or exchange the text,” said Hamal. “Such prior communication between the two sides before releasing the statements is helpful in avoiding any misunderstanding.”

According to Hamal, the two sides issue statements to make public what they discuss, not to confuse the citizens. “Bilateral talks are meant not only to strengthen ties between the two countries but also between the peoples,” said Hamal. “Different statements create confusion.”

## **THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD 12-8-2022**

### **US values long-term ties with Pakistan: Blome**

*This year marks 75 years of bilateral relations between the United States and Pakistan, says Blome*

**By Staff Correspondent**

**KARACHI:** US Ambassador Donald Blome has said that his country shares Quaid-e-Azam’s vision of a Pakistan at

peace with itself and its neighbours, a Pakistan of religious tolerance, economic prosperity and social inclusion.

During his visit to the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Thursday, he offered Pakistan congratulations on its 75th Independence Day on behalf of the American people, and said that it was a great honour for him to be at the Mazar-e-Quaid to pay respects and commemorate his legacy.

He laid a floral wreath at the mausoleum and signed the guestbook on behalf of the US Embassy in Islamabad. Later, he visited the mausoleums of Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first Prime Minister, and Fatima Jinnah, Jinnah's sister. He toured the adjoining museum and admired the artefacts related to the life of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Blome said, "This year marks 75 years of bilateral relations between the United States and Pakistan. The United States values our long-standing cooperation with Pakistan and has always viewed a strong, prosperous, and democratic Pakistan as critical to the US interests.

We support strengthening economic ties between our two countries by expanding private sector trade and investment, which benefits both countries. Examples of our long-standing cooperation include the US donation of more than 77 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Pakistan, including 16 million paediatric vaccines recently pledged in Washington.

This contribution is part of our ongoing solidarity with the people of Pakistan as they confront this devastating pandemic and is among the largest donations from the United States to any country worldwide.

"In addition to vaccine doses, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the US government has provided nearly \$70.4 million in direct support and \$13.8 million in in-kind support to assist the Pakistani people in the fight against COVID-19. An additional \$20 million in USAID funding is also planned to support vaccination efforts in Pakistan.

"Our trade relationship with Pakistan has helped both Pakistani industries and consumers. The United States continues to be Pakistan's top single country export destination. Also, in the last fiscal year alone, US direct investment in Pakistan increased by 50 percent, and is now the highest it has been in over a decade. US agricultural exports to Pakistan have grown from \$287 million in 2014 to \$1.3 billion in 2021.

"In 2021, US firms planted more than 600,000 trees in Pakistan to combat climate change and support climate adaptation measures. In 2022, the US Mission to Pakistan collaborated with the Houston-Karachi Sister City Association to plant an additional 10,000 trees in Pakistan.

"The United States has supported the addition of more than 4,000MW of clean energy capacity in Pakistan, enough power for more than 47 million Pakistanis. US firms are already making significant investments to help Pakistan provide expanded access to a cleaner, more resilient energy supply. General Electric turbines and equipment are widely used in Pakistan, including wind-powered turbines that increase Pakistan's renewable energy generation capacity."

#### **DAWN, ISLAMABAD 12-8-2022**

### **PM Shehbaz hopes for GSP Plus status to continue beyond 2023**

**Syed Irfan Raza**

**ISLAMABAD:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday underscored the trade relationship with the European Union as he hoped that the GSP Plus scheme, a special trade and investment policy set to expire next year, would continue beyond 2023.

The premier made these remarks during a meeting with the newly-arrived envoy of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr Riina Kionka, at the Prime Minister House.

"With current GSP Plus scheme mutually beneficial, trading ties between Pakistan and EU should be enhanced. Pakistan will continue to be part of the arrangement beyond 2023," the prime minister said as per the statement issued after the meeting. He said the sustained high-level exchanges between Pakistan and the European Union were vital to further strengthen the partnership.

"Pakistan attaches high importance to its relations with the EU as well as its historically close and cooperative bilateral ties with EU member states," he added.

Recalling his recent telephone conversations with EU Council President Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the prime minister expressed confidence that the upcoming visits to Pakistan by the EU parliamentary delegations, as well as the next rounds of political and security dialogues under EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan, would pave the

way for more substantive cooperation between the two sides.

Discussing Afghanistan, PM Sharif stressed the need for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. He also highlighted the “unprecedented level of cooperation” that Pakistan had extended to the international community with regard to Afghanistan, especially since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban in August last year.

Dr Kionka expressed her resolve to work for further deepening of EU-Pakistan relations during her tenure in Islamabad.

On the occasion of National Minorities Day on Aug 11, Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the coalition government’s resolve for the betterment and welfare of minorities and their fullest inclusion in national life and development.

He said the government was committed to these obligations and “officially celebrates the 11th of August to reiterate its resolve towards the achievement of the noble objective of building an inclusive society” in line with the vision of the Quaid-i-Azam.

The PM said the government was taking steps to “mainstream minorities in the country by ensuring a level-playing field for them”.

“The idea is to enable and facilitate all segments of society, particularly our non-Muslim citizens, to take a full part in the national life,” he said in his message on the National Day of Minorities.

He mentioned other measures for the uplift of poor members of religious minorities.

#### **THE NATION, ISLAMABAD 13-8-2022**

### **Pak-Italy bilateral trade potential €4 billion: Ambassador**

#### **APP**

**ISLAMABAD** – Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese on Friday said that Italy and Pakistan have a potential of €4 billion bilateral trade and it’s perfectly doable with collective efforts of both governments and private sectors collaboration.

Talking to the Pakistan Italy Alumni Network, ambassador said this year trade had exponentially risen and can reach around €2 billion and in 2021 it was recorded to €1.52 billion. It is the first time that Pakistan’s exports surpassed €1 billion and are more than imports in Italy, making Italy the second largest export

destination in the European market. He told the alumni that to achieve the €4 billion goal both countries need to enhance investments and explore new avenues of business cooperation such as in information and renewable technologies.

Ambassador said that on August 10, during his meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, he stressed the need to further enhancing the existing potential to enhance trade and investment relations between Pakistan and Italy. The Prime Minister also showed his interest in collaborations in the renewable energy sector.

He also told the Alumni that during the last 10 years the Pakistani community in Italy had surged from 25,000 thousand to 200,000.

He further added that Pakistan and Italy had a long history of cordial relations and cooperation in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the two nations had unanimity of views on several issues of global importance, and mutual cooperation in all fields had been on the rise.

Ambassador also urged the members of alumni to play their role in further cultural cooperation and economic integration between both countries. Apart from business and trade, Italy has carried out significant projects in archaeology, agriculture, health, culture, and tourism.

Italy’s Archaeological Mission is one of the oldest present missions in Pakistan and has made significant contributions to Pakistan’s already rich archaeological sphere.

With a population of around 220 million and a constantly growing demand for high-end products, Pakistan remains an attractive market for Italian manufacturers and businesspeople, he concluded. It is worth mentioning that remittances from Pakistani workers in Italy hit an all-time high.

With the figures of \$711.7 million in FY22, Italy has become the seventh-largest center of worker remittances to Pakistan globally and the top one in the EU countries.

#### **PEOPLE’S DAILY, CHINA 5-8-2022**

### **China, Cambodia to further strengthen partnership**

**PHNOM PENH, Aug. 4 (Xinhua)** -- China and Cambodia have pledged to further advance their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and

jointly build the China-Cambodia community with a shared future.

During talks with visiting Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi here on Wednesday, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said the United States has recently violated China's sovereignty, reneged on its own promise and heightened the tension across the Taiwan Strait, which exposed Washington's failure to match its words with actions as well as its hegemonic nature.

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, he said. Cambodia firmly adheres to the one-China policy and backs China's justified position on its internal affairs including Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet.

Cambodia supports China in safeguarding its legitimate rights and interests, and in responding resolutely to U.S. provocative actions, Sokhonn said.

He noted that the Cambodian and Chinese leaders have maintained close communication, which has injected great vitality into bilateral relations.

Sokhonn expressed gratitude to China for its long-time firm support for Cambodia in pursuing a development path suited to its own national condition, and in facilitating economic construction and improving people's livelihood.

Cambodia is ready to cement its "ironclad" friendship with China and push for ever more achievements from their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, he added.

For his part, Wang appreciated Cambodia's upholding of justice, stressing that the rights and wrongs concerning the current intense situation across the Taiwan Strait is crystal clear that it is the U.S. side that infringed on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and it is also the U.S. side that sabotaged the stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Many countries have made clear their adherence to the one-China principle and their support for China's legitimate position, Wang said, adding that it is the inherent requirement of the China-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership to support each other in safeguarding their core interests.

China is willing to work with ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries to safeguard the most basic norm of international relations -- non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign states -- to defend

international fairness and justice, and to protect the hard-won regional peace, stability and development, he said.

Facing the turbulent international situation, it is of great significance for China and Cambodia to strengthen solidarity and coordination, Wang said, noting that the more complicated the outside environment has become, the more resolute the two countries must be to do their own business well and to develop China-Cambodia friendship.

He said China supports Cambodia in safeguarding its sovereign independence and national dignity, and is willing to take as an opportunity the new action plan on building the China-Cambodia community with a shared future and the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations next year, to carry forward the traditional friendship forged by the older generation of leaders of the two countries, and promote the building of the community with a shared future, so as to create a new future for bilateral friendship.

The two sides exchanged views on strengthening coordination over regional affairs. Wang said China supports Cambodia in fulfilling its responsibility as the rotating ASEAN chair for 2022 and holding meetings of foreign ministers on East Asia cooperation.

China is ready to join hands with the ASEAN nations, including Cambodia, to better implement the consensus reached at the ASEAN-China special summit commemorating the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China dialogue relations in November last year and work together to reach an agreement on the action plan on the ASEAN-China comprehensive strategic partnership as soon as possible, so as to add fresh strong impetus to the two sides' cooperation in various fields, Wang said.

Wang and Sokhonn also exchanged views on the Myanmar issue.

## **PEOPLE'S DAILY, CHINA 5-8-2022**

### **Chinese, Turkish FMs meet for enhancing cooperation**

**PHNOM PENH, Aug. 4 (Xinhua)** -- Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Türkiye's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu here Wednesday on the sidelines of meetings of foreign ministers on East Asia cooperation, vowing to promote cooperation between the two countries.



Wang said China and Türkiye are both representatives of emerging economies, having closely-intertwined interests and similar positions.

China is willing to work with Türkiye, in accordance with the guidelines set by the two countries' heads of state, to enhance mutual trust and cooperation, support each other in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, deepen the synergy of development strategies, and promote the healthy and stable development of strategic cooperative relations between the two countries, Wang said.

He said that in the face of the current international landscape featuring a sharp increase in instability, uncertainty and disturbance, major countries should have taken the lead in abiding by the United Nations Charter, in upholding basic norms governing international relations, and in advocating and practicing multilateralism.

However, Wang noted, the United States is doing the opposite, blatantly challenging China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and disrupting the peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Noting that the international community has unanimously condemned the dangerous and foolish acts of the United States, Wang said that China, together with every party, is willing to abide by the basic norm governing international relations of respecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to safeguard regional and global peace and stability.

Cavusoglu said his country firmly adheres to the one-China policy not only on the Taiwan question but also on issues concerning Xinjiang, adding that the Turkish side was glad to see United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet visit Xinjiang, and hopes to keep contact with China over affairs related to the visit to Xinjiang by a Turkish delegation, he said.

Türkiye upholds multilateralism and opposes unilateral sanctions, said Cavusoglu, adding that amid the serious challenges induced by the Ukraine crisis to global economic recovery, Türkiye is willing to reinforce its solidarity with China and jointly cope with food security and other difficult situations.

Cavusoglu said the Turkish side attaches great importance to the in-depth synergy between its Middle Corridor initiative and the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, and hopes to push for a more balanced bilateral economic and trade relationship, welcome more Chinese

enterprises to invest and start businesses in Türkiye, and see more frequent direct flights between the two countries.

Wang said the Chinese side appreciates Türkiye's active part in mediating the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and supports Türkiye in playing a constructive role in securing a soft landing of the Ukraine crisis.

This year has seen China overcoming difficulties to provide over 30,000 tons of emergency humanitarian food aid to developing countries in utmost need, Wang said, adding that China, who proposed a cooperation initiative on global food security at the Group of 20 foreign ministers' meeting, will maintain a constructive role in tackling global food security challenges.

Noting that Xinjiang affairs are part of China's internal affairs, Wang said China has always taken an attitude of being open and transparent on issues related to Xinjiang, and expects to welcome the arrival of the Turkish delegation.

#### **PEOPLE'S DAILY, CHINA 7-8-2022**

#### **Chinese, Iranian FM's discuss bilateral ties, Taiwan question over phone**

**PHNOM PENH, Aug. 6 (Xinhua)** -- Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Saturday held a phone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

Noting that the presidents of the two countries spoke on the phone just a few days ago, Amir-Abdollahian said the Iranian side is willing to earnestly implement the important consensus of the two heads of state, maintain high-level exchanges, and advance the comprehensive cooperation plan between the two countries to achieve new results in bilateral relations.

The Iranian foreign minister stressed that his country firmly adheres to the one-China policy and strongly condemns the U.S. senseless moves over the Taiwan question.

The one-China principle is a prerequisite for ensuring regional peace and security, and the historical context and legal facts of the Taiwan question are crystal clear, said Amir-Abdollahian, adding that he himself and the Iranian foreign ministry have made their stance open and clear that Iran will continue to firmly support China's legitimate position.

Wang said the phone conversation between the two heads of state not long ago provided important strategic guidance for the next-stage development of relations between the two countries, adding that China is willing to work with the Iranian side to deliver more solid outcomes of the comprehensive cooperation plan between the two countries.

Wang said China highly appreciates that Iran promptly voiced its support for China on the Taiwan question and reaffirmed its adherence to the one-China principle as well as to the implementation of one-China policy, which fully reflects the high level of the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership.

In like manner, China stands firm in supporting Iran in safeguarding national sovereignty, as well as dignity, legitimate rights and interests of its nation, and opposes any hegemonic acts of bully that interfere in Iran's internal affairs, Wang said.

Wang stressed that the visit by the speaker of the U.S. house of representatives to China's Taiwan region violated China's sovereignty, and the international community has said "no" to such a bullying act.

To the surprise of the U.S. side, more than 160 countries have in recent days voiced support for China's legitimate position in different ways, Wang said.

This further consolidates and strengthens the consensus of the international community on the one-China principle, forming the voice of justice of all countries that opposes interference in internal affairs and safeguards sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Wang noted that China is ready to work with the Iranian side to safeguard their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, and join hands to oppose unilateralism and bullying practices and to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries. Amir-Abdollahian expressed his full support for that.

The Iranian foreign minister gave an update on the progress in negotiations of resuming compliance with the Iranian nuclear deal, vowing to strive for a powerful and stable agreement.

Wang said that the Iranian nuclear issue has once again come to a critical point, and that China appreciates Iran's

sincerity in pushing for the resumption of the talks in Vienna, which serves the interests of the Iranian side and meets the expectations of the international community.

China welcomes Iran's continued positive gestures, supports Tehran's legitimate demands, and will continue to play a constructive role in its own way, Wang said, adding that China is willing to maintain communication with the Iranian side.

### **GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA 6-8-2022**

## **'US should bear responsibility' for four times of grounding of China-US military ties over Taiwan question**

**By Guo Yuandan**

China on Friday announced eight countermeasures in response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's highly provocative visit to the island of Taiwan, among which three concern China-US military ties. China canceled China-US theater commander talks, defense policy coordination talks and military maritime security consultative mechanism.

Taking the latest countermeasures into account, China-US military ties have hit rock bottom over the Taiwan question for at least four times since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two sides.

Experts said that the US should be blamed for the suspension of basically all channels for the two militaries to communicate. On one hand, the US vowed to raise guardrails for bilateral ties and avoid military confrontations, while on the other, the country continued to infringe China's core interests.

The relationship between the Chinese and US militaries is an important part of bilateral ties. In the context of the current China-US relationship, the stability of the relationship between the two militaries is the "brake pad" that prevents the bilateral relationship from getting out of control. The negative impact of Pelosi's visit to the Taiwan island on the exchanges between the two militaries of China and the US is obvious, and it will also affect future relations between the two countries and their militaries, experts said.

On June 10, Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met for the first time in Singapore. On June 30, at a routine press conference of the Ministry of National Defense, Tan Kefei, deputy director of the Ministry of National Defense Information Bureau and spokesperson of the Ministry of National Defense, said that "the China-US military relationship is now at an important juncture, and going forward, the two militaries will carry out a series of dialogues and exchanges."

On July 7, General Li Zuocheng, a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and chief of staff of the CMC Joint Staff Department, held video talks at the invitation of General Mark Milley, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

However, along with Pelosi's visit, the China-US military ties have declined steeply and scheduled talks have been canceled.

Looking back at the history of China-US military relations, including this incident, due to the influence of the Taiwan question, the relationship between the two militaries has been damaged and fallen to a low point for at least four times.

In 1995-96, then Taiwan island leader Lee Teng-hui visited the US, leading to increasing tense in China-US military ties. China successively conducted two large-scale live missile launch exercises at that time; in October 2008, the US sold advanced weapons worth more than \$6 billion to Taiwan island; in January 2010, the US again sold weapons with a total value of nearly \$6.4 billion to the island.

Tian Shichen, founder of the Global Governance Institution and director of the International Center for the Law of Military Operations, told the Global Times that the Taiwan question concerns China's core interests and its essence is to safeguard China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The military dialogue mechanism between China and the US includes dialogue between senior-level military commanders. This is the first time that the dialogue mechanism of China-US Theater Commanders Talk goes public.

China-US Defense Policy Coordination Talks and China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement meetings are the communication channels in the China-US military relations, which are relatively long-term, stable and the most important dialogue channels, a military expert told the Global Times on Friday. The negative impact on China-US military relations is obvious following the cancellation of these two mechanisms, the expert said.

"Communication between the two militaries has improved a little recently, but it is now declining sharply," said the expert.

Zhou Bo, a researcher at the Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University echoed the opinion. Zhou told the Global Times on Friday that with the declining of China-US relations in recent years, the military relations between the two sides will inevitably be negatively affected.

The two above-mentioned dialogue mechanisms have played a vital role in military communication between the two sides. However, with the cancellation of the two, communication at the working level between the US and Chinese militaries will come to a standstill, said Zhou.

Tian has been involved in the negotiations of the China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement for a long time. Tian said that the communication mechanism was interrupted twice by the NATO bombing of the former Chinese embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the China-US plane collision incident in 2001. "At present, almost all the channels of mechanism communication between the Chinese and US militaries are interrupted, increasing the possibility of misunderstanding and unexpected incidents, all of which are the responsibility of the US."

Another expert told the Global Times that the US has been unilaterally seeking to add a so-called "guardrail" to prevent a military conflict between the two sides, but on the other hand, the US has been constantly provoking and violating China's core interests. "China's actions are a warning to the US that those who play with fire will eventually get burned."

Experts believe that given the US military action on China's doorstep, along with the disruption of military-to-military communication channels between China and the

US, there is no doubt that a possibility of a misfire will increase.

But they agreed that although the China-US military ties hit rock bottom, it does not mean the two militaries canceled all communication channels. The hotline between the two defense ministries still works and emergency talks can still be conducted.

### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 6-8-2022**

#### **Iran urges US to use Vienna talks as opportunity to return to JCPOA**

**TEHRAN** - Asadollah Eshragh Jahromi, Director General for the International Peace and Security at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, on Thursday urged the U.S. to use the opportunity of the talks resumed in Vienna to return to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The negotiations to resurrect the JCPOA were resumed in Vienna on Thursday. So far, Iran's lead nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani has held talks with European Union coordinator for the nuclear talks Enrique Mora, Russian nuclear negotiator Mikhail Ulyanov and Chinese negotiators, IRNA reported.

"Indeed, the ongoing talks in Vienna provide the United States with an ample opportunity to demonstrate its seriousness to return to its obligations under the JCPOA," Eshragh Jahromi told the NPT review conference in New York

Following is the text of the Eshraqh Jahromi's remarks at the conference posted on IRNA website:

"Together with the overwhelming majority of the international community, we believe that while the US, the UK, and France are actively involved in strengthening and modernizing their nuclear arsenals which pose an existential threat to humanity per se, while Germany as a non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT is hosting numerous nuclear weapons on its territory in contravention to its NPT obligations, and while they all turn a blind eye to the threat of the clandestine military nuclear program and arsenal of the Israeli regime and extend unqualified support to this regime, they have no

moral ground to give those hypocritical statements on Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

I would like to exercise my delegation's right of reply against the unfounded accusations and unacceptable statements made by the representatives of the United States, the UK, France, Germany and some others on the JCPOA and Iran's peaceful nuclear program, whereas the NPT recognizes the inalienable right of its state parties to enjoy peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Like all other parties to the NPT, Iran has an unquestionable right to benefit from its membership.

In fact, besides double standards and unfaithful approaches while pretending to have a passionate agenda, what could cause grave concerns in the international community is their non-compliance with their legally binding obligations.

I should underscore that JCPOA is a comprehensive plan of action meticulously negotiated and concluded between Iran and E3/Eu+3 as a final solution for the unnecessary and artificial crisis created over Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Its unanimous endorsement as an inseparable part of UNSC Resolution 2231 is a multi-party agreement based on reciprocity.

Just to remind that the uncontested reality is that Iran has so far adhered to the JCPOA terms while US and E3 have failed to meet their JCPOA obligations. By all accounts, after the US withdrew from JCPOA in May 2018 and reinstated the sanctions that were supposed to be lifted, and even imposed further new ones, Iran remained in full compliance with its commitments. In response to the restoration of US sanctions, Iran had to take certain remedial measures, time and again, consistent with the provisions of the JCPOA, including paragraphs 26 and 36 that allow Iran to do so.

I should underline our steadfast optimism that Iran will fully implement the JCPOA if the other JCPOA participants keep their end of the bargain.

It is regrettable that the current US Administration while having criticized Trump for his maximum pressure policy against Iran, in practice, has continued to enforce those sanctions and has even added more sanctions against us. It is a matter of further regret that the European participants of the JCPOA have not only failed to honor

their obligations but also have started to side with the US that has violated its JCPOA obligations.

The above-said representatives must realize that neither the gambit of using sanctions to leverage further Iranian concessions nor adopting a creditor approach will be effective against Iran.

It has been the responsibility of the US and the other participants in the JCPOA to ensure that Iran benefits from the advantages of its implementation and that the deal does not collapse due to the US's unacceptable behavior.

