

January 2019

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 21st TO
JANUARY 27th 2019***

PAKISTAN SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRES SURFACE-TO-SURFACE BALLISTIC MISSILE ‘NASR’

By News Desk Published: January 24, 2019

Pakistan on Thursday successfully conducted training launch of new surface-to-surface ballistic missile named Nasr.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the missile would enhance the operational efficiency of army strategic forces command besides re-validating the desired technical parameters. The training exercise involved launching of quad salvo for the desired effects and the missile is a high precision, shoot and scoot weapon system with the ability of in-flight manoeuvrability, said the military’s media wing.

This weapon system has augmented full spectrum deterrence posture remaining within the precincts of policy of credible minimum deterrence, against prevailing and evolving threat spectrum more effectively including enemy’s ballistic missile defence and other air defence systems.

The launch was witnessed by senior military leadership including Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee(CJSC), General Zubair Mehmood Hayat.

He appreciated scientists and engineers on developing the sophisticated weapon system to enhance the country’s deterrence capability.

President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Imran Khan including all services chief also offered felicitations on the successful launch of new missile.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1895884/1-pakistan-successfully-test-fires-surface-surface-ballistic-missile-nasr/>

PAK-SAUDI JOINT MILITARY PANEL VOWS TO BOOST DEFENCE COOPERATION

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter January 24, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The fifth meeting of the Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC) of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday expressed satisfaction over bilateral defence cooperation and pledged to intensify it.

The meeting was co-chaired by Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat and Saudi Chief of General Staff Gen Fayyadh Bin Hamid Al Ruwaili.

The 5th JMCC was held after nearly two and a half years. It last met in Saudi Arabia in June 2016. “Regional security situation, bilateral military engagements and training cooperation came under discussion,” the ISPR said.

A military source said the two sides held extensive discussions on all aspects of their military relations, including training, exercises and supply of defence equipment.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have very strong military ties. This cooperation is based on bilateral security cooperation agreement of 1982, under which Pakistan committed to assisting the kingdom in training and defence production capabilities. Pakistan in February last year agreed to deploy more soldiers “on training and advice mission”.

These troops were in addition to the nearly 1,600 that were already deployed there. The size of fresh deployment was never disclosed.

The decision to deploy extra troops helped ease strains in ties caused by Pakistan's refusal to contribute troops for Yemen offensive against Houthis.

Former army chief Gen Raheel Sharif is, meanwhile, leading the coalition of militaries of Muslim countries that were put together by Saudi Arabia.

GHQ: Gen Ruwaili later called on Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa at the General Headquarters.

"Geo-strategic environment and matters related to bilateral defence cooperation were discussed," the ISPR said.

"The Saudi CGS thanked Pakistan Army for assistance provided by Pakistan Army especially towards training of Royal Saudi Army both at Pakistan as well as at KSA through bilateral training cooperation. He acknowledged high standards of professionalism of the Pakistan Army," the ISPR further said.

Gen Bajwa said that the Pakistan Army took the capacity building of Saudi troops as its responsibility. Gen Ruwaili was presented Guard of Honour on his arrival at the GHQ and he also laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-i-Shuhada.

Gen Ruwaili also visited Pakistan Aeronautical Complex, Kamra.

He was awarded Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military).

Published in Dawn, January 24th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1459466/pak-saudi-joint-military-panel-vows-to-boost-defence-cooperation>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DEC 31st TO JAN 6th 2019

CHINESE CONTRACTOR TO BUILD WARSHIP FOR PAKISTAN: REPORT

Monitoring Desk January 03, 2019

KARACHI: China has started building an advanced warship that would be exported to Pakistan under a defence agreement between the two neighbouring countries, China Daily reported on Wednesday.

The newspaper, which quoted China State Shipbuilding Corp — one of the largest state-owned defence contractors — said the construction had started at the Hudong-Zhonghua shipyard in Shanghai. It is said to be a version of China's most advanced warship.

Though the Chinese corporation did not specify the type, China Daily quoted Pakistan Navy as saying the ship's class was Type 054AP, which is based on China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's Type 054A frigate. Pakistan has ordered four such ships, the newspaper said, quoting a statement by the Pakistan Navy.