Indeed, the ongoing talks in Vienna provide the United States with an ample opportunity to demonstrate its seriousness to return to its obligations under the JCPOA.

On another note, despite all challenges, Iran has continued its constructive cooperation and technical engagement with the IAEA. Despite all rhetoric and allegations against Iran, we are fulfilling our Safeguard Agreement with the IAEA as the mere instrument that legally applies to Iran's nuclear program.

#### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 10-8-2022**

### **Why EU rushed to unveil 'final text' in Vienna**

**TEHRAN** – After four days of intensive talks, the negotiators of Iran, the U.S., and the P4+1 group of countries headed to their capitals for consultations on a contested text presented by the coordinator of the talks.

On Monday, the Iranian negotiating team returned to Tehran after concluding intensive talks on a set of thorny issues that have long awaited a U.S. political decision. During the talks, Iran presented its views and relative progress was made regarding some issues, according to a senior Iranian foreign ministry official.

On the last day of negotiations, Enrique Mora, the EU coordinator for the talks, presented some ideas to all parties. Iran offered its preliminary response and said the final response was only possible after a thorough review of the ideas. "Such issues need to be studied thoroughly and we will give our final response to the coordinator of the Vienna talks and other sides," the Iranian official said.

While there were still outstanding issues, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell announced the end of

negotiations, a move that raised eyebrows in Tehran and elsewhere.

"What can be negotiated has been negotiated, and it's now in a final text. However, behind every technical issue and every paragraph lies a political decision that needs to be taken in the capitals," Borrell said on Twitter on Monday.

He added, "If these answers are positive, then we can sign this deal."

Borrell didn't mention Iran by name but Western media, citing diplomatic sources, reinforced Borrell's narrative that the text presented by the EU was not renegotiable and that Iran had to accept it. This is while Iran had told its negotiating partners that it needs to study the text thoroughly. In other words, Iran does not believe what has been presented by the EU is a final text.

Nour News, a website close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, took a jab at the EU for portraying its "proposals" as a "final text."

"The European Union, as the coordinator for the talks, cannot introduce its proposals as a 'final text' because making decisions in this regard is only in the hands of the negotiating parties," Nour News said, noting that the Islamic Republic of Iran does not recognize the existing text as a final one.

It added, "No other official can speak of a final text when the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a major party to the negotiations, does not recognize the existing text as the final deal."

By speaking about the finalization of the draft deal, the West seeks to create a narrative that the draft deal is not negotiable and that the two sides should give their final response, according to Nour News.

The website said this approach is unacceptable and totally contradicts the principles of negotiations.

Pundits believe Borrell's presentation of the final text could aim to put pressure on Iran to agree to what has been negotiated so far. The U.S. quick approval of Borrell's text has led some pundits to believe that the text was already coordinated with the U.S.

The EU text is also controversial from another point of view. Nour News said Borrell's text was an "effort to create a special status and role" for the European Union in the Vienna talks, one that "has never been approved by

the two sides of the negotiations.” In other words, the sole role of the EU is to coordinate the talks, not to present proposals.

It seems that the EU has sought to fill the vacuum left by the absence of the E3 negotiators in the recent round of talks.

### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 13-8-2022**

#### **EU gamble in Vienna could jeopardize talks**

**TEHRAN** – While Iran has just started reviewing the proposals put forth by the European Union in the Vienna talks, Western diplomatic circles doubled down on their propaganda and even set deadlines for Iran to provide a response to the proposals.

The talks in Vienna over reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have taken a new turn on Monday when the EU coordinator for the talks, in a maverick move, announced the end of negotiations.

While negotiators were in the process of returning to capitals for further consultations on the EU proposals, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the negotiations have come to an end and that his proposals are a “final text” on which Iran should give a clear-cut answer.

“What can be negotiated has been negotiated, and it’s now in a final text. However, behind every technical issue and every paragraph lies a political decision that needs to be taken in the capitals,” Borrell said on Twitter on Monday.

He added, “If these answers are positive, then we can sign this deal.”

Borrell’s tweet was met with suspicion in Tehran and beyond as the EU text should not have been portrayed as a final text. Pundits believe that the EU has gone further than his role as coordinator.

Iran made it clear that the text presented by Borrell was “proposals”, not a final text. However, Iran started reviewing the EU proposals. Nour News, a website close to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, says Iran has begun studying the EU text at the expert level.

While Iran was busy studying the text, Western media went so far as to set a deadline for Iran. The Wall Street

Journal has said that the West expects Iran to give an answer by August 15, a move that could further complicate the situation.

On Friday, an Iranian diplomat told Iran’s state news agency IRNA that Iran is weighing the European Union’s proposals on the three thorny issues currently under discussion in Vienna: Safeguards, sanctions, and assurances.

The diplomat said Iran would accept the European proposals only if they provided assurances to Iran in the forgoing issues, including the political allegations linked to the safeguards, sanctions, and guarantees.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is reviewing the received proposals to make sure that its demands are met,” the diplomat said.

The remarks came after the Wall Street Journal reported that the European Union has presented proposals in relation to the safeguards. But the Iranian diplomat said the EU proposals should provide assurances to Iran and encompass all the issues under discussion in Vienna.

Whether Iran would agree with the proposals remains to be seen. But the kerfuffle over the EU proposals could put the talks in danger. Because Iran seems to have some reservations over the EU ideas and, therefore, they could need to be discussed in Vienna.

This may be why some Vienna partners were cautious in dealing with the EU gamble. Russia, for instance, said that the EU was not in a position to determine whether Iran should accept or reject the current text in the talks.

“The Russian #MFA: according to the #EU spokesman the participants in the #ViennaTalks face a choice- either to accept the current text or to recognize that the talks failed. The Joint Commission of the #JCPOA didn’t authorize the EU Coordinator to make statements like that,” Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s Permanent Representative to the Vienna-based International Organizations, said on Twitter on Thursday.

Some believe that the EU should stick to its coordinative role and refrain from setting deadlines that would complicate the situation.

## **II - POLITICS AND ECONOMICS**





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**THE STATESMAN, NEW DELHI 3-8-2022****Government calls inflation a global phenomenon, beyond its control**

*Refuting the government's claim, the Opposition contended that rising prices of essential commodities coupled with imposition of GST on pre-packed food items and unemployment is affecting the poor badly. On top of it, rupee appreciation has put pressure on the economy.*

**Anjali Bhatia | New Delhi**

The government was urged by the Opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday to accept the rising inflation issue that is harming India's poor in order to address it, but the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) argued that it is a global development beyond the control of any nation.

BJP leader Prakash Javadekar said price rise hurts everyone and the Narendra Modi-led Central government is constantly working to check it. Inflation is ruling at 7% now and not yet reached the double-digit level like in the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime, he said.

He further said that due to the coronavirus and Russia-Ukraine crisis, the supply chain was hit, pushing up the fuel and food prices globally. "This is beyond the control of any country. Not only India, prices have risen in other countries too," he said.

However, the burden of high fuel prices on common man could have been reduced had the non-BJP states cut the value added tax (VAT), he said, adding that the Centre had reduced the taxes on petrol and diesel twice and it was followed by BJP-ruled states.

Accusing the Opposition of doublespeak on Goods and Services Tax (GST), the former Union minister said the Opposition had "unanimously" agreed for 5 per cent GST on pre-packed food items in the GST Council Meeting, but when talking to media outside, the same tax became "Gabbar tax". For undertaking developmental work, he said funds are required.

"Money does not come by printing but by generating income," he said.

On rupee depreciation, Javadekar said the Indian rupee has appreciated in comparison with other currencies. "It is a problem in other countries. We are faring better than other currencies," he said.

Initiating the discussion, CPI(M)'s Elamaram Kareem said there has been a constant increase in prices of essential commodities in the last eight years of Modi government.

Despite record foodgrains, it is tragic testimony that farmers are fighting to get better prices and consumers are weighed down by high prices, he said, adding that the government should have distributed the surplus stock to the poor through the public distribution system (PDS).

Imposition of GST on pre-packed food items has further put burden on the poor. The government should tax the rich not the poor, he said and added there was no unanimous decision in the GST Council on this issue.

"Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had made an arbitrary statement and should withdraw it," Kareem added. Sitharaman had said that hiked GST rates would hurt the poor.

Refuting Javadekar's claims, TMC leader Derek O'Brien said rising prices of essential commodities coupled with imposition of GST on pre-packed food items, which was not agreed by Opposition in the GST Council, and unemployment is affecting the poor badly. On top of it, rupee appreciation has put pressure on the economy, he said.

"We appeal to the government as a constructive Opposition, first, you have to acknowledge the problem. If you do not acknowledge the problem, how will you fix the problem?" he said.

Brien further said the cess and surcharge has been increased to 20 per cent from 10 per cent 10 years ago. Two-third of it is collected by the Centre, thereby reducing the states' share.

"About 29% of youth are jobless in India. Subsidy on cooking gas has come down, but not the retail prices," he said and sought the finance minister to respond to these issues.

Echoing similar views, Congress leader Shaktisinh Gohil said, "People are fed up. In a democracy, the government should listen to the Opposition. But today it is not so."

Prices of vegetables to fuel have risen sharply and people are committing suicide due to unemployment, he added.

**THE STATESMAN, NEW DELHI 11-8-2022**

**No-confidence motion against the BJP Govt in Himachal**

*Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar accepted the Opposition Congress' trust move against the council of ministers.*

*The motion was moved in the House by 22 members of Congress and a lone CPI (M) member accusing the state government of failure on all fronts.*

**Statesman News Service | Shimla**

Twenty-three members of the Himachal Assembly, on Wednesday, moved a No-Confidence Motion against the Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur-led BJP government in the state on the first day of the monsoon session after obituary references.

Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar accepted the Opposition Congress' trust move against the council of ministers. The motion was moved in the House by 22 members of Congress and a lone CPI (M) member accusing the state government of failure on all fronts.

After a heated exchange between members of the Opposition and treasury benches including Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, the Speaker accepted the notice moved by the Congress and the CPI (M) under rule 278.

Allowing the members to participate in the discussion on 'No Confidence Motion', the speaker announced that the entire business schedule for Thursday stands suspended.

"The House would assemble at 11 am tomorrow and discussion on the No Confidence Motion would be held till 3.00 pm, after which the Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur will give reply on the motion," said Parmar.

He urged the members of both the ruling and Opposition parties to submit names to him so that he could allow them to speak in the House.

Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihorti and other members of the Congress hailed the speaker's decision to accept their motion. They demanded that all the 23 members be given time to speak on the motion moved by them.

Congress members Ram Lal Thakur and Asha Kumari also urged the speaker to give adequate time so that all the 23 members and the members of the ruling BJP be allowed to partake in the discussion.

Reacting to the development, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said, "Our government is not shying away from the motion, it is ready to discuss it. Our government is in majority and strong."

He accused the Opposition Congress of having four working presidents. With a divided house they have no single leader to lead the party, he alleged.

He blamed the Opposition for disrupting the smooth functioning of the House.

Amid war of words, the Opposition, after the obituary references, stalled the business of the House and insisted on allowing the trust motion under Rule 278.

The speaker had to adjourn the House for 15 minutes and as the House assembled again, the Speaker acceded to the demand of the Opposition as it fulfilled the required number of head count of one-third of the House.

**THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 11-8-2022**

**India-Canada talks on Early Progress Trade Agreement speed up**

*The 14-member team from India, lead by Rachna Shah, additional secretary in the commerce ministry, is interfacing with counterparts from Global Affairs Canada, the country's foreign ministry, lead by Jay Allen, director-general – trade negotiations.*

**By Anirudh Bhattacharyya, Toronto**

Negotiations between India and Canada to secure an Early Progress Trade Agreement, or EPTA, have accelerated with a delegation from New Delhi in Ottawa for discussions through this week, according to people aware of the matter.

The 14-member team from India, lead by Rachna Shah, additional secretary in the commerce ministry, is interfacing with counterparts from Global Affairs Canada, the country's foreign ministry, lead by Jay Allen, director-general – trade negotiations.

A senior Indian official associated with the discussions told Hindustan Times that there is optimism over securing a "workable text" for the agreement by October this year. Pointing to the momentum, the official underlined the fact this is already the third round of discussions on EPTA.

India has been discussing key trade agreements with several countries and blocs, including the UK and EU, with the focus on digital trade, data protection, and sustainable development. New Delhi has already forged pacts with the United Arab Emirates and Australia with an aim to boost bilateral trade and investment.

India and Canada decided to consider the interim agreement when Canadian minister of international trade,

export promotion, small business and economic development, Marg Ng, visited New Delhi in March and held a ministerial dialogue on trade and investment with commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on March 11. EPTA, if concluded, will be a transitional step towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, or CEPA.

The governments have decided on the “two-tier” approach and “bank the low-hanging fruit” of the areas of close convergence under EPTA before progressing to the more complex CEPA.

According to the Canadian government data for 2020, the country’s imports from India were pegged at CA\$ 4.97 billion while its exports stood at CA\$ 3.71 billion. Major trade between the two sides covered exports of metal ores, non-metallic products and energy products from Canada, and imports of textiles and consumer goods from India. The country’s stated trade goal is to cross the CA\$ 10-billion mark.

The Indian delegation arrived in Ottawa on Sunday, negotiations commenced on Monday, and discussions on EPTA are scheduled to continue till the end of the week, the people cited in the first instance said.

There is also broader support for the deal, including from Canada’s finance ministry — headed by deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland — which wants the country to be far more economically engaged in the Indo-Pacific.

Unlike the previous series of negotiations over CEPA, 11 rounds in all, which finally didn’t bear fruit, this time around, the Indian official cited above said, both sides have “established a greater degree of understanding of sensitivities” of the other.

EPTA is being looked upon as the “first deliverable” towards strengthening the economic and trade relationship between the two countries, the official added.

Corporate groups in Canada have also sought progress on the matter in recent days.

Last week, a report from the Business Council of Canada and the Canada-India Business Council noted, “India represents a vital door to the future in global trade.” The two major groups called for an India-specific strategy and said that “will be an important first step in enhancing the relationship, but Canada should not stop there. A comprehensive trade and investment agreement that reduces tariffs and other barriers, increases labour mobility and improves investor confidence would generate significant economic gains for both countries.”

“Global markets are experiencing volatility on many fronts. It is a wonderful opportunity for India and Canada to diversify and actively seek out more trading opportunities together,” said Victor Thomas, president and CEO of Canada-India Business Council.

## **THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 12-8-2022**

### **India, UK push to finalise free trade pact by Diwali**

*The UK is expected to have a new prime minister next month, giving enough time for the deal to be cleared on the British side.*

**By Rezaul H Laskar and Rajeev Jayaswal, New Delhi**

India and the UK are intent on sticking to a Diwali deadline for finalising a comprehensive free trade agreement (FTA) amid the ongoing political developments in Britain, people familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

Despite some questions raised by the leadership race in Britain’s ruling Conservative Party, the people made it clear both sides aim to have a deal stitched up and ready for signing by the leadership of the two countries by the last week of October. The UK is expected to have a new prime minister next month, giving enough time for the deal to be cleared on the British side.

“The two partners are targeting to conclude negotiations by the end of August or early September. After approvals of the respective governments, the agreement on most of tariff lines will be ready to be signed,” an Indian official said, declining to be named.

“Both the UK and India have been clear that we are working towards a comprehensive free trade agreement – neither nation is considering an interim agreement,” a person familiar with the negotiations said on condition of anonymity.

India’s commerce ministry did not respond to a query on the matter.

A spokesperson for the British high commission said: “We are making good progress toward our shared target to conclude the majority of talks on a comprehensive deal by Diwali. We remain clear that we won’t sacrifice quality for speed and will only sign a deal which delivers for the UK.”

An FTA with India “offers the opportunity to deepen our already strong relationship, which was worth £24.3 billion in 2021”, the spokesperson said.

The Indian official cited above said: “The political developments in the UK are unlikely to derail the talks.” On July 21, commerce secretary BVR Subrahmanyam said that irrespective of the party in power in the UK, the “logic of an FTA with India is irreversible”.

Both Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss, the two Conservative Party leaders in the final race to replace Prime Minister Boris Johnson, are seen as supportive of the FTA and enhanced trade ties with India.

On the Indian side, the focus has been on ensuring a better deal for the mobility of professionals and students, and boosting exports in labour-intensive sectors such as leather, textiles, jewellery, processed agricultural products, marine products, pharmaceuticals and healthcare.

One of the priorities for the British side has been to slash significant barriers UK businesses face in exporting to India. Greater access to India’s market, especially as India’s middle class grows to a quarter of a billion consumers, will be seen as a major boost for UK firms. The UK is also looking at tariff cuts for whisky and cars and greater access for digital and legal services.

“We are working hard to continue the pace of negotiations, having begun to see a landing zone for a comprehensive FTA that respects the sensitivities and domestic processes of both sides,” the person cited above said.

Both countries had come to the negotiating table with readiness to work pragmatically on a “realistic deal”, the people said.

However, the people didn’t rule out the slim possibility of the two sides having to go in for a two-stage deal in the event of some items requiring larger political consensus. While there is agreement on a majority of tariff lines, a few items may require such political consensus, they said.

India and the UK concluded the fifth round of talks for the FTA on July 29. Experts from both sides held detailed draft treaty text discussions in 85 sessions covering 15 policy areas. Officials will continue working throughout the summer towards the target of concluding the majority of talks on a comprehensive FTA by the end of October,” a joint statement said.

Following Britain’s exit from the European Union (EU), the UK has been keen on quickly concluding trade deals with major economies such as India. The UK has concluded deals with 69 countries and one with the EU. India has speedily finalised trade deals this year with

Australia and the United Arab Emirates and is in talks with the EU, Canada and other nations.

## **THE DAILY STAR, DHAKA 2-8-2022**

### **Rise in remittance, dip in imports**

*Some breathing space for now*

**AKM ZAMIR UDDIN**

The country’s economy has got a welcome respite from the ongoing volatility, thanks to a rise in remittance inflow and decrease in imports last month.

Imports in July fell by 31 percent to \$5.50 billion from \$7.96 billion a month ago while remittance went up by 14 percent to \$2.09 billion from \$1.83 billion, shows Bangladesh Bank data.

Economists say the volatility in the financial sector may ease within the next few months as import payments are likely to decline further with the prices of some commodities falling in the global market.

There is, however, no room for complacency as the global economy is yet to get into a better shape. The government and the central bank should continue to monitor the foreign currency market, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Md Serajul Islam, spokesperson for the BB, said rising remittance and falling imports will help shore up the foreign exchange reserves.

The central bank recently took a set of measures to reduce import payments, and the move is paying off, he said.

Banks were asked to take up to 100 percent advance payments from businesses for opening letters of credit (LCs) to import luxury and non-essential items.

Moreover, the BB also instructed banks to provide it with information on LCs worth above \$3 million, a measure that helped squeeze import payments.

The directives came as the country’s import payments kept rising for several months since the end of last year.

The import payments stood at \$82.49 billion in FY22, up 36 percent in FY 21, while remittance fell 15 percent to \$21.03 billion in FY22.

Salehuddin Ahmed, a former BB governor, said that rising remittance and decreasing imports would help protect the foreign exchange reserves, but the BB should keep monitoring the forex market.

The country's forex reserves stood at \$39.48 billion on July 28 this year, compared to \$46.15 billion on December 30 last year.

"We do not know what will happen in the global economy in the days to come. We should consider the latest development as a short-term phenomenon," Salehuddin said.

The BB should take more steps to reduce money supply to the market to tackle both inflation and imports, he noted.

He also hoped that export earnings might increase in the coming days.

Export earnings stood at \$49.26 billion in FY22, up 33.45 percent year-on-year.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said that falling prices of some commodities in the international market would help Bangladesh manage its volatility in the financial sector.

For instance, wheat price in the global market was \$459 per tonne in June compared to \$522 in May, while Soybean oil price dropped to \$1,752 from \$1,963 a tonne, according to World Bank data.

He, however, said import payments are unlikely to fall substantially as the current price of petroleum may remain high.

Though Europe and North America may face recession due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, the Chinese economy is rebounding from the slowdown triggered by the Covid pandemic, he pointed out.

Against this backdrop, the demand for oil may rise in the Asian market, he said.

Ahsan suggested that the central bank reduce its supply of dollars to banks to protect its reserves from further depletion.

The BB had supplied a record \$7.62 billion to banks last fiscal year.

Ahsan thinks inflation will not come down soon due to the depreciation of the taka against the dollar.

The inter-bank exchange rate of the dollar was Tk 94.70 yesterday, up 11.67 percent year-on-year.

Depreciation of the taka means consumers have to pay more to buy goods. Inflation in the country hit a nine-year high of 7.56 percent in June.

"Withdrawal of the interest cap of 9 percent on loans will help tackle the situation," he said, adding that such a step

will help contain inflation by reducing the supply of money to the market.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said, "There is no scope for becoming complacent following the latest development in the global market."

If necessary, import restrictions will have to be widened to ease pressure on the economy, he added.

## **THE DAILY STAR, DHAKA 3-8-2022**

### **Trade with neighbors to soar come 2029**

**Rejaul Karim Byron**

Bangladesh's regional trade can increase by a staggering 93 percent thanks to the \$1.4 billion project the World Bank has set in motion to accelerate trade and transport connectivity in Eastern South Asia -- a development that can cushion the country from the anticipated export losses from LDC graduation.

The phasing-out of preferential market access in key markets upon graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2026 could lead to an annual reduction in exports by as much as 11 percent (approximately \$6 billion).

This can be offset by trade with Bhutan, India and Nepal, said the Washington-based multilateral lender in its project document. In fiscal 2021-22, exports to the three South Asian countries accounted for about 4.1 percent of total receipts of \$52.1 billion, according to data from the Export Promotion Bureau.

In South Asia, regional trade is about 5 percent of total trade, which compares poorly with East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where regional trade accounts for 50 percent and 22 percent of total trade respectively, according to the WB.

And the reason for low regional trade is the high cost of connectivity.

Several countries in the region trade on better terms with distant economies than with their neighbours, according to the WB.

For instance, it is about 15–20 percent less expensive for a company in India to trade with a company in Brazil or Germany than with a company in Bangladesh, found the WB's 2021 Connecting to Thrive report.

Were there a free trade agreement between the two neighbours, Bangladesh's exports to India could increase by 182 percent from the current levels and India's exports

to Bangladesh by 126 percent, according to the WB's estimates.

And improving transport connectivity between the two countries, which share a 4,100-kilometre border, could increase exports even further, yielding a 297 percent increase in Bangladesh's exports to India and a 172 percent increase in India's exports to Bangladesh.

Last fiscal year, Bangladesh's exports to India stood at \$1.99 billion, up 55.6 percent year-on-year.

The unexploited potential for regional trade is estimated at 93 percent for Bangladesh, 9 percent for Bhutan, 50 percent for India and 76 percent for Nepal.

With the view to increasing the efficiency and resilience of trade and transport along selected corridors in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, the WB has taken up the project involving \$1.4 billion initially.

India will be brought on board in phase 2 of the programme; the financing amount would be decided as per the country's needs. Bhutan will be given \$100 million in phase 2.

"Such investments are necessary for Bangladesh," said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Of the \$1.4 billion, the WB will provide \$1.03 billion, with the rest coming in from the governments of Bangladesh and Nepal. Of the \$1.03 billion that the multilateral lender is allocating to the phase 1 of the programme, Bangladesh will get \$753.45 million and Nepal \$275 million. Both the loans have been sanctioned by the WB board in June.

The \$753.45 million given to Bangladesh will go towards projects to be implemented by the Bangladesh Land Port Authority, the National Board of Revenue and the Road and Highways Department for completion by 2029.

One of the components involves upgrading the 43-kilometre two-lane Sylhet-Charkai-Sheola road to a climate-resilient four-lane road, connecting the Sheola land port with the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway and in so doing, cutting down the travel time by 30 percent.

The programme will support digital systems, infrastructure and more streamlined processes at Benapole, Bhomra, and Burimari land ports, the three largest land ports in Bangladesh handling approximately 80 percent of land-based trade.

There is little communication (electronic or otherwise) between the customs and the Bangladesh Land Port

Authority on what goods are present at any given time at the land ports.

Arriving goods for import are normally discharged from trucks and unless they are perishable, are stored in warehouses under the jurisdiction of the BLPA before customs clearance begins.

This has created a system of "border men" that collect documents from truck drivers on the Indian side of the border before arrival, and "proxy" customs and freight (C&F) agents standing in line to ensure that the slot is kept while the C&F agents interact with the NBR or other government agencies elsewhere.

Such human facilitation highlights the need for improved processes, which the project will address.

The project will support the development and improvement of IT-enabled services for trade, to reduce touch points and human interaction, enhance transparency and reduce congestion and truck idling, resulting in faster border clearance time and greater cargo throughput.

Electronic tracking of truck entry and exit, electronic queuing and smart parking would be installed.

It will also support the modernisation of the Chattogram customs house, which handles 90 percent of all import/export declarations in Bangladesh and services more than 45,700 unique traders per year.

The rapidly growing trade volumes have overburdened the Custom House, Chattogram, which was initially constructed in 1920.

Subsequently, the project will entail constructing a state-of-the-art green-building certified, resilient Custom House Chattogram with enhanced capacity to process rapidly growing trade volumes with required infrastructure, collaborative laboratory and other facilities including facilities for women.

It will also support the country's implementation of the World Trade Organisation's Trade Facilitation Agreement and Customs Modernisation Strategic Action Plan and preparation for the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) implementation.

The MVA was signed on June 15, 2015 by the transport ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. The agreement will permit the member states to ply their vehicles in each other's territory for transportation of cargo and passengers, including third country transport and personal vehicles.

But due to the lack of necessary infrastructure, MVA is yet to take off.



Bangladesh's export competitiveness will increase and importers will be helped, too, Rahman said.

"Both the consumers and producers would be benefited."

The WB programme will not only lead to trade facilitation but will also help in drawing in investment from abroad.

"The government has dedicated special economic zones for Indian and Chinese investors but those are not attracting the expected investment. It is because the border-crossing infrastructure and logistics facilitation are missing. If I have to pay 1.5 times more to send the products to Nepal, why should I come here? So it is a very important project."

### **THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 2-8-2022**

#### **Nepal's tea sector sees trouble brewing as India mulls restrictions on imports**

*India's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce has asked the Indian government to apply stringent requirements for the certificate of origin on tea.*

#### **KRISHNA PRASAIN**

**KATHMANDU**, Nepali tea producers and traders have been concerned ever since India's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in June asked the Indian government to apply stringent requirements for the certificate of origin on tea imported from Nepal.

The parliamentary committee said the entry of low quality products from the neighbouring countries was jeopardising the Indian tea industry, and asked that anti-dumping duty ranging from 40-100 percent be imposed. The panel has also asked that the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 be reviewed.

India is Nepal's largest customer, and any move to restrict exports will hit the industry hard, producers say. Nepal ships around 90 percent of its orthodox tea and 50 percent of its crush, tear and curl (CTC) tea to the southern neighbour.

Indian concerns come amid long-standing complaints that unscrupulous Indian traders have been mixing Nepali tea with Darjeeling tea.

Orthodox tea, imported from Nepal and commonly known as Himalayan tea, is similar to the Darjeeling variety grown in West Bengal in taste, aroma and flavour. However, Nepali tea is over 50 percent cheaper than the tea from the hills of northern Bengal.

Some traders have been passing off Nepali tea as Darjeeling, which is protected and has a Geographical Indication trademark, according to Indian media reports. Legally, tea from Nepal can be freely imported by anyone in India under the free trade agreement between the two countries.

According to reports, while Darjeeling tea, in bulk sales, is priced anywhere between IRs 320 and IRs 360 per kg, the orthodox variety of Nepali tea is not even half that price.

Nepali tea producers say that if India goes ahead with the parliamentary committee's call, Nepal's tea sector will collapse.

Orthodox tea is hand-processed tea and is grown at high altitudes. CTC tea grows at lower altitudes and in the hot and humid plains of Nepal, primarily in Jhapa district.

Nepali orthodox tea has been gaining popularity in the international market because of its quality, aroma, taste and aftertaste.

"Indian traders have been saying that Nepali tea is of low quality. On the other hand, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India certifies the quality of tea imported from Nepal," said Suresh Mittal, president of the Nepal Tea Producers Association.

"Without a certificate of origin, we cannot export even a single leaf. Our tea is locally produced and processed before export. It's not like the soybean or sunflower oil that is imported and refined and then re-exported," Mittal said.

In the past several years, Nepali tea shipments to India have been frequently stopped, especially over quality issues by the Indian side.

Years ago, the Darjeeling Tea Association had requested the then Indian President Pranav Mukharjee to stop the import of Nepali tea by submitting a memorandum when he visited Darjeeling.

There have been several attempts from Darjeeling to stop the import of Nepali tea.

Deepak Khanal, director of the National Tea and Coffee Development Board, says Indian producers have been alleging that Nepal's tea is substandard and that the prices too are lower which is impacting India's tea production.

Following the development in India, the Nepali tea association wrote to the authorities on Sunday requesting negotiations through the diplomatic channel, according to Khanal.

“We have informed the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies regarding the issue,” he said.

Nepali tea producers say that the repeated hassles created by the Indian side regarding the quality of Nepali tea have been discouraging farmers from growing it. Nepali tea needs to be tested at the Central Food Laboratory in Kolkata, India to obtain export certification.

Tea producers lament that they are still forced to sell tea at prices set by Indian traders.

“These issues are pertinent and need to be resolved through negotiations,” said Mittal.

“If India’s moves to impose restrictions, it would be a breach of international trade law,” said Purushottam Ojha, former commerce secretary and trade expert.

Orthodox tea from Ilam tastes better than Darjeeling tea, Nepali traders claim. The natural features and weather conditions of Darjeeling and Ilam are nearly identical. That is why Ilam tea is as good as Darjeeling tea, traders said.

Nepali tea is being stopped time and again by the Indian side under different pretexts. For instance, around eight months ago, India had blocked a shipment of 40,000 tonnes of tea for several weeks.

In June 2020, over 20 trucks carrying Nepali tea and large cardamom were halted on the bridge over the Mechi River by the state government of West Bengal in India.

In May 2018, tea exports from Nepal to India through the Kakarbhitta border crossing was stopped following obstructions from Indian authorities. Indian customs officials created hassles over quarantine.

According to the Trade and Export Promotion Centre, tea exports dropped by 9.55 percent to Rs3.43 billion in the last fiscal year.

In September 2020, Nepal’s orthodox tea got its own trademark, 157 years after tea cultivation was introduced in the country.

Nepal has a long history of growing tea. The first tea estate, Ilam Tea Estate, was launched in 1863 in the hills of Ilam district.

Historians think that the first tea bushes in Nepal were grown from seeds which were given as a gift by the Chinese emperor to the then prime minister Jung Bahadur Rana.

It is believed that tea planting in Nepal started about the same time as in the Darjeeling Hills of India.

In 1965, a second tea plantation, Soktim Tea Estate, was set up in the plains of Jhapa district.

Tea is grown in Nepal at elevations ranging from 800 to 2,200 metres above sea level. Previously, production was centred in a few districts like Ilam and Jhapa in eastern Nepal. Of late, tea gardens have been flourishing in other parts of the country too. Currently, the tea acreage totals 28,700 hectares.

Nepal produces around 7,168 tonnes of orthodox tea annually in the hills. It also produces 15,654 tonnes of CTC tea, known for its strong and bright appearance, in the lowlands of the Tarai.

“Restricting the import of any product to protect domestic industry is against international trade practices,” said Ojha, the former commerce secretary. “Nepali tea is not inferior to Darjeeling tea as Nepali tea is also produced on similar geographic terrain.”

## **THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 4-8-2022**

### **Ruling coalition reaches understanding to hold elections on November 20**

*Some issues remain though including transitional justice act and seat-sharing, which leaders say will be sorted out.*

**Anil Giri**

Amid speculations that elections could be postponed to February, the ruling coalition partners on Wednesday reached an understanding to hold the polls on November 20.

A leader participating in a meeting of the ruling coalition on Wednesday said that the partners have reached an understanding that elections would be held on November 20 and the next Cabinet meeting, most probably on Thursday or Friday, will take a decision to that effect.

On July 6, the Election Commission had recommended November 18 for general and provincial elections.

The delay in declaring the date stoked speculations if the coalition partners were planning to postpone it.

The Election Commission has long been saying that it needs 120 days to prepare for the elections. If elections are held on November 20, the commission will have 112 days for the preparations.

“That will be enough,” Dinesh Thapaliya, chief election commissioner, told the Post on Sunday.

In the Nepali Congress-led coalition, the CPN (Maoist Centre), the CPN (Unified Socialist), Janata Samajbadi Party and Rastriya Janamorchha are partners.

Durga Poudel, a leader from the Rastriya Janamorchha who was present at the meeting, told the Post that the understanding among the partners on holding elections on November 20 should end the speculations.

“The next Cabinet meeting will take a formal decision,” said Poudel.

The government was facing criticism for not declaring the election date even after the commission recommended a date.

As per the existing laws, the government announces election date(s) in consultation with the poll commission.

Some leaders within the alliance, particularly from the CPN (Maoist Center) and the CPN (Unified Socialist), were of the view that the elections could be postponed to February.

But the Election Commission said that since the last general election was held in November-December of 2017, it was not wise to defer it to February 2023.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has long been saying that elections would be held within November.

Deuba’s strategy, according to leaders familiar with the development, is not to delay the polls as it could give room to the communists to come together, which could be detrimental to his party—the Nepali Congress.

Even some leaders of the Nepali Congress wanted to defer the elections to February, but Deuba refused, said a central member of the Congress.

The ruling alliance partners face an uphill task of seat-sharing as the Congress wants to keep at least 100 constituencies, out of 165, where elections will be held under the directly elected system for the House of Representatives. Nepal’s lower house is 275-strong, and 110 members are elected under the proportional representation (PR) system. For seven provincial assemblies, 330 seats are up for grabs under the direct election system and 220 members will be elected under the PR system.

The Congress is under pressure as its coalition partners are demanding at least 80, out of 165 seats in the House, for them.

There’s yet another complication the government has to deal with. Confusion continues as to whether the House can function once the election date is announced.

The government has registered a bill to amend the Commission on Investigation of Disappeared Persons, Truth and Reconciliation Act 2014.

The incumbent government wants to get the bill through the House, but conflict victims and human rights activists have questioned some of its provisions, saying they are aimed at granting amnesty even for serious human rights violations.

Earlier, it was said that the government was waiting for the amendment bill on Citizenship Act to pass for announcing the election date. The bill has already gone through both the houses and is awaiting President’s approval.

Now, some say the government may have been waiting for the bill on transitional justice to get through.

“We are of the view that Parliament will continue even after the election date is announced,” said a Nepali Congress leader. “Once the bill on transitional justice gets through, its current term will end.”

Meanwhile on Wednesday, conflict victims met with Prime Minister Deuba and expressed their reservations about some of the provisions in the bill to amend the transitional justice act.

Suman Adhikari, whose father was killed by Maoists in 2014, told the Post that the prime minister took note of the victims’ concerns and said that he would look into their reservations so as to address them.

Conflict victims are also worried that the government might bulldoze an Act through an ordinance if the House term ends without passing the bill, in a way that exonerates the perpetrators of serious human rights violations

Some legal and constitutional experts, however, say the House should not remain functional after the election date is announced.

Bipin Adhikari, the founding dean of the Kathmandu University School of Law, said that the House term should come to an end once the election is announced.

“Politically and morally... it is not ethical to have the House when the country is set to elect a new set of lawmakers,” Adhikari told the Post.

Ruling party leaders said another meeting of the coalition has been scheduled for Friday to discuss a host of issues, including the House term.

“The next meeting will discuss a wide range of issues—the House term, transitional justice act and seat-sharing, among others,” said Ram Chandra Poudel, a senior

Congress leader who also heads a committee to guide the government.

**THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 11-8-2022**

**Beijing announces new Rs15 billion aid to Nepal**

*During talks with Khadka, Wang promises feasibility study for a fertiliser plant, hi-tech lab for blood cancer cure, disaster relief, Covid assistance and railway survey.*

**ANIL GIRI**

**KATHMANDU**, China on Wednesday announced a Rs15 billion (800 million RMB) grant to Nepal to invest in projects selected by Nepal for the year 2022.

The announcement was made by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is also the state councillor of China, during the bilateral visit of Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka to Qingdao.

Khadka is on a visit to China, the first high-level visit from Nepal to the north since the formation of the Sher Bahadur Deuba government in July last year. This new grant is additional to the grant announced by the Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nepal in October, 2019.

During official talks between President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Chinese President Xi in October 2019, the latter had announced a 3.5 billion RMB grant to Nepal for two years but both sides failed to negotiate on how to utilise the amount in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nepal has yet to select the projects to be funded under the grant announced by the Chinese president.

Khadka's visit follows two back-to-back visits from the north in March and July by Foreign Minister Wang and Liu Jianchao, head of the international department of the Chinese Communist Party, respectively.

During the meeting on Wednesday, Khadka and Wang also discussed the evolving situation in the Taiwan Strait, officials said. Wang is learnt to have said that the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan "a complete political provocation."

"This move [Pelosi's Taiwan visit] seriously violates the commitments made by the United States and seriously violates China's sovereignty," reads a statement issued by the Chinese foreign ministry after the talks between Khadka and Wang.

"Starting from safeguarding its own sovereignty and territorial integrity, maintaining non-interference in internal affairs, the basic norm of international relations,

and truly safeguarding the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait, of course, China must take necessary and resolute countermeasures."

China considers self-ruled Taiwan part of its territory. Khadka, according to officials, reiterated Nepal's commitment to the one-China policy and assured that Nepali territory will not be allowed to be used for any activity against China.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese side assured that it will positively consider Nepal's request for chemical fertiliser and a feasibility study for establishing a chemical fertiliser plant in Nepal. Earlier too, Nepal and China had held several rounds of talks on supplying chemical fertilisers from China.

"The state councillor and foreign minister of China agreed to assist Nepal's agricultural sector. He also agreed to encourage Chinese investment in developing the manufacturing capacity of Nepal and enhance cooperation in the export of Nepali tea and traditional medicinal herbs," said the foreign ministry statement.

On the opening of border points between Nepal and China that have seen restricted movement of goods and cargo since the start of the Covid pandemic, the two foreign ministers decided to establish a joint mechanism for pandemic control at border ports, according to the Foreign Ministry of Nepal.

Both sides agreed to form a bilateral technical committee to make necessary preparations for functionalising the existing mechanism of Nepal-China Joint Boundary Inspection Committee. This was in principle agreed last month during a virtual meeting between officials from the two sides.

Khadka and Wang also agreed to open Rasuwa-Kerung and Tatopani-Khasa ports for two-way trade and Hilsa-Pulang port for one-way trade, which will take place as soon as the fresh wave of Covid pandemic in Tibet Autonomous Region of China is controlled, according to the statement.

In support of the people affected by disasters and natural calamities in different parts of Nepal, Wang announced a package of RMB3 million worth of disaster relief materials as per Nepal's request.

China will also provide Nepal with medical items and logistics worth 2million RMB.

The Foreign Ministry said Wang also announced that China will provide additional Covid vaccines and Covid-related medical assistance as much as Nepal may require.

Minister Khadka requested further support towards strengthening of health infrastructure and facilities as well as transfer of new technologies in cancer treatment in Nepal.

Wang announced that China would provide support to the establishment of Chimeric Antigen Receptor T cells (CAR T cells) manufacturing lab at the Civil Service Hospital, Kathmandu to treat blood cancer and provide

necessary training to Nepali health professionals, said the foreign ministry. This is hailed as a huge partnership between the two countries in the health sector.

Wang also announced that all the Nepali students seeking to return to China following the disruption caused by the pandemic can proceed for visa procedures, while fulfilling the health protocols, to resume their studies, according to the Chinese statement.

Hundreds of Nepali students studying in China who returned home after the pandemic have been stuck in Nepal owing to Chinese restrictions and are desperate to return to their universities to continue their studies.

The Chinese foreign ministry stated that Wang and Khadka discussed the implementation of past accords signed during Xi's visit to Nepal, jointly advancing the Belt and Road Initiative with high quality projects. Nepal and China signed up the BRI in May 2017 but both sides have failed to execute a single project.

The two sides will negotiate and sign the implementation plan for the joint construction of projects under the BRI as soon as possible, and hold a joint economic and trade committee and a working group on unimpeded trade within this year, according to a Nepali official who was present during the ministerial meeting.

"Khadka reiterated that Nepal firmly adheres to one-China policy and will never allow the use of Nepali territory to engage in any activities that oppose China and harm Chinese interests. This firm commitment will never waver. Nepal supports China's legitimate position on internal affairs such as Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong," according to the Chinese foreign ministry website.

The Chinese statement also claimed that Nepal agrees with the concept of the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, and is willing to actively study and participate in the venture.

Wang on behalf of his government appreciated the adherence of successive governments of Nepal to the one-China principle and abidance by their commitment to not allow any forces to use Nepali territory to engage in anti-

China activities, according to the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

"Facing the current chaos in the world, China and Nepal, as developing countries and friendly neighbours, should especially support each other, jointly safeguard the core role of the United Nations, and maintain non-interference in internal affairs, the 'golden rule' of international relations," the Chinese foreign ministry said.

In addition, the two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in judicial affairs, combating cyber cross-border crimes, border management, joint prevention and control, and ports.

"Wang announced that China will use the aid to Nepal to support the feasibility study of the China-Nepal cross-border railway, and send experts to Nepal to conduct surveys within this year. The zero-tariff treatment for 98 percent of the tax items that China has granted to Nepal will come into effect on September 1, and support the Nepali side to make good use of the dividends of this policy to expand exports to China," the Chinese foreign ministry stated.

## **DAILY NEWS, COLOMBO 2-8-2022**

### **Merchandise export earnings up by 20%**

Earnings from the merchandise exports increased by 20% y-o-y to US\$ 1,208.2 million in June 2022 mainly due to the increase in earnings from export of apparel and textiles, rubber based products, coconut based products, food & beverages and seafood according to Exprot Development Board.

Major product sectors except tea and spices and concentrates; apparel and textiles, rubber-based products, coconut based products, electrical and electronic components and food and beverages, seafood and ornamental fish recorded increased exports in June 2022. Exports of Apparel and Textiles increased by 36.85% y-o-y to US\$ 566.78 million in June 2022. The increase was driven by both Apparel and Textiles.

Export earnings from rubber and rubber finished products have increased by 7.18% y-o-y to \$102.36 million in June 2022, with good performance in exports of Pneumatic & Retreated Rubber Tyres and Tubes (15.2%).

Export earnings from Seafood increased by 130.75% to US\$ 36.39 Mn in June 2022 compared to June 2021. Further, export earnings from Ornamental fish increased by 297.4% to US\$ 3.06 million in June 2022. Export earnings from the electrical & electronics components

increased by 5.71 % y-o-y to US\$ 39.82 million in June 2022 with strong performance in exports of Insulated Wires & Cables (14.5%) and switches, boards & panels (23.55%).

However, export earnings from tea in June 2022 which made up 12% of merchandise exports, decreased by 5.99% y-o-y to US\$ 116.49 million. In addition, export earnings from spices and essential oils decreased by 10.9% to US\$ 31.74 million.

For the first half of 2022, merchandise exports increased by 12.4% to US\$ 6,408.3 million. Apparel & textile exports increased by 19.73% to US\$ 2,967.39 million during the period.

For the period of January to June 2022, export earnings from Coconut and Coconut based products expanded by 12% to US\$ 434.34 million. Meanwhile, earnings from export of Electrical and Electronic Components (EEC) increased by 12.96 % to US\$ 228.12 million.

Export earnings from Seafood increased by 33.64% to US\$ 142.17 million.

However, export earnings from Tea decreased by 11.25% to US\$ 577.38 Mn during the period and Export earnings from Rubber & Rubber finished products slightly decreased by 0.64 % to US\$ 516.62 Mn.

Strong Export Growth recorded for top 5 export markets in the month of June 2022 and the period of January to June 2022.

During the month of June 2022, exports to the United States, Sri Lanka's single largest export destination, increased by 46.16% to US\$ 323.65 Mn compared to the month of June 2021.

The better performance led by increase in exports of Apparel & Textile (29.68%) and Coconut based products (26.8%).

The single largest export destination of the United States of America recorded US\$ 1,687.73 Mn worth of exports in the period of January to June 2022 a significant year on year increase of 24.54 % in comparison to US\$ 1,355.14 Mn recorded in 2021.

### **SUNDAY OBSERVER, COLOMBO 7-8-2022**

#### **Trade deficit narrows during first six months**

The merchandise trade balance recorded a surplus in June 2022 for the first time since August 2002, reflecting the impact of historically high monthly export earnings and the continued decline in import expenditure. Earnings

from tourism recorded an increase in June 2022 (year-on-year) from the low base, despite the negative sentiments associated with travel advisories and the ongoing shortage of fuel and resultant transportation difficulties.

Workers' remittances moderated in June 2022, compared to May 2022, reflecting an increase of grey market activity of foreign exchange transactions. Foreign investment in the government securities market recorded a marginal net inflow, while that in the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) recorded a marginal net outflow during June 2022.

The Central Bank continued to provide forex liquidity to finance essential imports, exhausting the usable level of gross official reserves.

The weighted average spot exchange rate in the interbank market remained around Rs. 360 per US dollar during the month.

The balance in the merchandise trade account in June 2022 recorded a surplus of US dollars 21 million, compared to the deficit of US dollars 652 million recorded in June 2021, and for the first time since August 2002, where a trade surplus of US dollars 110 million was recorded.

The cumulative deficit in the trade account during January-June 2022 narrowed to US dollars 3,514 million from US dollars 4,316 million recorded over the same period in 2021.

Terms of trade, i.e., the ratio of the price of exports to the price of imports, deteriorated by 5.4 per cent in June 2022, compared to June 2021, as the increase in import prices surpassed the increase in export prices.

Earnings from merchandise exports in June 2022 increased by 23.9 per cent over the corresponding month in 2021, recording US dollars 1,248 million, which is the highest ever monthly export earnings recorded. An increase in earnings of both industrial and agricultural exports contributed to this favourable outcome, while mineral exports, which constitute a meagre share of export earnings, recorded a decline. Cumulative export earnings from January to June 2022 also increased by 14.3 per cent over the same period in the last year, amounting to US dollars 6,514 million.

Industrial exports: Earnings from the export of industrial goods increased in June 2022 by 28.4 per cent, compared to June 2021. Higher export earnings from garments contributed to a major share of this outcome. Export of garments to all major markets (the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom) improved.

Meanwhile, most of the other industrial export categories also showed an improved performance, particularly, gems, diamonds and jewellery; petroleum products; animal fodder; and food, beverages and tobacco. Earnings from the export of petroleum products improved mainly due to the increase in average export prices of both aviation and bunker fuel exports. Meanwhile, a decline in earnings was reported in base metals and articles (mainly, aluminium, iron and steel and articles), transport equipment (mainly, bicycles), plastics and plastic articles thereof (mainly, plastic sacks and bags) and chemical products (mainly, cosmetic or toilet preparations and pharmaceutical products).

**Agricultural exports:** Total earnings from the exports of agricultural goods in June 2022 increased by 9.2 per cent, compared to June 2021, with a substantial share of the increase being contributed by seafood (primarily, fresh and frozen fish) and minor agricultural products (primarily, areca nuts). Export earnings from coconut kernel products, vegetables and natural rubber also increased to some extent.

Export earnings from tea and spices declined by 6.0 per cent and 10.6 per cent (year-on-year), due to the decline in volume exported.

**Mineral exports:** Earnings from mineral exports in June 2022 declined by 34.8 per cent, compared to June 2021, mainly due to a decline in export earnings from titanium ores categorised under ores, slag, and ash.

The export volume index increased notably by 23.5 per cent, while unit value index improved marginally by 0.3 per cent (year-on-year), in June 2022. Thus, the increase in export earnings could be attributed mainly to higher export volumes.

### **THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD 8-8-2022**

#### **CPEC activities resume with renewed vigour APP**

**ISLAMABAD** – China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is once again kicking off after a decelerated stage during previous few years as the present government reiterates resolve to resume the pace of work as witnessed during 2013-2018.

The Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) led coalition government initiated China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had experienced sluggish advancement during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf government with

number of projects under the Corridor delaying due to unknown reasons.

The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives under the supervision of its minister Prof Ahsan Iqbal has resumed the activity and started interacting with the Chinese concerned authorities to expedite work especially on the stalled projects and include new avenues in the mega project.

Both Pakistan and China are engaged in finalising the agenda of 11th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on CPEC where number of new projects in sectors like agriculture, information technology, tourism and others would be considered besides reviewing work on the ongoing projects.

According to the sources in ministry of planning, the 11th JCC is likely to be held in August. Although, the venue has not yet been finalised yet most probably it would be held in Beijing, China.

Both Pakistan and China are also mulling over extending the scope of CPEC to Afghanistan and the matter was also discussed at a meeting chaired by Ahsan Iqbal.

Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood, gave a detailed briefing on the third-party participation and extension of CPEC to Afghanistan.

There is also possibility of holding the meeting of Joint Working Group in Energy between Pakistan and China where the issues of 1124MW Kohala and 700.7MW Azad Pattan hydro power projects as well as 1320MW Thar Coal power plant project would be taken up with the Chinese side.

A joint study for the future development of Thar Coal had also been made part of the agenda.

Two key run of the river hydropower projects have recently completed under the umbrella of CPEC. The 720MW Karot Hydropower project has already started its commercial operation while production of electricity from the 880MW Suki Kenari hydro power project would start soon.

“CPEC is back on track and measures are underway to provide sufficient power for Gwadar city,” said Ahsan Iqbal at a meeting held to review preparations for 11th JCC meeting and stressed the need for renewable energy projects for the city’s development.

According to Daily China Net, exports have been set in motion for the first time in the Gwadar Free Zone in the backdrop of exemption from taxes and customs duties for a period of 20 years.

Along with exports to foreign countries, the Gwadar Free Zone (GFZ) – both south and north – has also kick-started supply of trade articles and manufacturing items to the local market of Pakistan.

Both phenomenal steps, aligned with the e-Custom (Web-based One Custom – WeBOC) system are aimed at helping Pakistan realise its dream to become a high-performing export-oriented country in the international trading landscape.

Agvon, an enterprise incorporated into the Gwadar North Free Zone that deals in fertilizers import and processing, said it would sell 20,000 tons of potassium sulphate to Pakistani and international markets.

The company is expected to start its production facility by the start of next year. For this purpose, Agvon has already acquired 10 acres of land and the manufacturing setup is under construction.

Moreover, another industrial concern operating in the Gwadar Free Zone, HK Sun Corporation, will export its consignment to the tariff area in Pakistan.

Talking about overall progress of CPEC, an official in the planning ministry informed that under first phase of the CPEC, numerous major energy projects including hydro, wind and solar projects were executed.

“The second component of the CPEC is infrastructure, highways, waterways and bridges which have been built across Pakistan, improving the communication and road infrastructure,” he added.

The important part of physical infrastructure was laying the fibre optic link from Chinese border to Pakistan to help the communication network.

The official said that the third important component of the first phase was the Gwadar Port which was almost functional.

Another infrastructure project, the East Bay Express has been recently inaugurated besides progress on International Airport in Gwadar and many of the allied infrastructure and industrial development projects.

About Special Economic Zone (SEZs) being set up in Gwadar, the official said, a large number of Chinese companies were setting up their businesses at SEZs.

The country was entering into phase two that is even more important and focused on industrialization, agriculture, social well-being of the people, poverty alleviation and green economy.

“Under the Green Corridor, the government is focusing on agriculture and food security and digital corridor to

fully utilize China’s experience and expertise in IT and industrial sectors,” the official said.

Pakistan is currently developing five out of nine SEZs nominated under CPEC including Allama Iqbal Industrial City in Faisalabad, Punjab, Dhabeji SEZ in Sindh, Rashakai SEZ in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Boston SEZ in Balochistan.

Another fast-track SEZ is Gwadar Free Zone as its phase at an area of 60 acre land is already fully functional and the mighty second phase spanning over 2200 acres is under construction.

Dozens of Chinese firms are operating at Pakistan’s various economic zones as both the governments were actively engaged to carry forward the SEZ projects and making them operational at the earliest possible.

Meanwhile, the government is also keen to attract foreign direct investment in textile, IT, agriculture, science and technology and mining sectors to boost exports and bridge the gap between imports and exports.

#### **THE NATION, ISLAMABAD 12-8-2022**

### **Miftah for further strengthening Pak-EU trade ties**

#### **Staff Reporter**

**ISLAMABAD** – Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail on Thursday said that enhancing revenue collection, boosting exports, increasing remittances and making the energy sector sustainable are the foremost priorities of the present government. Dr Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail at Finance Division. Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr. Aisha Ghous Pasha, Special Secretary Finance and senior officers attended the meeting. Finance Minister Miftah Ismail welcomed the ambassador of the EU and highlighted bilateral relations and development cooperation between the EU and Pakistan. He said that Pakistan highly values its bilateral ties with the EU including trade and economic relations. He stressed the need to further strengthening trade relations between Pakistan and the European Union. The finance minister also apprised the EU ambassador on recent economic developments and policies of the present government. The finance minister stated that enhancing revenue collection, boosting exports, increasing remittances and making the energy sector sustainable are the foremost priorities of the present government. The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest and



cooperation including progress on GSP Plus. Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka also highlighted the mutual relations between Pakistan and the EU in diversified fields and appreciated present government's ongoing economic reform agenda. The ambassador also supported Pakistan's efforts towards making progress for GSP Plus and extended her cooperation. The finance minister thanked the EU ambassador for her cooperation and assured her all out support from Finance Ministry.

### **THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD 13-8-2022**

#### **Pakistan, Turkiye sign preferential trade pact**

##### **Staff Correspondent**

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan and Turkiye on Friday signed the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) aimed at boosting trade between the two countries.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif witnessed the inking of the agreement at a ceremony held here. Trade Minister of Turkiye Dr Mehmet Mus and Minister for Commerce Naveed Qamar signed the agreement.

The PTA includes comprehensive provisions on bilateral safeguards, balance of payment exceptions, dispute settlement and periodic review of the agreement. Addressing the ceremony, PM Shehbaz termed the agreement a milestone in the brotherly and historic relations of Pakistan and Turkiye. He said immense business opportunities existed between the two countries and expressed the confidence that the agreement would explore trade avenues in diverse sectors. He said Pakistan would continue to work with Turkiye to strengthen the bilateral ties.

Dr Mehmet Mus thanked Shehbaz Sharif for his leadership to seal the agreement for the betterment of two countries and enhancing linkages between their business communities.

Naveed Qamar hoped that the PTA would open up new opportunities to boost the bilateral trade in various sectors. He said Turkiye had given concessions to Pakistan on 231 tariff lines while Pakistan had given concessions on 130 lines.

Later, speaking at a luncheon given in honour of Dr Mehmet Mus, Shehbaz said the agreement would help increase the bilateral trade by five billion dollars in the next three years. He said the agreement reflected the strength of "our brotherhood and fraternal ties which are anchored with mutual trust". He said that within a short span of time, the Turkish minister for Trade visited

Pakistan and signed the agreement, providing a great opportunity that the two countries must cash upon. He invited Turkish investors to Pakistan's energy sector, saying that Turkiye had a vast experience in hydel power projects.

The prime minister said Pakistan spent more than 20 billion dollars on fuel import annually that could be decreased by shifting to alternate sources of energy. He said Pakistan aimed at building 5,000 to 6,000 megawatt solar parks through public private partnership. Solar panels would be provided to poor households and solarization of government buildings would be completed without wasting time.

### **PEOPLE'S DAILY, CHINA 2-8-2022**

#### **African diplomats expect closer economic ties with China**

**CHANGSHA, Aug. 1 (Xinhua) --** Twenty-nine diplomats from 15 African countries visited the pilot zone for the In-Depth China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation Program in central China's Hunan Province from July 27 to 29. They expressed confidence in China's economy and said they expected closer economic and trade ties between their country and China.

Despite recurring COVID-19 outbreaks and the complex and volatile international situation, the diplomats said China's economy is resilient and the Chinese market is full of opportunities. They expressed hope to strengthen cooperation with China in sectors such as agriculture, the digital economy and health care.

According to the Tanzanian ambassador to China Mbelwa Kairuki, China's 1.4-billion-strong consumer market has plenty of opportunities for all African countries.

"China-Africa trade and economic cooperation has been increasing in the last 20 years," said Kairuki, who is convinced that there will be more opportunities for Tanzania to export products to China, especially high value-added products.

Tanzania is particularly looking to seize opportunities for its agricultural goods in the Chinese market, facilitated by the pilot zone for in-depth China-Africa economic and trade cooperation, he said.

"The pilot zone combines the advantages of quality African agricultural products with the processing and distribution strengths of our Chinese partners, helping our

products to be able to increase in value according to the needs of the Chinese market," Kairuki said.

The pilot zone is an important initiative under the "Nine Programs" that were established at the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in November last year. New models and paths for China-Africa trade, investment and financial cooperation are being cultivated to serve the transformation and upgrading of China-Africa economic and trade cooperation.

During their three-day visit to the pilot zone, the African ambassadors paid visits to the core area of the pilot zone as well as key enterprises.

According to Hassane Rabehi, Algerian ambassador to China, the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo and the China-Africa In-depth Economic and Trade Cooperation Program pilot zone offer new opportunities for cooperation with Africa that can create additional sources of income and employment, diversify commercial products and increase exports of African goods to China.

"These concrete objectives confirm the sincerity of the Chinese leadership to strengthen capacity building in African countries, accelerate market access to China for African products, expand import categories and improve supporting facilities for exchanged commodities between China and Africa," Rabehi said, affirming that for both sides, these actions are commensurate with the noble objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative.

China has been South Africa's largest trading partner for 13 consecutive years. Last year, the trade volume between the two countries increased to 54.35 billion U.S. dollars, up 50.7 percent. South Africa is also one of the largest investment destinations for Chinese enterprises in Africa. By the end of last year, China's total investment in South Africa exceeded 25 billion U.S. dollars.

"We are very impressed about the development of China since the reform and opening-up, because we have seen that China is growing in strength," said South African ambassador to China Siyabonga C. Cwele, adding that China-Africa economic and trade cooperation has brought opportunities and development to developing countries.

Bilateral trade and investment have brought practical benefits to people not only in China but also in other

developing countries, by creating jobs and better lives, Cwele said.

"That's what you call a community with a shared future for mankind," he added.

According to the General Administration of Customs, trade between China and Africa reached an all-time high of 254.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2021, up 35.3 percent year on year, of which Africa exported 105.9 billion dollars of goods to China, up 43.7 percent.

From April 28 to May 12, the online African Products Shopping Festival was held successfully, attracting 23 African countries. Through livestreaming and e-commerce platforms, Chinese consumers can easily shop for African goods such as coffee from Ethiopia, black tea from Kenya and wine from South Africa.

Teshome Toga Chanaka, Ethiopian ambassador to China, said the focus of China-Africa economic and trade cooperation is on agriculture, because it is the foundation of most African economies.

Noting that the digital economy will be an important frontier in the future, the Ethiopian ambassador said there is great potential for China to cooperate with African countries in the field of the digital economy.

### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 4-8-2022**

#### **Iran exports commodities worth over \$2b to Turkey in 4 months**

**TEHRAN-** Iran exported non-oil products valued at \$2.06 billion to Turkey in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), according to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Based on the IRICA data, Turkey was Iran's fourth main export destination in the four-month period.

Iran has also imported goods worth with \$1.787 billion from Turkey in the first four months of this year.

Turkey was Iran's second source of imports in the mentioned time span.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Turkey was Iran's second trade partner in the first quarter of the present year.

During a webinar, held in March, on trade relations between Iran and Turkey, which was held through cooperation between Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) and Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICOC), and attended by officials from both chambers and a group of entrepreneurs, ways to develop economic relations between the two countries and some problems in this due were examined.

In this virtual conference, which was attended by more than 250 entrepreneurs from Iran and Turkey, the opportunities for cooperation between the two countries were examined and the two sides emphasized the development of cooperation.

Addressing the conference, Nihat Alayoglu, the secretary-general of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, referring to the political, economic and cultural similarities between Iran and Turkey, said: "The two countries have long-standing relations dating back more than 400 years, and more than 500 kilometers of common border, as well as several trade agreements with each other, in particular, the preferential trade agreement, which was concluded in 2015, is very important for both countries."

He added that the value of trade between Iran and Turkey has increased from \$1.2 billion in 2001 to about \$5.6 billion in 2021. Of this amount, \$2.7 billion is allocated to Turkish exports to Iran and \$2.8 billion is related to Iran's exports to Turkey. Machinery and equipment are among the top exports of Turkey to Iran, and mainly materials such as copper and plastic are imported from Iran.

Noting that Turkey accounts for seven percent of Iran's \$39-billion imports, he added: "Our goal is to increase Turkish exports to Iran to \$10 billion, and it is obvious that the two countries' chambers of commerce have a role to play in increasing trade cooperation."

Bahman Eshqi, the secretary-general of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, for his part put emphasis on the significance of expanding economic ties between Iran and Turkey, and said, "Turkey is one of the gateways of Iran's economy to Europe, and Iran is one of the gateways connecting Turkey to the Silk Road and the lands of the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members. Iran can also be the main gateway for Turkey to join India and the subcontinent."

Emphasizing that economic cooperation between the two countries is a necessity, Eshqi continued: "Compromise between the two nations has been strong for the last three centuries, and although at times there have been competitions between the two countries, Iran-Turkey cooperation is still developing."

MA/MA

### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 11-8-2022**

#### **Iran-Hungary 5-month trade increases over 44% yr/yr**

**TEHRAN** – The value of trade between Iran and Hungary reached \$19.350 million in the first five months of 2022, registering a 44.8 percent increase, year on year, according to the data released by Hungarian Central Statistical Office (known as KSH).

In January-May 2021, the value of trade between Iran and Hungary was about \$13.362 million, indicating that the trade between the two countries has increased by about \$5.988 million or 44.8 percent.

During the mentioned five months, Iran exported commodities worth \$5.714 million to Hungary, while the imports from the country stood at \$13.636 million, IRIB reported.

The Islamic Republic had imported \$11.272 million worth of goods from Hungary in the first five months of 2021, while exporting \$2.53 million worth of commodities to the country.

The top commodity items exchanged between the two countries included livestock and animal products, vegetables, plastic products, textiles and clothing, transportation equipment and parts, and ophthalmology supplies.

The total trade exchange between the two countries in 2021 amounted to \$48 million while in 2020 the figure was about \$33 million.

Iran and Hungary signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the expansion of economic cooperation in late 2021.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi and the visiting Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó on the sidelines of the two countries' second Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran on December 17.

The MOU covered a variety of areas including cooperation in the fields of water treatment, seeds, power plants, animal feed and construction materials, and joint investment opportunities.

During the meeting, the two sides also discussed the facilitation of visa issuance procedures for the two sides' businessmen and the Hungarian official promised to follow up on some issues that the Iranian transportation fleet had for transiting through Hungary.

Cooperation between a Hungarian bank and the Export Development Bank of Iran was another issue agreed upon during the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting.

EF/MA

### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 13-8-2022**

#### **Astarachay bridge to enhance Iran-Azerbaijan economic co-op**

**TEHRAN** – Iranian Ambassador to Baku Abbas Mousavi has said that completing the bridge over the Astarachay border river is going to diversify the modes of transportation between Iran and Azerbaijan and improve economic cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported.

“The completion of the bridge between Iran and Azerbaijan will boost business in both countries and result in diverse transportation (both railway and automobile) between the two sides,” Mousavi said on Wednesday on the sidelines of a visit to the bridge construction site.

Having a length of 89 meters and a width of 30 meters, this bridge aims to connect the international transit highways of the two countries (Baku-Rasht-Qazvin highways), the official explained.

According to the official, the transport ministers of the two countries are going to meet soon to discuss such joint projects and ways of expensing transportation and transit cooperation.

“Also, a tripartite meeting between Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia will be held in the near future to review issues related to transit, customs, and the development of the North-South corridor,” Mousavi added.

Iran and Azerbaijan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in late January for cooperation in constructing the bridge over the Astarachay border river.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister Kheirollah Khademi and Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rahman Hummatov in Baku on January 26.

The two neighbors had earlier announced the total investment made in the project to be 4.7 million euros.

Speaking in the signing ceremony of the mentioned MOU, Azeri Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev said the construction of the bridge is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2022.

"The president and the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan attach special importance to the development of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the presidents of Iran and Azerbaijan expressed interest in further developing relations between the two countries in a cordial meeting in Ashgabat," the official said.

Noting that Azerbaijan and Iran have established deep relations in various areas including trade, economy, energy, customs, and investment, he said: "There are good opportunities between the two countries to implement joint projects in these fields."

Iranian Transport Minister Rostam Qasemi for his part called Azerbaijan the closest neighbor to Iran and said: "We hope that after the meeting of the presidents of the two countries, relations between the two nations will develop as much as possible."

EF/MA

### **III - SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**



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**THE STATESMAN, NEW DELHI 3-8-2022**

**Quality of education can't be compromised  
by 100% reservation for teachers from  
district: SC**

*The top court judgment came on a batch of appeals filed by Jharkhand and some individuals against the Jharkhand High Court judgment, which quashed the notification.*

**IANS | New Delhi**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the quality of education of the school-going children cannot be compromised by giving 100 per cent reservation in favour of the teachers of the same districts and prohibiting meritorious teachers' appointment.

The top court quashed a 2016 notification issued by Jharkhand to provide for 100 per cent reservation for local residents in district cadre Class III and Class IV posts in the 13 scheduled districts of the state.

A bench of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna said: "If the candidates belonging to other areas (non-scheduled areas/districts) are given an opportunity to impart education (who may be more meritorious than the candidates belonging to the scheduled areas/districts), than it will be more beneficial to the students belonging to the scheduled areas and their quality of the education shall certainly improve. The quality of education of the school-going children cannot be compromised by giving 100 per cent reservation in favour of the teachers of the same/some districts and prohibiting the appointment to more meritorious teachers."

The bench, in its 107-page judgment, said notification making 100 per cent reservation for the local residents of the concerned scheduled area/districts (reservation on the basis of residence) is ultra vires to Article 35 read with Article 16(3) of the Constitution.

"100% reservation provided for the local residents of the concerned scheduled districts/areas only would be violative of Article 16(2) of the Constitution of India and affecting rights of the other candidates/citizens of non-scheduled areas/districts guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution of India," Justice Shah, who authored the judgment on behalf of the bench, said.

The bench noted that it may be true that so far as basic education (at the level of primary section) is concerned, it may help students at the primary level (while providing basic education) to be taught in their own tribal language. But the same principle may not be applicable when the

question is of providing education at higher level viz. above Class 5, it added.

The top court judgment came on a batch of appeals filed by Jharkhand and some individuals against the Jharkhand High Court judgment, which quashed the notification. Holding the notification unconstitutional, the high court quashed the appointments of the trained graduate teachers made pursuant to the advertisement in the scheduled districts relating to the local residents of those districts.

The original respondents – candidates belonging to the 13 scheduled districts have preferred present appeals.

The top court noted that as per Article 16(3) read with Article 35, local domicile reservation can be provided only through a law enacted by the Parliament and the state legislature has no power to do so. It added that the notification is held to be void under Article 13 for violating fundamental rights and declared to be ultra vires.

The top court referred to the law laid down by a constitution bench in 2020, Chebrolu Leela Prasad Rao and others versus State of Andhra Pradesh, where 100 per cent reservation given for Scheduled Tribes members in teaching posts in scheduled areas in Andhra Pradesh was struck down.

The state government and the successful candidates belonging to the scheduled districts contended that the notification making 100 per cent reservation for local residents of the scheduled areas was absolutely within the scope, ambit and powers of the Governor in exercise of para 5 of the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution.

Citing various top court judgments, the bench said it was observed and held that Para 5 of the Fifth Schedule confers power on the Governor, it is not meant to confer an arbitrary power. "The Constitution can never aim to confer any arbitrary power on the constitutional authorities. They are to be exercised in a legal and rational manner keeping in view the objectives and provisions of the Constitution," it said.

Noting that the state government had told the high court that the measure was taken in order to overcome the factors of low human development indices, backwardness, poverty etc, in the scheduled districts, the top court directed that instead of fresh/de novo recruitment process by setting aside the appointments already made in the scheduled districts/areas, the state shall revise the merit list based on the already published cut off obtained by the last selected candidates in each TGT subject against the respective categories with

respect to entire state and respective candidates belonging to the non-scheduled areas and scheduled areas (districts) shall be adjusted accordingly on the basis of individual merit of the candidates.”

#### **THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 3-8-2022**

### **6 arrested for killing Muslim man amid communal tension**

*Six people have been arrested in Karnataka's Mangaluru in connection with the murder of a 23-year-old Muslim man at Surathkal in the Dakshina Kannada district on July 28, two days after the killing of ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) functionary Praveen Nettaru, police said.*

**By Arun Dev, Bengaluru**

Six people have been arrested in Karnataka's Mangaluru in connection with the murder of a 23-year-old Muslim man at Surathkal in the Dakshina Kannada district on July 28, two days after the killing of ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) functionary Praveen Nettaru, police said.

Mangaluru police commissioner, N Shashi Kumar, said the six people came together with the aim of “killing someone” at the earliest and planned Mohammed Fazil's murder for three days. Responding to a question on whether Fazil was hacked to death in retaliation for Nettaru's killing, Kumar said further interrogation was required to ascertain that.

However, two investigators speaking on the condition of anonymity said that the murder was indeed retaliation and that they had a potential list of targets, all Muslims. “Four arrested men were from Surathkal and they knew Fazil. So, his name was suggested. The other people on the list of potential targets too were from also one community.” They added that the killers eventually settled on Fazil because he was an easy target. “They finalised Fazil's name for logistical reasons. They wanted to kill someone at the earliest,” said one of the two officers.

The six men are believed to belong to a right wing group, but Kumar said this and the motive could be confirmed only after further questioning.

Police said the six, Suhas Shetty, 29, Mohan Singh, 26, Giridhar, 23, Abhishek, 21, Shrinivas, 23, and Deekshith, 21, have been involved in several crimes in the past. Citing preliminary investigation, police said the accused were planning to kill Fazil since July 26.

“The six people did not know each other, but they came to know each through common friends. Suhas called his friend Abhishek and had a long discussion with him. He told Abhishek that by the evening of July 26, they should murder someone. They decided to gather more people and weapons,” said Kumar.

He added that Suhas Shetty met Abhishek on July 26 (the day BJP Yuva Morcha activist Praveen Nettaru was murdered) and shared his plan to murder someone.

On July 27, Shetty met Giridhar at a hotel in Surathkal, where he shared the plan with him and said that he had weapons and needed vehicles and manpower. Giridhar called Mohan who agreed to organise a car. “On July 27, Mohan got a car from Ajith Crasta who was assured of ₹15,000 in three days if their plan was successful,” said the commissioner.

They did not proceed with the task on July 27 as three of the accused did not turn up for a planned meeting.

“On July 28, Suhas left early in the morning with weapons to Bantwal's Karinjeshwar temple, while three other accused had to appear in court. They had a discussion near the court where Fazil's name was finalised as the target...” Kumar said.

In the evening, all six left in the car. They made three rounds of the garment shop where Fazil was. Shetty got out of the vehicle along with Mohan and Abhishek and hacked Fazil to death. “Suhas, Mohan and Abhishek were the assailants, Giridhar was driving the car, Deekshith was seated in the car, while Srinivas tried to protect the accused from the public during the murder. The six accused then escaped towards Palimar. They abandoned the car and escaped in another car to a hideout,” the commissioner said.

All six were arrested on Tuesday morning at Udyavar. The accused were produced before the court and remanded to 14-day police custody.

Kumar said Shetty is an accused in a murder and three other criminal cases, while Mohan, Giridhar and Abhishek are accused in two criminal cases each. Shrinivas is accused in four criminal cases while Deekshith is accused in three criminal cases.

Kumar ruled out reports that the killers targetted Fazil by mistake. He also said news reports that Fazil was in a relationship with a girl from another Muslim sect and was murdered on account of that, were false.

Reacting to the arrests, Fazil's father said he still doesn't why his son was murdered. “I still haven't understood

why my son was killed. He was not part of any political party. They have arrested (some) people; the toughest punishment should be given to them. These organisations (political organisations) are the problem. We don't need them, our children should not be killed in the name of politics," said Umar Farooq.

### **THE TELEGRAPH, KOLKATA 5-8-2022**

#### **Centre holds meeting with health experts on monkeypox**

*A case is considered laboratory confirmed for monkeypox virus by detection of unique sequences of viral DNA*

**PTI | New Delhi**

A meeting of top health experts called by the Centre on Thursday deliberated on the need for revisiting existing guidelines on management of monkeypox amid rising number of cases of the disease in the country.

India has so far reported nine cases of monkeypox including one death.

"It was a technical meeting to revisit the existing guidelines," an official said.

The meeting was chaired by Dr L Swasticharan, director of Emergency Medical Relief and attended by officials from the National Aids Control Organisation, National Centre for Disease Control and World Health Organisation (WHO) representatives.

According to existing 'Guidelines on Management of Monkeypox Disease' issued by the Centre, any person having a history of travel to affected countries within the last 21 days presenting with an unexplained acute rash and symptoms like swollen lymph nodes, fever, headaches, body aches and profound weakness is to be considered to be a 'suspected case'.

A 'probable case' has to be a person meeting the case definition for a suspected case, clinically compatible illness and has an epidemiological link like face-to-face exposure, including health care workers without appropriate PPE, direct physical contact with skin or skin lesions, including sexual contact, or contact with contaminated material such as clothing, bedding or utensils.

A case is considered laboratory confirmed for monkeypox virus by detection of unique sequences of viral DNA either by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and/or sequencing.

Defining contacts, the guidelines stated that a contact is defined as a person who, in the period beginning with the onset of the source case's first symptoms, and ending when all scabs have fallen off, has had one or more of the exposures-- face-to-face exposure, direct physical contact, including sexual contact, contact with contaminated materials such as clothing or bedding --- with a probable or confirmed case of monkey pox.

Cases can be prompted to identify contacts across household, workplace, school/nursery, sexual contacts, healthcare, houses of worship, transportation, sports, social gatherings, and any other recalled interactions.

Contacts should be monitored at least daily for the onset of signs/symptoms for a period of 21 days from the last contact with a patient or their contaminated material during the infection period. In case of occurrence of fever clinical/lab evaluation is warranted.

Asymptomatic contacts should not donate blood, cells, tissue, organs or semen while they are under surveillance.

Pre-school children may be excluded from day care, nursery, or other group settings.

The ministry guidelines state that human-to-human transmission occurs primarily through large respiratory droplets generally requiring prolonged close contact.

It can also be transmitted through direct contact with body fluids or lesions, and indirect contact with lesion material such as through contaminated clothing or linen of an infected person. Animal-to-human transmission may occur by bite or scratch of infected animals or through bushmeat preparation.

The incubation period is usually from six to 13 days and the case fatality rate of monkeypox has historically ranged up to 11 per cent in the general population and higher among children. In recent times, the case fatality rate has been around three to six per cent.

The symptoms include lesions which usually begin within one to three days from the onset of fever, lasting for around two to four weeks and are often described as painful until the healing phase when they become itchy.

The WHO had recently declared monkeypox a global public health emergency of international concern.

According to WHO, monkeypox is a viral zoonosis -- a virus transmitted to humans from animals -- with symptoms similar to smallpox although clinically less severe.

Monkeypox typically manifests itself with fever, rash and swollen lymph nodes and may lead to a range of medical

complications. It is usually a self-limited disease with symptoms lasting for two to four weeks.

International passengers have been asked to avoid contact with dead or live wild animals such as small mammals including rodents like rats and squirrels and non-human primates like monkeys and apes.

## **THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 2-8-2022**

### **Seeking holistic approach to higher education**

*Apart from quality education, students' decisions in selecting higher education institutions depend on fee structure, scholarship schemes and overall development activities.*

#### **Post Report**

**KATHMANDU,** Like thousands of students from all across the country, Niharika Acharya, a recent Secondary Education Examination (SEE) graduate, has come to Kathmandu to pursue higher education. Acharya is a student of Shree Saraswati Higher Secondary School in Diktel, Khotang, a hilly district in eastern Nepal.

Acharya graduated with a 3.75 Grade Point Average (GPA) and plans to enroll on the Science stream. She has been visiting various educational institutions in the Valley and preparing to sit for the entrance examinations.

But a secondary school's reputation is not the only thing Acharya and fresh SEE graduates like her are considering.

Besides a quality education, which is the obvious requirement, Acharya believes the fee structure, scholarship schemes and extracurricular activities the institutions have to offer play a major role in a student's decision when choosing a secondary school.

"Quality education is the most important thing," said Acharya. "However, the fee structure and scholarship schemes along with

extracurricular activities too matter a lot."

"I came to know that secondary schools provide scholarships based on the marks secured during the entrance as well," Acharya said.

"I am currently preparing for it."

Raj Kumar Acharya, the head of academics and administration at Nobel Academy at New Baneshwor, believes the school can be the ideal choice for students like Acharya.

"We will enroll around 400 students in the Science stream," said Acharya. "The students will be divided into 10 sections and classes

will be conducted in the morning as well as afternoon shifts."

In terms of the tuition structure, Acharya claims, the Nobel Academy has a competitive bracket compared to other educational institutions in the Valley. "The fee for the Science stream for grade 11 is Rs135,000 annually. The fee structure for grade 12 is also the same except for the Rs10,000 admission fee applicable to grade 12 students."

The secondary school also provides various scholarship schemes.

Besides those provided on the basis of GPA and to the graduates from public schools, the school this year will provide various scholarships to around 300 students on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, said Acharya. "Examinations for the scholarships are being held on August 3, Wednesday."

The secondary school not only has options for those looking to pursue Science but also has plenty of choices for those interested in Management and Fine Arts.

The annual fee for these streams are Rs120,000 and Rs117,000 respectively, Acharya told the Post.

The high school plans to enroll around 480 students in the Management stream and around 80 in Fine Arts.

Of 495,751 students who sat for the 10th grade final examination, 9,633 graduated with Grade Point Average (GPA) 3.60 and above, according to the National Examinations Board. The maximum GPA a student can score is 4.

Similarly, 41,627 students secured 3.20 to 3.60 GPA while 69,900 students managed to secure GPA between 2.80 to 3.20.

The number of students graduating with a 2.40 to 2.80 GPA stood at 90,758. As many as 112,733 students qualified for grade 11 with 2.0 to 2.40 GPA.

For those who want to specialise in a particular field of study, there are institutions such as IST Secondary School. The secondary school offers Hotel Management and Tourism Management courses in grade 11, according to Samjhana Basnyat, the principal of the school. This year the secondary school has 120 seats available for both the courses altogether.

“The course has been designed for students who want to pursue a career in the hospitality industry in future,” said Basnyat. “Our method of teaching is practical learning. The students will spend most of their course time in practical applications of what they learn in the classroom.”

The fee structure for both the courses for grades 11 and 12 starts at Rs300,000, according to Basnyat. The secondary school provides GPA-based scholarships to deserving students.

“We focus more on quality than quantity,” said Basnyat. “We make sure we have quality students and that they graduate with flying colours.”

The students securing top ranks in final examinations are also provided with various scholarships.

Moreover, the students will get a first-hand experience of what awaits them in the pursuit of their career in the hospitality sector with

IST sending students for three-to-four-month internship programmes at various three and four-star hotels in Kathmandu after completion of grade 12 examination, according to Basnyat.

Apart from the certificate from the National Examinations Board, the students also get a vocational certificate from Tourism School Salzburg, Austria on the basis of their performance during practicals and internships after grade 12.

“They will have two certificates when they complete grade 12,” said Basnyat. “Apart from academic knowledge, we focus on students’ personality development from day one.”

Upon graduating from grade 12, students

can join the IST College, which offers Bachelor’s degrees in Hotel Management and Tourism Management, affiliated with the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, Austria.

Rakesh Acharya, another SEE graduate from Shree Pancha Secondary School in Diktal, Khotang, agrees with Niharika adding that secondary schools should also focus on sports and other activities that will boost students’ confidence.

“I have always hesitated to speak in front of people,” said Rakesh. “I would like to get enrolled in a secondary school which offers activities to boost the confidence of students like me apart from regular academic classes.”

## **THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 5-8-2022**

### **Dengue spreads to 59 districts including Jumla and Kalikot**

*Of over 600 cases reported so far this year, more than 100 are from Kathmandu Valley. Officials say they are also investigating some deaths for possible dengue connection.*

**Arjun Poudel**

**KATHMANDU,** Amid a spike in new cases of Covid-19, dengue cases have been reported in many districts throughout the country.

According to the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, 59 districts including all three of Kathmandu Valley—Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur—as well as some mountain districts like Jumla and Kalikot have reported dengue cases.

The Health Office in Kathmandu has reported 64 cases and Lalitpur 57 cases, said Dr Gokarna Dahal, chief of the Vector Control Section at the division, adding that as many as 396 dengue cases were reported from across the country in July alone.

Officials at the division said they have also been reported of some deaths from dengue but they have yet to verify.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease transmitted by female *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. The same vector also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika viruses, according to the World Health Organisation.

Although the post-monsoon period is considered a high transmission season for the dengue virus, Nepal has witnessed outbreaks of the deadly disease in the pre-monsoon, monsoon and post-monsoon seasons.

Satis Bista, chief of the Health Office, Lalitpur, said a lot more people [than what is being reported] could have been infected with the dengue virus as up to 80 percent of dengue cases are asymptomatic. “The problem is that asymptomatic patients can easily spread the deadly disease,” he said.

According to the Health Office, Lalitpur, the infection has spread mainly in the Lalitpur Metropolitan City. The metropolis has already launched search and destroy drives in the disease-hit areas.

“We had also reached some schools during the search-and-destroy drive,” said Bista. “We found dengue-spreading mosquitoes even in some renowned schools.”

Upon discovering dengue-causing mosquitoes' larvae in the discarded tyres in the corners of a school compound, the health workers showed it to school staff and had asked them to cover the tyres with plastic, according to Bista.

In Kathmandu, however, despite detection of dozens of cases, authorities have not yet launched search-and-destroy drives in disease-hit areas, according to officials at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division.

The Ministry of Health and Population said that it has allocated Rs500,000 to each district of the Valley to launch awareness and search-and-destroy drives.

In 2019, at least six people had died and over 16,000 were hospitalised with dengue fever. The outbreak, which had started in the pre-monsoon period from Dharan, spread to 68 districts.

"Even if the fatality rate from infection of the dengue virus is not as high as that of the coronavirus, the massive spread of infection increases burden on hospitals," said Dahal of the division. "Sometimes the virus can cause hemorrhagic fever, which could be deadly."

Mosquitoes that cause dengue breed in clean water and infect people in daylight. Due to an acute drinking water crisis, people in the Valley store water in jars and pots, which could provide ideal breeding grounds for these mosquitoes. Uncovered water tanks, and discarded plastic cups and bottles could also shelter dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

Most of the dengue cases reported in Lalitpur, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur are indigenous—meaning, the infected people contracted the virus locally, officials said.

Experts warn that the timing of the dengue outbreak is serious, as the country has already been dealing with a rapid surge in Covid cases. They say that the rise in dengue cases in the midst of the monsoon could be a variable impact of climate change, which the country is still not prepared to cope with.

"We do not have proper strategies to cope with emerging problems like the dengue infection," said Dr Biraj Karmacharya, an epidemiologist, who is also the head of the Department of Community Medicine at the Dhulikhel Hospital. "By launching awareness drives, search-and-destroy campaigns, and preparing health facilities to deal with emerging problems through adaptation strategies, we can lessen the disease burden."

According to doctors, mild to high fever, severe muscle pain, rashes, severe headache, and pain in eyes are some of the symptoms of dengue.

The UN health agency says that there is no specific treatment for severe dengue, but early detection and access to proper medical care can lower the fatality rate.

"Issues of dengue infection and its spread are no less serious as considered," Karmacharya said. "Authorities concerned should be prepared to deal with its growing burden and introduce programmes to address it."

#### **THE KATHMANDU POST, KATHMANDU 10-8-2022**

### **Swine flu cases rise amid fourth wave of the pandemic**

*At least 57 cases of H1N1 known as swine flu have been reported in the last two months.*

*Experts suggest that authorities concerned should step up surveillance measures.*

**Arjun Poudel**

**KATHMANDU,** At a time when health authorities throughout the country have been dealing with surging new cases of Covid-19 infection, cases of H1N1 virus, also known as swine flu virus infection, have been reported from many places.

Public health experts warned that the H1N1 virus, which is not less severe than the coronavirus, could cause a twindemic in the country.

"Even the health workers are unaware of the spread of the H1N1 virus," said Dr Prabhat Adhikari, an infectious disease and critical care expert. "As the focus of all authorities concerned is on Covid-19, the H1N1 virus could cause epidemic in the country."

According to the World Health Organisation's Global Influenza Surveillance, at least 57 cases of H1N1 infection have been reported since June 6. Similarly, infection of 55 cases of AH3 virus also known as Hong Kong flu have been also reported in the same period.

Public health experts say the rise in the number of influenza cases is concerning at a time when the country is dealing with the fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic. They have warned that chances of misdiagnosis and negligence could be high during this time, which could lead to delayed treatment and even deaths.

"Many people including some senior bureaucrats and leaders died of H1N1 virus infection in the past in our

country,” said Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, chief of Clinical Research Unit at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital.

“What concerns me is influenza cases have not been reported so much after the start of the coronavirus pandemic and this time cases are surging along with Covid-19 cases.”

Doctors say most of the symptoms of the H1N1 virus and Omicron variant of coronavirus overlap with each other, which can lead to misdiagnosis and cause confusions. In both infections (Omicron and influenza), patients suffer from fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, vomiting and diarrhoea, and others.

“Both viruses cause respiratory disease and if not treated on time, both cause severity and deaths,” said Adhikari, an infectious disease and critical care expert. “Most people have been immunised with Covid-19 vaccine but we generally do not take the flu vaccine.”

Doctors say people can also be infected with Covid-19 and influenza at the same time.

On Tuesday, two died and 1,090 people tested positive for Covid--560 in 2,958 polymerase chain reaction tests and 530 in 3,342 antigen tests.

Of 6,300 total tests (both PCR and antigen) carried out in the last 24 hours 1,090 tested positive, meaning the cause of infection in over 5,000 people are unknown.

“What was the reason for the infection in other people,” said Pun, chief of the Clinical Research Unit at Sukraraj Hospital. “Some of them could probably have been infected with the H1N1 virus.”

Doctors generally do not recommend additional tests if one tested negative for the coronavirus.

When a person tests negative for Covid-19, he/she returns home believing that they are safe. But doctors say one should not forget that influenza virus (H1N1) is also highly contagious, which could cause pneumonia and if left untreated, even deaths.

In the past, hospitals in Nepal reported that people have been infected with both Covid-19 and influenza at the same time.

“Authorities concerned should step up surveillance measures and carry out influenza tests, if a patient having Covid-like symptoms tests negative for Covid,” said Adhikari, the infectious disease expert.

## **THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD 7-8-2022**

### **Rotary International president hopes to ensure polio-free world by end of 2023**

**By Staff Correspondent**

**ISLAMABAD:** Visiting President of Rotary International Jennifer Jones has said that Rotary, along with partners, has increased its emphasis on polio eradication in Pakistan and Afghanistan and hopes to make the whole world free from the menace by the end of 2023.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has given the task to nations that polio must be eradicated by the end of 2023 but, unfortunately, 14 cases in a day in Pakistan and Afghanistan were reported. She declared that Rotary International and other partners knew how to deal it and treat it.

She was briefing a select group of media persons on the contribution of Rotary International in the human development sector across the country on Saturday. Director of Rotary International Mohammad Faiz Kidwai, Trustee of Rotary Foundation Aziz Memon, District Governor Adnan Rohaila and Media Coordinator Imran Gaznavi was also present on this occasion.

Jennifer Jones, president of Rotary International, said that Rotary was working in more than 200 countries of the world; its 1.4 million members are constantly striving to improve the lives of their communities and the people of their countries.

“In Pakistan, we have projects on sanitation, clean drinking water, basic education and literacy, maternal and child healthcare, peace development, economic development, women empowerment and environment”, she added.

Citing the example of one of the projects, she said that in Karachi they inaugurated a water filtration plant operated by a female and also visited basic educational schools. Such kinds of projects, she said, were sustainable with the involvement of local females. They (females) also felt ownership and empowerment. She said this kind of project was the hallmark of sustainable human development.

Jones said Rotary was constantly trying to improve people’s lifestyle and economic situation through welfare projects. Rotary has rendered valuable services in Pakistan, now it is time to start new welfare projects with a new commitment from the platform of Rotary in Pakistan.

Rotary has contributed towards the eradication of polio from the world. Rotary's PolioPlus investment in Pakistan for polio eradication is US\$353.8 million and overall its global contribution has been around US\$2.5 billion. Rotary is committed to keep contributing until the world becomes polio-free, she said.

The RI president said that Rotary members believe that we have a shared responsibility to take action on our world's most persistent issues. "We provide service to others, promote integrity and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through our fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders."

She said Rotary was dedicated to causes that build international relationships, improve lives, and create a better world. She emphasized Rotarians all over the world were involved in projects in seven areas of focus, which includes peacebuilding and conflict prevention; disease prevention and treatment; water, sanitation, and hygiene; maternal and child health; basic education and literacy; community economic development and environmental sustainability and climate change.

Appreciating the remarkable performance of Rotary in Pakistan in the event of natural disasters, she said that be it a earthquake situation or flood disasters, Rotary has always stepped forward and played a full role in providing immediate relief to the victims and their rehabilitation. Rotary Pakistan has distributed around 25,000 shelter boxes/ tents, donated by Rotary in the UK.

The RI President said "Rotary Jo Goth" was the best project for the rehabilitation of victims of the earthquake in Pakistan, in which 160 houses along with a sustainable infrastructure was built and given to the underprivileged and homeless victims with ownership rights. She also appreciated Rotary's role towards the Total Literacy and Quality Education where almost each of the 500 clubs in Pakistan are involved in eliminating illiteracy from Pakistan. She was also appreciative of the 2,500 congenital heart surgeries jointly undertaken for children in Pakistan and India.

The project of artificial limbs under Rotary in Pakistan is also performing significant services. Under this project, disabled people are enabled to play an active role in society. Similarly, Rotary is also doing significant services in the field of education.

"There is a need for many more such projects in the country," she declared.

## **THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD 11-8-2022**

### **The state of IT education**

*Over the last 15 years, in most years, annual export growth of the IT & ITES sector has been solidly in the double digits*

**By Dr Ayesha Razzaque**

The Information Technology (IT) and IT Enabled Services (ITES) sector has been among the fastest growing in Pakistan's economy. IT exports for 2021-22 are expected to clock in at around \$3.5 billion, up from \$2.1 billion the previous year, a massive 66 per cent increase.

Over the last 15 years, in most years, annual export growth of the IT & ITES sector has been solidly in the double digits. Fully developed, this sector has the potential to become a huge contributor to the foreign exchange needs of the country. During this time, at different times, successive governments have exhibited various degrees of support (by introducing policy reforms), indifference and neglect (by inaction), and at times greed (by milking the cow prematurely by significantly raising taxes) towards it.

What is more, the Board of Investment's (BOI) data of forex earned from exports vs forex spent on imports by the IT sector from 2006 to 2019 shows how incremental additional forex spending has coincided with a disproportionately larger increase in exports.

In August of last year, the Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA) issued its Salary Survey 2021, a detailed report that goes well beyond documenting compensations of a wide variety of roles in Pakistan's IT industry. The data is sliced by location, roles, experience level, company size, company types, gender.

Despite the mushroom growth of computer science and related programmes in colleges and universities over the past few decades, the IT and ITES sector still faces a shortage of skilled, capable professional workers. This is evidenced by the fact that 50 per cent of companies cited the lack of experienced human resources in the market, and 17 per cent cited employee retention as the reason for higher salary increments. High staff turnover rates provide further evidence that this is an experienced and qualified worker's market - staff turnover rate went from the 14-18 per cent range in the years from 2017 to 2020, up to a whopping 30 percent in 2021.

The report dedicates a significant section to industry-academia linkages and university rankings. It contains



several rankings of universities, such as by companies' willingness to offer their graduates higher salaries, reputation for research and innovation, number of graduates on company staff, rankings sliced by regions as well as an overall nationwide ranking. The universities listed in almost all these rankings, in descending order, are: NUCES-FAST, NUST, LUMS, COMSATS, GIKI, IBA, UET-Lahore, NED UET, Bahria University and SZABIST. Industry-academia linkages and, closely related to it, employer reputation also factor into global university rankings, such as the Times Higher Education (THE) and QS rankings.

Region-specific rankings add more names to this list. Almost all universities featuring prominently on these rankings are located in the three technology hubs: Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. These three cities account for 97 per cent of the companies and more than 99 per cent of the more than 30,000 employees surveyed for the P@SHA report.

Note how most names are private universities or public universities that enjoy better levels of financial support than most public universities. The university rankings in the P@SHA report are the market's evaluation of graduate employability (and worth) of computer science and related programs of universities.

A few months ago, I wrote about some of the insights that were buried in the data set of applicant profiles for batch-3 of the Kamyab Jawan programme ('Not skilled for work', The News International, March 7, 2022). The programme offered 240 different skill trainings of various duration typically intended for those with a high school education or less. As an education researcher, I was very interested in applicants holding university degrees. Out of 279,000 unique applicants, 74 had PhD degrees, 29,225 had MA/MSc degrees and 76,899 had BA/BSc degrees.

Unsurprisingly, interest was strongly skewed towards technology-sector skills. The top-five programmes by applications were: 1) Digital Marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO); 2) Amazon Virtual Assistant; 3) IT (Web Graphics & Mobile App Development); 4) Cyber Security; and 5) Computer Application & Office Professional, which received between 24,000 and 18,000 applications each.

Based on data available at the time, the following were the 10 universities that supplied the most university graduates to the applicant pool: 1) University of Punjab, 2) various degree colleges across the country, 3) Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), 4) University of Sindh Jamshoro, 5) University of Karachi, 6) Bahauddin

Zakariya University Multan, 7) Islamia University Bahawalpur, 8) University of Peshawar, 9) Government College University Faisalabad and 10) University of Balochistan Quetta. Applicants from each institution range from many thousands to about 1300.

This can be interpreted as a list of the top large universities whose programmes fail to make their graduates employable. Note that all of them are public. Also note that this list is complementary to the list of university names found in the P@SHA report's rankings by IT and ITES companies.

Also noteworthy is that almost all universities with sought-after programmes are located in or near Pakistan's three tech hubs. On the other hand, several universities whose graduates feel the need for a vocational / skills training programme post-degree are located outside those tech hubs. The geographical distance of a university to relevant employers is an important factor that determines the ease with which industry-academia linkages can be established and, ultimately, how many graduates can transition into jobs.

Institutions located in far-flung areas or even tier-2 and tier-3 cities also have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified faculty members on staff. This is particularly the case for technology programmes which end up wallowing in mediocrity. This is something politicians need to keep in mind when they demand or announce the establishment of a new university for their constituency. The faculty talent pool available to small-town and far-flung universities affects the level of skill that can be expected from graduates of their programmes.

P@SHA's university ranking is, in essence, an assessment of that all-important feature the HEC and universities claim to champion but have so much trouble quantifying: the quality of (computer science and associated) programmes. The results of the HEC's one-size-fits-all approach to programme rankings lumps vastly different programmes into the same basket and that is why they do not align with the public's perception of institutional reputations.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: the myriad of factors that are taken into account to arrive at the HEC's rankings are for the most part irrelevant for the purpose of most undergraduate students who make up the bulk of university students. Undergraduate students largely do not care how many papers their faculty published in (often) obscure venues, grant proposals they won or patents they have to their name.

It ought to be universities' own responsibility to collect, publish and disseminate data that proves their programme's quality and effectiveness. The HEC stepped in and tried to fill that void with its own ranking but clearly lacks sufficient resources for this task. In that regard, P@SHA is providing valuable information to the public that at least covers computer science and IT education. Prospective computer science and IT programme students and their parents should take full benefit from P@SHA's – the industry's – own report which provides a useful, actionable, and outcome-based evaluation of local university programmes; one hopes it is able to continue publishing them in years to come.

### **PAKISTAN TODAY, ISLAMABAD 12-8-2022**

## **The ebbing standard of Education in Pakistan**

*Why we aren't producing world beaters*

**By Ali Zubair Soomro**

“To destroy a nation, you need not to drop an atomic bomb, just lower its standard of education”

While other countries are working on the technology, innovation, different modern projects, making their country progressive with modern technologies, Pakistan is still generating graduates with a low level of creativity and low chances of getting employed which neither guarantees them a job nor makes them capable of developing a project through which they can earn a living. Resultantly, they cannot become financially self-sufficient and cannot contribute to the well-being of the country.

Besides, Pakistan's literacy rate is 62.3 percent which means that about 60 million people in the country are illiterate. An estimated 22.8 million children aged between 5 and 16 are out-of-school, though Article 25A of the Constitution obliges the government to provide free and compulsory education to children of ages five to 16 years.

However, the students, who are getting education, are not getting a standard education. Consequently, we do not have any prominent locally graduated economist, computer scientist, political scientist, or scientists etc who can outsmart our international counterparts.

With 2.83 percent of the world population, we have only two Nobel laureates (Dr Abdus Salam in Physics and Malala Yousafzai in Peace), and no Nobel laureates in fields like chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace. On the other side, Israel with 0.2 per cent

population of the world has 20 percent of the Nobel laureates in different fields. She has advanced in modern technology. She uses modern machinery for agriculture, and for executing different works.

Do you wonder why we cannot manage to create Nobel laureates, prominent economists, computer scientists etc who can work for the prosperity of the country while Israel and some other countries have managed to create all of them? It is the poor quality of our education that is generating incapable and unskilled masses that cannot contribute to the well-being of the country.

There are some reasons behind this poor educational quality.

Low budget for the sector is discussed widely and it is indubitably a matter of great concern the government must pay heed to, but there are several other reasons.

**The government should take concrete measures to resolve issues of a démodé syllabus, untrained teachers, poor supervision, and the poor examination system so that our students can take an active part in the international arena of education and can successfully outsmart their counterparts.**

First is an outdated syllabus. We have always remained deprived of an up-to-date syllabus that could match the trend of the developing world. Presently, when the world knows the significance of technology in each and every field and is chasing it, we have overlooked modern technology. If universities are providing degrees in technology, regretfully, the quality of education that is being provided is so low that the students cannot have innovative ideas regarding their main field. If some students succeed in coming up with some innovative ideas, they lack the resources to execute them.

Apart from this, our school and college syllabuses are outdated too, and similarly they do not match international standards so they remain far behind in the international arena of educational contests. Most of our syllabus is based on theory. Luckily, we have some practical work but about 60 to 70 percent of educational institutions do not have access to equipment for performing practicals. We do not prefer logical thinking, critical thinking, advanced mathematics, advanced science etc at secondary education level as Israel has preferred, and Israelis by reaching university outmatch their American counterparts because their syllabus is updated as per the need of the hour.

Secondly, unskilled and untrained teachers, who possess old and traditional teaching methods. A teacher plays a

key role in the learning process of a student. But, in Pakistan, hardly, our teachers apply modern methods for teaching. Roughly 60 percent institutions have traditional teaching methods where teachers write answers of questions on the board and students copy. They are not encouraged to search out the answers from the textbook so that they can develop their reading skills, writing skills and presentation skills.

Besides, teachers' behaviour is found rude or inappropriate due to some reasons such as incompetence, communication gap and incapability to create learning environment. Incompetent in terms of knowledge or teaching style, teachers cannot assimilate the mental capacities of students so become inapt to educate them. Also, the communication gap between teachers and students is a matter of concern. Sometimes teachers cannot communicate appropriately to the students and rest of the time students

And, they remain unable to create a learning environment due to reasons like too much strength of students in one classroom whereas according to the America's National Education Association the ideal classroom strength is 15 students. A size of 30-40 students in a classroom is also considered a normal size. But, in our schools the strength exceeds 100 or 50 at least, and it is impossible for a teacher to pay one-on-one attention to students. Consequently, they cannot learn attentively, only students with much effort manage to learn somewhat. Also, old and traditional teaching methods jade students to learn without any creative or fun-based activity.

For these reasons, students' learning capabilities are adversely impacted. They are discovered to be unmotivated to study. Herbart verbalised that a student's interests influence learning outcomes. In the case of an unmotivated and jaded student, he cannot perform extraordinarily and will remain dull and uncreative. As a consequence, he experiences stress as well. For stress, a study was conducted to gauge what kind of students can tackle this properly. The study showed that students with the big five personality traits managed to control stress well and secure better grades. The big five personality trait models consist of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience, and emotional stability.

Thirdly, poor supervision also contributes to the ebbing standard of education. Supervision can be of parents, institute administration, and teachers. Institute administration and teachers are rarely held accountable for their performance at the institute, and they are

sometimes unsupportive of students. Aside from that, a large number of parents pay little or no attention to their children's performance and rarely visit school to inquire about their children's performance. However, Lev Vygotsky, in his theory of zone of proximal development, mentions that students with support and cooperation can perform better in comparison with students who are not supported or aided.

Lastly, the faulty examination system contributes to declining standards too. In Pakistan, the purpose behind examinations is to assess the memory of students rather than their intelligence. So, crammers secure good marks and intelligent students cannot perform well in memorizing long answers. In the end, crammers' knowledge does not contribute to their well-being even. Also, we have a school-based examination system which does not pave way for better results. And, a professor in South Africa had well said that, "Collapsing any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long-range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations." In interiors of the country, especially in Sindh and Balochistan, copying in board examination is common.

To counter educational issues, not only schools but also parents have to contribute. To make a practical and applied syllabus, the government should compare it to the international level and train teachers as per international standard. Also, parents must train their child for the big race. Government and parents can follow Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development to train children from their childhood. The model comprises four stages: 1) Sensorimotor, which lasts from birth to two years, in this stage a child learns through seeing, touching etc. 2) preoperational, which lasts from three years to seven years, at this stage a child engages in symbols and manipulates symbols. So, they should be taught through symbols at this stage. 3) Concrete operational, which lasts from eight to 11 years, at this stage the child thinks logically. So, the syllabus must contain some lessons in which a child can learn logically. 4) Formal operational, which lasts from 12 to adulthood, at this stage a child formulates hypotheses and systematically arrives at the answer of a question. Thereby, the syllabus should contain some lessons accordingly.

However, some psychologists differ in opinion saying that each child has different mental capacity by the time, that's why the government should ascertain a middle way to make syllabus with the addition of logical and critical thinking starting in 6 or 7 grade.

The government should focus on modern teaching methods for teachers and should conduct workshops for teachers. Teachers' training is equally significant for ameliorating the education system.

Besides, as per John Dewey's words, schools should focus on students rather than on subjects. Schools should teach as per the learning capacity of a student, not as per the subject constraints. Similarly, parents should set expectations based on the student's ability and continue to encourage them so that they can find motivation to learn.

The government should also pay attention to the examination standards of the schools. Exam papers should be free of errors and encouraging for students. Teachers must be taught regarding preparing question papers and additional checking is essential by the examination head. The government should take constructive measures to control copying in examinations.

The government should take concrete measures to resolve issues of a *démodé* syllabus, untrained teachers, poor supervision, and the poor examination system so that our students can take an active part in the international arena of education and can successfully outsmart their counterparts.

#### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 2-8-2022**

#### **Monsoon floods inflict \$83 million economic toll on Yazd, tourism minister says**

**TEHRAN**—Torrential downpours in the historical core of Yazd have caused some 25 trillion rials (\$83m) in damage, Iran's tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami said on Monday.

"Losses from the natural catastrophe in the historical core of Yazd totals around 25 trillion rials," according to the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Dozens of flash floods ravaged 735 mudbrick houses and structures in the ancient oasis city over the past couple of days, the minister said.

Yazd is chock-full of adobe houses, mansions, bazaars, public bathhouses, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and centuries-old gardens. From the

divine point of view, the city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

During the last few days, flash flooding in 17 provinces of the country claimed 32 lives and left 25 people missing. Sistan-Baluchestan, Tehran, Fars, Kerman, Hormozgan, Qom, Semnan, Mazandaran, Yazd, East Azarbaijan, South Khorasan, Golestan, Isfahan, Bushehr, Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad, Markazi, and Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari are the provinces ravaged by the heavy rainfalls.

A UNESCO World Heritage, Yazd is regularly referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is full of mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

Cultural heritage experts believe that Yazd is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center. Furthermore, the use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs through the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

Yazd is home to numerous qanats which have supplied water to agricultural and permanent settlements for thousands of years. The man-carved underground qanat system relies on snow-fed streams flowing down the foothills of surrounding mountains. The earliest water supply to Yazd is estimated to date from the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE). However, many others have been continually repaired and used over time, and most surviving Ab-Anbars (traditional mudbrick cisterns) can be today traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods.

**AFM**

## **IV - DEFENSE AND SECURITY**



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**THE TELEGRAPH, KOLKATA 2-8-2022**

**India to be part of 17-nation 'Pitch Black' exercise in Australia**

*Mega air combat activity is scheduled to take place from August 19 to September 6*

**PTI | New Delhi**

India will be part of a mega air combat exercise in Australia this month that is set to witness the participation of around 100 aircraft and 2,500 military personnel from 17 countries.

India's participation in the exercise, "Pitch Black", has been confirmed by the Australian government.

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) considers "Pitch Black" as its "capstone" international engagement activity with the air forces of strategic partners and allies.

The exercise is scheduled to take place from August 19 to September 6.

An Australian readout said about 100 aircraft and 2,500 military personnel from 17 countries will arrive in the Northern Territory in the country in two weeks to commence Pitch Black 2022 (PBK22).

With a four-year hiatus since the last edition of Pitch Black due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's exercise will see a return of the combined force to Australian skies, enhancing interoperability and strengthening relationships, it said.

PBK22 Director Engagement Group Captain Peter Wood said he is pleased to see the return of Pitch Black after the extended break.

"International participation in Exercise Pitch Black, from within the Indo-Pacific region and further abroad, provides all nations' personnel with experience in working with aircraft, systems and work practices, in northern Australia's unique environment, that would otherwise be unfamiliar," Group Captain Wood said.

"Exercising with our international partners in combined air combat operations is pivotal to ensuring Air Force remains ready to respond whenever the Australian government requires," he added.

The readout said this year's participants include Australia, Canada, India, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, the UAE, the UK and the US.

"We are very much looking forward to working with our international partners once again for Exercise Pitch Black," Group Captain Wood said.

The defence and security ties between India and Australia have been on an upswing in the last few years.

In June 2020, the two countries elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed a landmark deal for reciprocal access to military bases for logistics support.

The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) allows the militaries of the two countries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies, besides facilitating scaling up of overall defence cooperation.

The Australian Navy was part of the Malabar naval exercise hosted by India in November 2020 as well as last year.

**THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 11-8-2022**

**US, India to participate in annual military drill near China border: Reports**

*Yudh Abhyas' will take place from October 18 to 31 at an altitude of 10,000 feet in Uttarakhand's Auli and will focus on high-altitude combat training.*

**Written by Aniruddha Dhar, New Delhi**

Amid the ongoing tensions between China and the United States following House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's recent visit to Taiwan, the US and India have decided to conduct a combat exercise in Uttarakhand, bordering China, this October, reported *Nikkei Asia*.

The military drill will take place from October 18 to 31 at an altitude of 10,000 feet in Uttarakhand's Auli and will focus on high-altitude combat training, the report, citing US Army Pacific, added.

While the annual joint exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' is not new, the location and timing for this year's drill are interesting, taking into consideration Beijing's unprecedented exercise surrounding Taiwan in the past several days.

US Army Pacific's Major Jonathan Lewis, who handles public affairs, told *Nikkei Asia* that the strategy for this year's exercise focuses on cold-weather operations, and at high-altitude, an environment that poses distinct challenges.

Auli is about 95 km from the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the disputed border between India and China. The drills will take place as part of the 18th edition of an annual joint exercise known as "Yudh Abhyas" (War Practice).

India has hosted the annual exercise in Uttarakhand before, including in 2014, 2016 and 2018. But those exercises were all conducted in the foothills, more than 300 km from the boundary.

The edition of the exercise also focused on high-altitude, cold-climate training, but was held in Alaska, *Nikkei Asia* reported. The combination of high elevation and the

proximity to the border area shows that the US and India are pushing the envelope.

The border standoff between India and China, which has cast a shadow over the bilateral relationship, entered its third year in May 2022. A full resolution is still not in sight even though the two sides have had limited success in disengaging rival soldiers from some flashpoints.

India and China have been locked in a border standoff since May 2020 and several rounds of military and diplomatic talks have only resulted in partial disengagement of troops from friction points.

India lost 20 troops in the clash and four Chinese soldiers also died.

During a visit to India this year, US Army's Pacific Commanding General Charles Flynn described China's military build-up near the disputed border as "alarming."

CNN reported that a US department of defence spokesperson said the tie with India was "one of the most important elements of our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region."

"One important element of this broader effort includes exercises and training events and Yudh Abhyas is one such annual bilateral exercise designed to improve interoperability and improve our respective capacities to address a range of regional security challenges," CNN quoted the spokesperson as saying.

#### **THE INDIAN EXPRESS, NEW DELHI 2-8-2022**

### **ISRO to undertake maiden flight of SSLV on August 7**

*"The launch of the SSLV-D1/EOS-02 Mission is scheduled for Sunday, August 7, 2022, at 9:18 am (IST) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota," the space agency said on Twitter.*

**Written by Anonna Dutt | New Delhi**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will undertake the maiden flight of its newly developed Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) on August 7, ahead of Independence Day celebration.

"The launch of the SSLV-D1/EOS-02 Mission is scheduled for Sunday, August 7, 2022, at 9:18 am (IST) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota," the space agency said on Twitter.

This is significant given that India was set to celebrate 75th Independence Day with the first human spaceflight, as per the deadline set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence day, 2018.

The work on Gaganyaan mission, country's first manned flight to space, was delayed due to the pandemic, with the first abort test scheduled for later this year, to demonstrate the crew escape system to be used in case of an emergency mid-flight.

The SSLV mission too was delayed by a couple of years due to the pandemic. Experts believed that this could hamper the economic prospects of the space agency in the global space market as the new launch vehicle has been designed keeping in mind commercial launches of small satellites with a quick turn-around time for the missions.

On its first flight, the SSLV will carry one of India's Earth Observation Satellites – EOS-2 – that will have applications in mapping and developing various GIS applications.

It will carry a mid-wavelength infrared camera and a long-wavelength infrared camera with a resolution of 6 metres. The satellite, weighing 142 kg, will have a mission life of ten months.

"The SSLV launch was long overdue. It will shift the burden of commercial launches from Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles (PSLV). And, will likely offer cheap, quick launch for small satellites. ISRO should have the wherewithal to do that, especially now that space startups are being encouraged," said Ajey Lele, senior fellow at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

In its maiden flight itself, SSLV will also carry the AzadiSat, a satellite developed by 750 rural students from across the country coordinated by SpaceKidz India, a space start-up.

The satellite was shipped to Sriharikota on Monday, ready for integration with the launch vehicle.

Primarily designed as a commercial vehicle, the SSLV is likely to cost a fourth of the current PSLV. It can also be assembled by a team of six people within seven days in comparison to a team of 600 people who take a couple of months to assemble a PSLV.

#### **THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 3-8-2022**

### **What ails the IAF fighter fleet**

**Anil Golani**

Every time there is a MiG-21 crash or an accident in the Indian Air Force (IAF), there is hype and frenzy, with the media going ballistic for a few days till another news takes over. The last unfortunate accident that occurred on the night of July 28 resulted in the loss of two precious lives in the line of duty. Since then, statistics have

flooded the media on the number of MiG-21 aircraft and lives lost to date.

Military aviation is inherently a profession laden with occupational hazards that entail risk to life, irrespective of actual conflict situations. All aviators understand this well. The public perception, however, is contrary to what exists and the circumstances that people operate in, and this needs to be clarified along with suggestions to alter or improve the status quo. In addition, an earnest attempt needs to be made to avoid jingoism and deal with facts that bedevil national security.

The morale of young aircrew is important, and their confidence is affected when fatal accidents occur. While a court of inquiry determines the cause of accidents and remedial measures are instituted by the IAF, given a choice, every fighter pilot would like to fly the latest combat aircraft. Every aircraft that gets airborne is certified airworthy, and the maintenance crew of the IAF has the unenviable task of keeping the MiG-21s flying as they approach the end of their service life.

The perception that the IAF flies poorly maintained aircraft is incorrect. Vintage aircraft fly across the world, mainly for display purposes. But combat aviation for a professional force, faced with growing and imminent threats, should be avoided. The country's leaders must keep the morale of the young air warriors high to face challenges. So, important decisions and steps to change the status quo must be taken urgently.

When it comes to national security, consensus among political parties must not only be bipartisan, but also the concern for replacement of aging aircraft and systems must be unequivocal. This concern, at the national level, must lead the government to take bold steps and decisions that would not only repose the trust placed in them by the country's people, but also reverse the slide that the IAF faces today for its dwindling fighter fleet.

Bold steps taken today will take time to bear fruit.

The contract for supply of 83 LCA Tejas Mk 1A was signed by the government in February 2021 with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). The prototype of this aircraft just flew last month, the deliveries are due to begin in 2024, with the last aircraft being supplied by 2030.

The Tejas saga is a story of many achievements and firsts for the indigenous aviation industry. However, the production track record leaves much to be desired. The incessant delays and promised timelines that slip do not repose much trust in the only behemoth of aircraft production in the country, HAL.

Trapped in the vicious cycle of "Atmanirbharta" and the lack of indigenous options coupled with the IAF's dwindling fighter fleet, there is an urgent need to take prompt action, which the present government can well do, given its heft and nationalistic agenda.

For a nation that needs its sanctioned strength of fighter aircraft, considering the clear and present security situation that confronts it, urgent steps and bold decisions are required to stem the slide of its inventory.

Huge investments are required for the procurement and manufacturing of fighter aircraft, and this requires a whole-of-government approach. India's growing economy should quickly invest in assets that secure our skies.

Decisions taken today would take time to bear fruit, but the impact on the morale of its fighting force and the trust that the country's people have reposed in the leadership would be immediate.

**Anil Golani is additional director general, Centre for Air Power Studies**

### **THE TRIBUNE, CHANDIGARH 4-8-2022**

#### **No compromise on security**

*The pointer to future economic prosperity is 'Make in India'. The Indian armed forces are a prominent stakeholder in its success. The numbers related to equipment and wherewithal of the services are huge. The making of military equipment gives a push to the industry. It also builds up a dual-use ecosystem of many smaller items, which in turn, boosts entrepreneurship and generates employment.*

**Lt Gen Pradeep Bali (retd)**

*Military Commentator*

As independent India turns 75, the most important aspect of its nationhood is its territorial integrity and the safety and security of its citizens from any external threat or externally sponsored threat. At the forefront in safeguarding our country are the armed forces, supported by various other elements of state power, the prime one being the economy.

We went through four major wars within the first 24 years as an independent country and the last of these conflicts saw India liberating and facilitating the birth of a nation. A limited war was again fought successfully against Pakistani intrusions in Kargil. Virulent insurgencies, which are actually proxy wars, have been effectively combated and kept under check.

However, disputed borders and large areas with constant friction continue to impinge on our developmental goals

and territorial integrity. India's ongoing security problems are land-centric. We have unsettled and disputed borders with our two major adversaries.

Going from the east to west, there is a 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, which is contested all along by the manufactured claims of our northern neighbour. It has well-identified disputed and sensitive areas.

Almost in continuation is the disputed boundary with Pakistan on the world's highest battlefield at the Siachen glacier. Thereafter, is the Line of Control (LoC), stretching over 740 km through J&K.

As the international border with our western neighbour nears the Persian Gulf, we have the boundary dispute at Sir Creek in the Rann of Kutch.

Moving inwards from the borders, the Indian Army, paramilitary forces and Central police organisations have been embroiled in combating militant insurgency in J&K and the North-East, which is aided and abetted by our inimical neighbours.

Then there is a Maoist insurgency waxing and waning in the heartland states, where the Army deployment has been rightly avoided so far.

As we look ahead, there are some pressing issues which need increased focus, relative to our national security. The first one is the economy and the optimum use of the defence budget.

The major economic thrust of the government and the pointer to future economic prosperity is 'Make in India'. The Indian armed forces are a prominent stakeholder in its success. The matrix of numbers related to equipment and wherewithal of the services is of a very large dimension. The manufacture of military equipment not only gives a boost to the defence industry, but also builds up a dual-use ecosystem of many smaller items and sub-items, which in turn, encourages entrepreneurship, generates employment and multiple other benefits. The success of 'Make in India' for defence equipment will lead to an enhancement of defence exports, accrue forex earnings and contribute significantly to the GDP.

The big-ticket missile export to the Philippines was a clear pointer in the direction of becoming a net exporter of defence equipment. The recently tabled report by the Ministry of Defence in Parliament has highlighted a notable decrease in India's military equipment imports. This is primarily due to the new acquisition policies, thrust on indigenous manufacture and successive increase in items on the negative import list, giving a boost to the start-ups to work increasingly in the defence manufacturing eco-system. In this vein, very useful work

is now being done in robotics and AI technologies by new small-scale entrants.

Organising the armed forces into integrated theatre commands is another subject which needs urgent attention. It directly impacts how the forces should be structured and evolved into a robust organisation that optimally harnesses the national military power.

At the outset, there is no gainsaying that to be a great power, India needs a large and modern navy with a trans-oceanic reach. The Indian Navy is a formidable force but given our emerging challenges, it definitely needs to be on a growth trajectory, adequately equipped with surface, sub-surface and aerial platforms for varying roles.

The Air Force has to possess the capability to not only guard our vast air space but also provide operational reach that can also act as an effective deterrent. The IAF is a highly professional service but its capacity needs to be enhanced, upgraded and modernised on an ongoing basis.

However, the issue of integrated force structures has to be viewed in terms of our current challenges and not as one that a superpower with expeditionary forces would see it. Our deployments beyond the Indian shores are only under the UN aegis with two brief exceptions in the past and that too in the immediate neighbourhood.

The US girdles the globe with its theatre commands and aircraft carriers and the wannabe superpower, China, has carved out its own version of such an organisation in keeping with its aspirations and perceived threats. India is neither an expansionist nation nor does it covet foreign territory or aspire to act as a global security provider on its own through the deployment of forces overseas.

The primary role of our armed forces is to deter war against the country and prosecute operations to safeguard our territorial integrity in case deterrence fails. Given the adversarial relationships with our two major neighbouring countries, it is imperative to maintain and equip the three services with state-of-the-art and platform-centric systems.

However, given the force parities and stakes involved, as long as the disputes along the LAC and LoC are managed with resolve and sagacity, the actual occurrence of a large-dimension conventional conflict can well be deterred. At worst, face-offs and intrusions could lead to local clashes, which would lie in the domain of the Army with support from the Air Force. Within these parameters, the creation of an integrated theatre command system would be well served if it leads to greater synergy and optimisation while fulfilling this role.

A concurrent aspect has to be economisation of effort and resources, which will help in balancing the revenue and capital expenditures in the defence budget. This can be achieved by working in a time-bound manner towards commonality in procurement, logistics and administrative issues, which are not service-specific, for the Army, Navy and Air Force.

There are many such areas that require a merger and a patient examination for all three services, ensuring that there is no repetition and wastage of effort. These need to be pursued vigorously, overcoming procedural and service-centric hurdles.

### **THE TRIBUNE, CHANDIGARH 12-8-2022**

#### **Highs & lows of our defence and security**

*Defence reforms were triggered by failures. Even the reforms initiated were exercises in 'tinkering', not de novo ones. Planned holistically and integrating political, military and diplomatic instruments of state, the 1971 victory stands out in solitary splendour. Its military success, however, could not be translated into political gain.*

**Maj Gen Ashok K Mehta (retd)**

*Military commentator*

India's record since Independence in keeping its borders secure and itself internally stable has been satisfactory, but for patches of erratic planning and erring in performance. India hit the ground running to confront its security challenges with a war over J&K days just after the Partition. Since then, it has not ceased fighting wars and skirmishes against Pakistan and China, both blood brothers in their enmity towards India. Over time, threats have magnified as India faced serious internal security challenges of left-wing extremism, insurgencies and terrorism, and more lately, the threat to national cohesion. For a country with myriad challenges staring in the face, scant attention was paid to nurturing and developing systematic defence planning and capability building processes. This led to ad hoc and piecemeal reforms, resulting in substandard operations laced with stunning failures in intelligence, leadership and higher political direction.

The Himalayan tragedy in 1962, the half-fought war against Pakistan in 1965, the costly Kargil skirmish, the wasteful Operation Parakram and the clumsy response to Mumbai terror attacks illustrate the infirmities.

Defence reforms were, therefore, triggered by failures and were not standalone. Even the reforms initiated were exercises in 'tinkering', not de novo ones. Planned

holistically and integrating political, military and diplomatic instruments of state, the 1971 victory stands out in solitary splendour. Its military success, however, could not be translated into political gain.

Of all the reforms, the Kargil Review Committee report was the most far-reaching, though cherry-picking marred its implementation. Other reforms emanated from the Krishna Rao Committee on Forward Policy, the Arun Singh-led Committee for Defence Expenditure and the creation of the Defence Planning Staff (DPS), National Security Council, National Security Adviser with the National Security Advisory Board, Naresh Chandra Task Force and Shekatkar Committee. The first comprehensive Long-Term Defence Plan (1985-2000) was produced by the DPS (I was its founding member), the forerunner of the existing Integrated Defence Staff.

The first National Strategic and Technology Environment Review, which is the equivalent of the contemporary Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), meshing all elements of national power was done by the DPS. The National Security Strategy and war-fighting doctrines will emanate from the SDSR. None of these has materialised so far, not even after the transformational creation of the CDS and Department of Military Affairs.

There is not even a White Paper on defence. India is limping towards an overhaul of its national security and defence architecture. The higher defence organisation has gone somewhat blurred with the National Security Adviser encroaching on the Defence Minister's turf. Political direction from the government to the armed forces is couched in the Defence Minister's 2009 Operational Directive (which is drafted by the services, and none issued thereafter) which states that they will fight on two fronts (Pakistan and China) simultaneously for 30 days (intense) and 60 days (normal).

The intensity for the duration of combat has been revised and updated by each service and synchronised by the IDS. In 2013, the then Army Chief, Gen VK Singh, created a furore by revealing the critical shortages in ammunition and equipment even to fight a 10-day war. Individual service chiefs tend to decide unilaterally on the force levels. So, the IAF aspires for 42 squadrons, the Indian Navy for 200 warships and the Army for four strike corps and so on. Due to India's continental strategy, except the Army, the other services are woefully short of capability.

Defence planning and procurement processes have broken down despite numerous reviews. Compounding these deficiencies is the paucity of modernisation funds. Although the GDP is targeting for \$5 trillion by 2025, the percentage of the defence budget has been declining over

the last decade and without the pension bill, it is around 1.3 per cent of the GDP, when it is meant to be three per cent as per the 15th Finance Commission. The dedicated non-lapsable fund for modernisation recommended by the commission is missing.

The government's focus on Atmanirbharta and 'Make in India' is laudable, but given the fledgling private sector, poorly invested R&D and reluctance of foreign players to transfer high technology, the modernisation process will be retarded. The late CDS, Gen Rawat, had suggested: "We can do with second best equipment", and before him, in Kargil, the then Army Chief Gen VP Malik had said: "We will fight with what we have."

The government has been gung-ho about national security. It implemented the OROP without working its finances, which led to the pension bill exceeding the allocation for modernisation and the hair-brained Agnipath scheme to redress it. Soon, the government shifted its focus from strengthening defence capacity to winning elections, a fair bit of politicisation of the armed forces and targeted deep selection of the service chiefs.

Commendable cross-border attacks in 2016 and 2019 established deterrence against Pakistan and political will of the leadership. These military triumphs created complacency. The absence of urgency in appointing the CDS after Gen Rawat's tragic accident seven months ago reflects that the priority of the defence of the realm has been relegated and the selection of the CDS made maddeningly intricate.

Chinese PLA's intrusions in May 2020 were a big blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, destroying the rapport he built with President Xi Jinping. But more significantly, the PLA aggression signalled that China was going to determine the border and the nature of bilateral relations. Consequently, the realignment of the Indian forces has led to an active second front, reversing the old threat logo: "While Pakistan is the immediate threat, China is the long-term challenge." The PLA achieved strategic surprise in occupying its 1959 claim line. This is yet another major intelligence and operational failure and lessons must be learnt.

This survey depicting the highs and lows of India's defence and security story shows how it has muddled through, and yet acquired a niche in international peacekeeping, recognised as the region's first responder during natural disasters and defended the country's perilous borders.

Once theaterisation is in place, the existing processes refined and political guidance, supervision and funds provided, the military will be second to none. What it

needs is a clear mission, adequate resources and no political interference. Also, the military must be fully professional, undauntingly secular and defiantly apolitical to remain the pride of the nation at 75.

## **THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI 10-8-2022**

### **Diluting the international fight against terrorism**

**TS Tirumurti**

September 11, 2001, was a defining moment in the battle against terrorism. Before 9/11, the world was divided into "your terrorist" and "my terrorist", which were meant to view terror and terrorism as domestic issues, not global concerns. But 9/11 proved that terrorism in one part of the world could devastate the centre of Manhattan, New York. Suddenly, they became "our" terrorists. The war against terror became a collective fight at the global level. The United Nations (UN) Security Council passed a binding resolution on September 28, 2001, and also established the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, whose chair for 2022 is India.

But 20-plus years after 9/11, all is not well. We are drifting back to the era of "your terrorist" and "my terrorist". To begin with, there is a move to categorise terrorism based on the motivations behind such acts. The current preoccupation of Europe (apart from Ukraine) is the rise of their Right-wing. European countries have identified violent Right-wing attacks as their main terrorist threat. These are being called Right-wing violent extremism, violent nationalism, far-Right terrorism, or more simply Right-wing terrorism. This has made Europe defensive while accosting other forms of terrorism, especially the radical Islamist terrorist upsurge in their own countries, and unable to support counterterrorism efforts elsewhere in Asia or Africa.

For the United States (US), the domestic priority now is what it calls racially/ethnically-motivated violent extremism (REMVE). This brand of "extremist terror" has distracted the US from terrorism in other parts of the world. The US attack on select high-value terror targets and also the close cooperation between India and the US in the UN are exceptions. REMVE threats are, at best, limited to certain national or regional contexts, and are certainly not global. Though important in their domestic context, this narrow focus has diluted the country's larger focus. We are now slipping back to the "my terrorist-your terrorist" era.

Another danger in these labels is that they completely ignore that, in democracies, the Right-wing is part of the polity because it comes to power through the ballot. To

demonise these ideologies, using arbitrary labels may work against democracy itself.

This comes even as some fundamental assumptions on which counterterrorism measures rest are being questioned. It is well known that the UN global counterterrorism strategy (GCTS) categorically states that “any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed”. In effect, it says that there cannot be any justification for terror. But when three terrorist attacks took place in France in 2020, the spokesperson of the high representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) said on October 28, 2020, that “the inflammatory caricatures have also provoked acts of violence against innocent civilians...”

In one swift sentence, this UN body provided these attacks with a justification (of Islamophobia no less). It is not a secret that UNAOC depends on funding from Islamic countries for its survival. India held its ground in the latest GCTS report of June 2021 against attempts by countries to provide a justification for terror and dilute the fight against terrorism. There is no good terror or bad terror.

The other worrying attempt is to politicise the phobias against Abrahamic religions, and justify terror. This has serious implications for multicultural, pluralistic, and democratic countries such as ours. Declaring March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia through a resolution tabled by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and co-sponsored inter alia by China and Russia, in effect, singled out one religion above the rest and tacitly divided the UN into religious camps. Only India and France made a so-called Explanation of Vote (EOV).

In its EOV, India condemned all acts motivated by anti-Semitism, Christianophobia or Islamophobia and stated: “...such phobias are not restricted to Abrahamic religions only. In fact, there is clear evidence that over decades such ‘religiophobias’ have affected the followers of non-Abrahamic religions as well. This has contributed to the emergence of contemporary forms of religiophobia, especially anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist and anti-Sikh phobias.”

India provided examples in the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha, the massacre of Sikh pilgrims in gurudwaras, the attacks on temples, the glorification of breaking of idols in temples, and other such, against non-Abrahamic religions. “Celebration of a religion is one thing, but to commemorate the combatting of hatred against one religion is quite another,” said India and hoped that the resolution would not divide the UN into religious camps.

The OIC sponsors (whom India recently accused of bigotry) rejected India’s attempts to include the word “pluralism” in the text, revealing their bias. Is it again a coincidence that Islamic countries are the biggest voluntary donors to the UN for counterterrorism activities?

To top it all, Pakistan continues cross-border terrorism against India and shelters many UN-proscribed terror groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. The Taliban’s capture of Afghanistan, and its continuing strong links with al-Qaeda, have given a fillip to all radical Islamist groups elsewhere, including in Africa and West Asia. The existing structures in Africa are ill-prepared to counter these terrorist groups, particularly in the Sahel, Somalia, or even further down south. We ignore this at our own peril.

Now, some countries seem to have reservations about using the term “zero tolerance” to terrorism. Then have we now come to a stage where we can tolerate a “bit of terror”?

If that is so, how little?

*TS Tirumurti is former Permanent Representative/ Ambassador of India to the United Nations in New York and former chair of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee*

## **THE NATION, ISLAMABAD 8-8-2022**

### **Anti-Terrorism Laws**

**Dr Syed Kaleem Imam and Hammad Rohila**

Almost everyone agrees that terrorism must be eradicated, but many groups criticize the route taken to accomplish this. One school of thought believes the war against terrorism itself is terrorism. Alternatively, some debate the necessity of harsh measures while others push for addressing the root cause to nip the evil in bud.

Dissenting views are essential to maintain balance in any society. This agreement to disagree can even be seen at the highest levels of the United Nations. Despite the zero-tolerance policy of the UN Office of Counter terrorism, the Human Rights Committee is ever concerned about the Anti-Terrorism Act’s (ATA) extensive powers. Occasionally reviewing laws that criminalized terrorism would be prudent before joining either pressure group. It is true that various sections of the law penalize war against the country, sedition, and mutiny, which are the basic components of terrorism; however, its inherent nature is largely lacking for the ever-mutating nature of terrorist activity.

As a result of sectarian conflicts and target killings during the late 70s and early 90s, the country was plunged into a deep swamp of instability and violence. Along with other supplementary laws, the Suppression of Terrorist Activities (Special Courts) Act 1975 and the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance 1990 were passed. In contrast, our chronic problem has been the careless way in which laws have been implemented. The ATA was Pakistan's primary legislation dealing with terrorism in this context. Through various Ordinances or Acts, provisions of the said law have been regularly amended or added.

In the post 9/11 world, a variety of laws were needed to ensure uniform transnational anti-terrorism policies, one of which was terror financing. The Fourth Schedule of the ATA was amended in 2001 to curb financial support for terrorism. Several amendments were made to the law in 2013 and 2014 to further clamp down on terror financing. Earlier to these amendments, special laws aimed at curtailing money laundering were introduced in 2007 and 2010. Although Pakistan has taken early steps to improve its financial situation, one wonders why the Paris-based watchdog 'Financial Action Task Force' placed it on the 'Grey List'. Maybe having a law is one thing, and unyieldingly enforcing it is another! It must be admitted that the blame cannot be pinned entirely on the legislature, executive, or judiciary. It was practically impossible for the government to control terror financing because proscribed organizations disguise their motives as Islamic causes, and the masses give away charity with such cavalier disregard.

The amendment passed on January 10, 2002, emphasized the speedy completion of the trial while specifying a ten-month time frame. As a result of the law, a single bench was expanded to a three-member bench, along with the introduction of one military personnel. A similar solution to having military courts was reinforced in 2014 under the Protection of Pakistan Act. It does not take much convincing that our judicial infrastructure needs serious overhauls, however, makeshift arrangements that endorse and advertise inefficiency do more harm to the cause than good. Despite a lapse of two decades, neither our law enforcement agencies nor our judiciary are inclined to increase their capacity. It is still popular to prefer quick fixes over substantial reforms. This results in lengthy trials which rarely yield the desired results and a system still on artificial life support.

A significant addition to the 2002 amendment was the ability to detain a suspect for up to a year without filing any criminal charges. This very amendment stimulated the deliberations regarding missing persons, it wouldn't

be wrong to say. Interestingly Articles 9 and 10 of our Constitution, however, guarantee a person's security as well as their freedom from arrest and detention. But on the other hand, it allows the making of laws for dealing with persons acting in a manner prejudicial to country integrity, security, and defense. Additionally, the Action (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulations 2011 allowed the restriction of miscreants in internment centers during counter-insurgency operations in Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

In recent years, there has been continuous criticism of the definition of terrorism provided under the ATA. There were originally only two paragraphs in Section 6 ATA defining terrorism, but today the same has been extended to nearly 30 paragraphs. The criminal code was amended in 2005 to include offenses such as kidnapping for ransom and explosives. Due to the aftermath of the Lal Masjid attack, attacks on public properties, such as government buildings, schools, and hospitals, were also included in the definition. The addendums might have been necessary, yet an overstretched definition of terrorism that would include almost all crimes without any link to militancy wasn't prudent. As a result, the necessity and significance of the ATA have been undermined.

The basic test to categorize an act as terrorism under section 6 of the ATA is whether it was designed to create fear among the population. As a result of such an ambiguous requirement, the justice system has clearly endured more loss than value. As examples, two separate murders between political rivals and a murder of a couple accused of extramarital affairs have also been tried under ATA. According to records, many cases are transferred from antiterrorism courts to regular courts due to incorrectly drafted FIRs. The apex court of the country has also recommended that the ATA be revised carefully.

With every passing day, the government was restrained from enforcing its anti-terrorism laws due to the advancement of modern technology. Therefore, both the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Ordinance 2007 and the Act that replaced it in 2016 included provisions relating to terrorism. National Counter Terrorism Authority was also constituted in 2009 to have a holistic counter terrorism strategy by collecting and disseminating data between all stakeholders.

Law enforcement agencies and intelligence agencies remain at odds with each other, which is one of the main setbacks to counter terrorism activities. It is common practice for suspects to be picked up first by other agencies and then transferred to police later. Police are therefore forced to fabricate a story regarding the arrest



incident, which ultimately falls apart in court. Due to lack of credibility in the story narrated in the First Information Report, such procedural irregularities only benefit the suspects when they are eventually released.

Unless existing cracks in the system are filled, a better result cannot be expected. Legislation can never be perfect despite the plethora of numerous other laws that address this topic. Providing robust training not only to law enforcement and intelligence agencies, but also to judges and lawyers will provide the results we need. The good news is that sane voices within the system are raising red flags. To achieve a safe society for future generations, all stakeholders must take stock and work together.

### **THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD 12-8-2022**

#### **Rising militancy**

The recent reports coming in from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa about the regrouping and rise of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Swat are alarming. More than 80,000 lives have been lost at the hands of the TTP terrorists and a long battle spanning over a decade was successfully fought to get rid of them by our security forces. KP and former Fata have seen the worst violence in recent decades at the hands of the TTP. It was only after the APS attack in 2014 that a proper political consensus was built around a military operation to eliminate terrorist networks. All that effort is in danger of slipping away. Security personnel have been attacked, more lives have been lost, negotiations with the TTP were started, then went off the rails and then back – all since the Afghan Taliban took over government in Afghanistan. Ever since the Afghan Taliban overran Afghanistan in August 2021, there had been apprehensions in Pakistan about its possible fallout here. Turns out that those apprehensions were not entirely misplaced. Recently, TTP commander Omar Khalid Khorasani and two others were killed in a roadside bomb attack in Afghanistan. There are several versions related to the details of the attack and it is not yet clear who carried out the targeted attack. But what is clear is that the TTP is regaining strength.

In a case of unwelcome deja-vu, the people of (former) Fata and other parts of KP are once again experiencing the fear of rising militancy. With a fast deteriorating law and order situation, there have been anti-militancy protests in parts of a province that has already seen too many of its own targeted by terror. It is also worrying that the PTI government in KP is blaming the federal government for the rise of the TTP in Swat and adjoining

areas. Provincial governments are essentially responsible for the law and order situation in their administrative areas and the PTI has been in power in the province since 2013, not to mention the fact that the PTI was also in power at the centre when the negotiations started with the TTP last year. This was done without taking parliament into confidence. The past year or so also saw unfortunate attempts to somehow paint the Afghan Taliban as heroes and the TTP as a bunch of 'angry young men' who could just be converted back into accepting constitutional rule in the country. While locals in places such as Dir and Swat are witnessing an increased movement of the militants, they also fear reprisals in case they raise a voice against the rising militancy.

What is needed is a strong political consensus on negotiations with the TTP. Serious questions also await answers: why did Pakistan agree to these negotiations when the TTP was in a weak position? How many TTP members have laid down arms? Is the TTP willing to obey Pakistan's constitution or is it just buying time to regroup as it has done in the past? From Nek Mohammad to several other deals, we have seen how the TTP has not abided by any agreements in the past. It is important for Pakistan to now set some ground rules and then approach any such negotiations. With a political and economic crisis on the one hand and the hydra of terrorism rearing its head again on the other, any attempts at dealing with the TTP must be formed via consensus and a well-thought-out plan. Pakistan cannot afford such a security nightmare at this time.

### **GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA 3-8-2022**

#### **PLA launches missile drill to east of Taiwan as Pelosi arrives; China to turn on a new status quo for Taiwan situation as 'US has broken the old one'**

**By Yang Sheng and Liu Xuanzun**

The People's Liberation Army (PLA), on the night that US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi landed in Taiwan for her provocative visit that violates the US promise of opposing "Taiwan independence" secessionism, launched massive military drills around the island of Taiwan, including a long-range live fire drill in the Taiwan Straits and a live fire conventional missile drill to the east of the island, with analysts saying China is not merely targeting a visiting 82-year-old US politician, but is eyeing the anti-secession campaign against the secessionist Taiwan authorities and is to concretely speed up the reunification process.

The PLA will also conduct a series of live fire military drills from August 4 to 7 in six different areas that encircle the island of Taiwan from all directions, according to the Xinhua News Agency after Pelosi landed at the Taipei airport. Analysts said there are many options on the table for China to speed up the reunification process. Apart from military drills, the options could include striking Taiwan military targets, just as the PLA did in the previous Taiwan Straits crisis, pushing new legislation for national reunification, sending military aircraft and vessels to enter the island's "airspace" and "water areas" controlled by the Taiwan authorities and ending the tacit cease-fire with the Taiwan military.

Participating in the drills, J-20 stealth fighter jets took off from an airfield on Tuesday evening, with launchers of rockets and missiles also mobilizing under shades of the night, a report by China Central Television showed.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng summoned US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns on early Wednesday morning to protest against Pelosi's visit to Taiwan island. The nature of Pelosi's visit is extremely vicious and the consequence is very grave. The Chinese side will not sit idly by, Xie told Burns.

Shortly after Pelosi arrived at Taipei's Songshan Airport, five Chinese authorities including the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Taiwan Affairs Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee and the Ministry of National Defense issued statements condemning the visit, which seriously damages the political foundation of China-US relations and sends a seriously wrong message to "Taiwan independence" forces.

China will definitely take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity in response to the US Speaker's visit. All the consequences must be borne by the US and the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in the statement.

The secessionist DPP authority colluded with the external forces and insisted on inviting Pelosi to Taiwan, which is extremely dangerous and will trigger severe consequences. The Ministry of National Defense said the PLA will conduct a series of targeted military operations to take countermeasures in safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity and crack down on the external interference and secessionist attempts.

Based on the frequent releases from Chinese governmental departments and the announced military

drills, China is fully prepared for Pelosi's provocative acts, and it is certain that China will take a series of actions to make a strong response to the US provocation, experts said.

There is no reason for China to be nervous, because such a political show made by Pelosi will not change the overwhelming advantages, especially the military one, held by the mainland against the Taiwan authorities and the US in the region. Nor will the trip provide any possibility of "Taiwan independence," and it cannot change the unshakable hard fact that Taiwan is part of China, said experts, noting that what China needs to do is to use this incident to maximize its advantage and keep pushing the reunification process.

#### **PLA's actions**

The announced PLA drills, likely to be larger in scale than the one in the 1996 Taiwan Straits crisis, serve not only as warnings to the US and "Taiwan independence" secessionists, but also as rehearsals for the PLA to reunify the island by force, experts said, noting that missiles could fly over the island.

Immediately after Pelosi's plane landed in Taipei on Tuesday evening, the PLA Eastern Theater Command announced it will start a series of joint military operations around the island of Taiwan starting Tuesday evening.

Joint maritime and air exercises will be held in sea and air spaces to the north, southwest and southeast of the island of Taiwan, long-range live-fire shooting will be held in the Taiwan Straits, and conventional missile test launches will be held to the east of the island of Taiwan, Senior Colonel Shi Yi, a spokesperson at the PLA Eastern Theater Command, said in a statement on Tuesday.

This means the island of Taiwan will be surrounded by PLA drills in five directions.

The joint maritime and air exercises in the north, southwest and southeast will likely hone the capabilities of warplanes and warships to seize air superiority and control of the sea; the long-range live-fire shooting in the Taiwan Straits will likely feature long-range multiple rocket launchers that can strike targets on Taiwan island directly from the mainland; the conventional missile test launches to the east of the island means that, if the missiles were launched from the mainland, they would fly over the island of Taiwan, analysts said.

It's also possible that the missiles will be launched from the PLA Navy vessels that are sailing to the east of the island, said military experts, noting that the move will target the external forces that try to intervene in the reunification process from the east.

The operation is a stern deterrence against the US' recent negative move and major escalation on the Taiwan question, as well as a serious warning for "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces' attempt to seek "independence," Shi said.

Gu Zhong, deputy chief of staff of the PLA Eastern Theater Command, said that the drills involve courses like joint blockade, sea assault, land attack and air superiority seizing plus live-fire shooting of precision weapons.

The drills will comprehensively test the performance of weapons and equipment as well as the troops' joint operational capabilities in order to be ready for all crises, Gu said.

The troops of the PLA Eastern Theater Command are fully confident and capable of fighting back at any provocation and resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Gu said.

Just as Pelosi's flight was about to land, official Chinese mainland media reported that a Su-35 fighter jet(s) of the PLA Air Force was flying across the Taiwan Straits. Observers said that the PLA aircraft's activity could be part of the drills.

In a separate event, the Xinhua News Agency released a notice announcing that the PLA will conduct important military exercises and training activities including live-fire drills in six large maritime areas and their air space surrounding the island of Taiwan, in its north, northeast, east, south, southwest and northwest, from Thursday noon to Sunday noon.

For safety reasons, entering of vessels and aircraft to those sea and air space is prohibited, Xinhua said.

The report did not give more details on the drills, but experts said that more realistic combat-oriented training courses like the drills that started on Tuesday are expected, including those featuring aircraft carriers.

The PLA Navy's aircraft carrier Liaoning on Sunday embarked on a voyage from its homeport in Qingdao, East China's Shandong Province, and the aircraft carrier Shandong on Monday set out from its homeport in Sanya, South China's Hainan Province, accompanied by a Type 075 amphibious assault ship, media on the island of Taiwan reported on Tuesday.

A report by state broadcaster China Central Television on Saturday revealed for the first time a scene in which what seems to be a DF-17 hypersonic missile was fired. The missile, despite its hypersonic characteristics, is a conventional weapon.

Analysts said that the drills could be greater than the one held in the Taiwan Straits crisis in 1996.

The drills aim to enhance combat preparedness over the Taiwan question, Song Zhongping, a Chinese mainland military expert and TV commentator, told the Global Times on Tuesday.

### **New status quo**

Chinese analysts said the struggle between China and the US at this point is about dignity and concrete strategic interests, but the latter is much more important, so China will not merely focus on playing a game of chicken and hawk with Pelosi, as changing the whole situation of the region is much more significant and valuable.

Lü Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times on Tuesday that China's reaction will not just be a momentary action but will consider the whole security mechanism of Taiwan.

"Based on the released information about the PLA drills from August 4 to 7, the six locations have already encircled the island of Taiwan from all directions, and it could be a series of unprecedented military exercises aimed at realizing reunification by force and also to fight against the external forces that could interrupt the reunification process," Lü said.

Because of Pelosi's arrival at the Taipei airport that totally ignored China's warning, it is certain that the status quo of the Taiwan Straits situation has been broken, and China will make it enter a new status quo, Lü stressed.

The Chinese mainland really knows the importance of "strategic patience," just like when many people expected that China would crack down on the Hong Kong turmoil in 2019 with force when rioters attacked the central government's liaison office, but the facts prove that China did not act in that way but eventually realized a land-slide victory to reinforce its governance in Hong Kong. "So this time, China will teach the US a lesson again, as it will use US mistakes to comprehensively change the Taiwan Straits situation, just as it did in Hong Kong in recent years," said a Beijing-based senior expert on international relations who asked for anonymity.

Wang Jiangyu, a professor of law at the City University in Hong Kong, said China will use this incident to strengthen its sovereignty claim over Taiwan. "For instance, sending squadrons of military aircraft to enter the 'airspace' of Taiwan, or sending military vessels to enter the 'water areas' controlled by the Taiwan military," he said.

These are unprecedented acts of declaring sovereignty over Taiwan, and if China can send its tough signal of determination to effectively contain the provocations made by the US and other Western countries, the

situation will be in favor of the Chinese side in the future, Wang said.

Song said the mainland could also consider speeding up legislation for a national reunification law and even publish a timetable for reunification which will impose real pressure on the US and Taiwan authorities.

#### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 2-8-2022**

### **Biden's blackmailing brings Iran to nuclear threshold**

**TEHRAN** — Although the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is not officially dead yet, the internationally recognized agreement endorsed by the United Nations Security Council is now in a state of coma, chiefly due to the political confusion of U.S. President Joe Biden.

As the successor of a reckless president named Donald Trump who unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018, Biden pledged to return to the deal and built his elections campaign around it.

However, his willingness to compromise has led to a current state of coma for the 2015 nuclear deal, and this has caused Tehran to shift tones.

In an interview with Al Jazeera aired on July 18, Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said, "It should be noted that Iran is on the nuclear threshold and this is not something secret."

He added "Iran has the capability to build nuclear bomb but it has no decision" to do so.

The remarks by Kharrazi sparked various reactions from political analysts all around the world, but it meant one thing: he made it clear that Iran is preparing a credible response to a possible Israeli aggression.

Kharrazi is usually reticent and cagey about Iran's foreign policy. And when he speaks, he chooses his words carefully and in a measured way. However, the same position was uttered by Iran's nuclear chief, Mohammad Eslami.

Speaking on Monday, Eslami said, "As Mr. Kharrazi stated, Iran has the technical ability to build a nuclear bomb, but this is not on the agenda."

However, he added, the important point is that the Israeli regime has made numerous false accusations and fabrications to deceive the public.

"The public is being raised with the support of the opposition front of the Islamic Revolution. They may create problems for Iran, but they will not achieve their desired results, as Iran has found its way and is moving forward with its plans," he elaborated.

Eslami also noted that all of Iran's nuclear activities are being carried out under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency in line with the NPT and the Safeguards agreement.

"The philosophy of the JCPOA was to answer all the illusory questions attributed to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, in the JCPOA, it was agreed that Iran would limit its capacity and accept strict monitoring of its nuclear activities in order to eliminate these false accusations," he noted, asking the West that if it wants to return to the deal, do it quickly and stop wasting everybody's time.

Iran is now closer than ever to obtaining a nuclear bomb, past the point where assassinations, sabotage, or even an airstrike blitz might meaningfully impede its nuclear capability.

In an article published in The Intercept, Hussain Murtaza, a prominent journalist, wrote, "Iran's path to the bomb is of course of its own making, but it has been helped along the way by Biden's stubborn refusal to make the compromises necessary to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. Biden's predecessor Donald Trump withdrew from the deal in a fit of pique, and Biden campaigned on getting back in. When push came to shove, however, Biden refused to undo Trump's aggressive measures."

Murtaza labeled the current status of the JCPOA "as a zombie," as it's neither dead nor alive.

"It's hard to say that the nuclear deal is definitively finished because, in theory, both parties could miraculously come to terms at any time. It could be accurately described as a zombie: not quite dead, but not about to have life breathed back into it either," he wrote.

Seemingly, Biden likes blackmailing Iran. Although Trump initiated the process that led to this point, it was Biden's combination of weakness and indecision that brought the JCPOA to its current dilemma.

"The U.S. is largely stuck now with a long-term mess of its own making. Negotiating with Iran was often depicted by U.S. leaders as doing a favor to the Islamic Republic.

The reality, though, was that the deal served legitimate U.S. interests: preventing nuclear proliferation, while sparing Americans from another armed conflict in the region," The Intercept commented.

Lack of commitment, political will, and guts in the Biden administration has been detrimental not only to his future as a political leader, but also to Europeans and Americans in the midst of the energy crisis. Iran, with its enormous energy market, can be a solid partner for the Europeans throughout the upcoming frigid winter. Biden, on the other hand, selected a different route. Making amends

with Saudi Arabia's Mohammad bin Salman, also known as MBS.

Nonetheless, the strategy did not go as planned. Biden never received a clear guarantee from the Saudis or the Emiratis to raise oil production, and MBS spoke on the phone with Vladimir Putin, Biden's nemesis. This may be taken as the cherry on top of Russia's ice cream sundae, indicating that Russia continues to sell more oil despite U.S. sanctions.

By returning to the 2015 nuclear deal, Biden could be delighted with just one achievement during his presidency before the Republicans possibly depose him in 2024. Having barely accomplished anything in domestic or foreign policy and dealing with angry Americans for a whopping increase in fuel prices, Biden needs to return to the JCPOA more than anyone.

The nuclear accord was the Obama administration's hallmark diplomatic achievement, with Biden serving as vice president. Biden had a substantial political opportunity upon taking office to bring the United States back into compliance with the deal, the minimal parameters of which the Iranians had maintained to uphold despite Trump's maximum pressure campaign.

Instead, perhaps fearful of upsetting his political opponents, Biden declined to immediately re-enter the agreement. Due to domestic political pressure coupled with indecision, Biden continued to play good cop bad cop rather than making a genuine effort to re-enter the deal. Now it appears that he has nothing to show for it.

#### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 2-8-2022**

#### **Iran-Taliban border clashes can be prevented**

**TEHRAN** – The unfamiliarity of the Taliban forces with the nuances of border issues has once again caused completely preventable clashes on the border with Iran, which has so far exercised restraint to contain the situation.

On Sunday, Afghan news media broke the news that clashes took place between the border guards of Iran and the Taliban in the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchistan.

Iran confirmed the news and moved quickly to prevent the issue from spiraling out of control.

Iran's Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Seyed Majid Mir-Ahmadi said the clashes erupted in the Hirmand region when a small group of Taliban border guards ignored border laws and took provocative measures in the Zahak region. The Taliban forces opened fire on Iranian border guards after entering an area they

were not authorized to, which prompted the Iranian side to respond in kind. The clashes lasted for an hour and resulted in the killing of a Taliban member and the injury of another one.

The episode came to an end thanks to Iran's prudence and diplomatic efforts. Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's special envoy for Afghanistan, who has been busy over the last year coordinating Iran's Afghanistan policy, moved to calm the situation.

He said a meeting was held with Taliban defense officials in the wake of the clashes and it resulted in a decision to form a joint committee between Tehran and Kabul to address border issues and prevent the recurrence of border clashes.

The Iranian envoy said the Taliban defense officials instructed their border guards to avoid frictions with their Iranian counterparts after the meeting.

The clashes took place because the Taliban border guards were unfamiliar with the complexities of the porous Iran-Afghanistan borders, according to Iranian officials. Iran's state news agency IRNA said the Taliban guards were conducting patrols inside Iranian territories.

This may explain Iran's calm approach and its measured response to Taliban border infractions despite the fact that Sunday's clashes were not the first in their kind. Over the last year, several similar clashes took place and in all of them Iran sought to soothe tensions.

That's because Iran believes that Taliban forces are yet to get familiar with border issues. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani referred to this on Monday.

"Our understanding of the events of the past two days on the common border with Afghanistan is that these events seem to be caused by the lack of proper attention and knowledge of the Afghan border guards about the common border lines and the known border lines of the two countries," Kanaani said.

"Last year, we created a security wall to deal with traffickers and drug trafficking. In some of these areas, it seems that the Afghan border guards are not aware of the border situation and do not have accurate knowledge of border areas and lines. And some of their actions and movements cause misunderstandings and sometimes border clashes," he added.

The spokesman noted, "Iran's border guard forces closely monitor the border movements along the borders of the region. We expect the authorities of Afghanistan to train their border guard forces more carefully. And they should be familiar with the border lines and know their duties so that we do not witness the repetition of such incidents."

Therefore, border misunderstandings can certainly be cleared up through a Taliban decision to sufficiently train Afghan border guards on border issues. Iran is not seeking to escalate tensions with Afghanistan. Quite on the contrary, it seeks better relations with the war-torn country.

But there are voices in Iran calling for a tougher stance on the Taliban in case border clashes continue. Shahriyar Heidari, an Iranian lawmaker, told ILNA that now Iran is not taking decisive action against the Taliban because it blames border clashes on the Taliban's unawareness of border laws but if the Taliban continue to violate these laws, they will receive a decisive response.

### **TEHRAN TIMES, TEHRAN 13-8-2022**

#### **Recently-launched satellite successfully stabilized: Iranian government**

**TEHRAN-** Ali Bahadori Jahromi, the spokesman for the Iranian government, said on Thursday that the nation's freshly launched satellite, called Khayyam, had successfully orbited the Earth.

"The stabilization of satellite 'Khayyam' was successfully done," Bahadori Jahromi said on Twitter.

On Tuesday, a Russian rocket carrying the high-resolution Iranian satellite was safely launched into orbit from a facility in Kazakhstan. The initial telemetry data from the satellite was received by Iran's ground stations, according to confirmation from the Iranian Ministry of Information and Communications Technology.

Jahromi went on to say that the data and photos gathered from the Khayyam satellite would be used by Iranian knowledge-based businesses in a variety of industries.

He was reiterating statements made recently by Minister of Communications and Information Technology Issa Zarepour who emphasized that Moscow and Tehran are determined to construct fresh versions of the Khayyam satellite.

Zarepour informed the media on Wednesday that preparations were being made to begin a collaborative manufacturing line between Iran and Russia to manufacture three precise upgrades of the remote sensing satellite.

Based on the confirmation from the Iranian Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, the first telemetry data from the satellite was received at Iran's ground stations.

According to Zarepour, the signals were picked up "three or four times" at Iran's Mahdasht station outside Tehran.

The satellite's full system is working well, according to the Iranian Space Agency (ISA). Based on the early evaluations of specialists at the station, every system of the satellite is operating perfectly. It was determined after examining the telemetric data from the satellite that all of its systems are operating exactly as intended and that its orbit is optimal, ISA said.

The Khayyam satellite's imagery will be used to monitor Iran's borders and advance the nation's management and planning capacities in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, environment, mining, and disaster management.

Despite U.S. sanctions, Iran has made enormous technological and scientific advancements.

Early in June, ISA revealed that preparations were being made to launch seven additional satellites into orbit.

Iran conducted a second test of its homegrown Zuljanah hybrid-propellant satellite carrier rocket in late June for "predetermined research purposes." In February 2021, the Zuljanah satellite carrier was first launched into orbit by the Iranian Defense Ministry.

Ebrahim Raisi, the president of Iran, has emphasized the need to continue efforts to enhance space technology.

He stated in mid-March that "the obtainment of this technology is among the manifestations of national might, which was made possible with the efforts of the Armed Forces - especially the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Communications Ministry - and must continue with greater force."

President Raisi also stated on Wednesday that new achievements in aerospace industries will be revealed in the future. He emphasized the government's serious commitment to advancing space technology.