In June last year, Pakistan Navy had announced that it was purchasing two multirole Type 054A frigates from China for bolstering its war-fighting capability.

The navy had said that Pakistan's fleet of Type054A warships would grow to four by 2021. The PLA Navy has about 30 of the Type 054A ships, each of which has a loaded displacement of 4,000 tonnes and is equipped with advanced radars and missiles.

According to a researcher at the PLA Naval Military Studies Research Institute, Cao Weidong, it appeared that the equipment installed on the ships will be Chinese, which shows China's "progress in the industry and the Pakistani Navy's confidence in our technology and capability". Previously, Pakistan would always ask its Chinese contractors to install Western radars and weaponry as it believed that West's technology was superior to China's, Mr Cao said.

“I believe the reason they chose our type is that ours is one of the few that can carry out all of the air-defence, anti-ship and anti-submarine tasks,” he said, adding that he believed that the ships would improve Pakistan’s naval defence.

Published in Dawn, January 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1455175/chinese-contractor-to-build-warship-for-pakistan-report>

February 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEB 11th TO FEB 17th 2019

WAR KILLS MORE THAN 100,000 BABIES A YEAR, SAYS SAVE THE CHILDREN

AFP Updated February 16, 2019

MUNICH: At least 100,000 babies die every year because of armed conflict and its impact, from hunger to denial of aid, Save the Children International said on Friday.

In the 10 worst-hit countries, a conservative estimate of 550,000 infants died as a result of fighting between 2013 and 2017.

They succumbed to war and its effects, among them hunger, damage to hospitals and infrastructure, a lack of access to health care and sanitation and the denial of aid.

It said children face the threat of being killed or maimed, recruited by armed groups, abducted or falling victim to sexual violence.

“Almost one in five children are living in areas impacted by conflict — more than at any time in the past two decades,” said the charity’s CEO Helle Thorning-Schmidt in a statement.

“The number of children being killed or maimed has more than tripled, and we are seeing an alarming increase in the use of aid as a weapon of war,” she said on releasing the report at the Munich Security Conference.

Save the Children said a study it had commissioned from the Peace Research Institute Oslo had found that 420 million children were living in conflict-affected areas in 2017.

This represents 18 per cent of all children worldwide and was up by 30 million from the previous year.

The worst-hit countries were Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The total number of deaths from indirect effects over the five-year period jumped to 870,000 when all children under the age of five were included, the charity said.

It also issued a list of recommendations to help protect children, from steps such as committing to a minimum age of 18 for military recruitment to the avoidance of using explosive weapons in populated areas.

Thorning-Schmidt said the rising number of child casualties was very worrying.

“It is shocking that in the 21st century we are going backwards on principles and moral standards that are so simple — children and civilians should never be targeted.”

Published in Dawn, February 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464163/war-kills-more-than-100000-babies-a-year-says-save-the-children>

SOUTH ASIA HAS MORE TROOPS THAN OTHER REGIONS: REPORT

Anwar Iqbal Updated February 15, 2019

WASHINGTON: Between 2006 and 2016, armed forces personnel as a share of the labour force trended downward in every region except South Asia, says a US State Department report released on Thursday.

In 2006, South Asia had about 2.62 million personnel in the armed forces, which was 0.18 per cent of its total population and 0.43pc of its labour force.

In 2016, the total strength of armed forces in South Asia increased to 3.01 million, remaining at 0.18pc of the region's population but increased slightly to 0.44pc of South Asia's labour force.

The world's annual value military expenditures, however, registered an increase of 19 to 38pc during this period, from about \$1.74-\$2.03 trillion in 2006 to about \$1.73- \$2.82 trillion in 2016, the report shows.

Thus, the global average of military expenditure for this 11-year period was between \$1.67 and \$2.48 trillion.

In South Asia, the lowest mean for the 11-year period was \$53,100 million while the highest was \$198,000 million. In 2016, South Asia spent up to \$264,000 million on defence, including military personnel, services and hardware, which was up to 2.5pc of the region's GDP.

South Asia's lowest GDP to military expenditure percentage for the 2006-2016 period was 1.1pc and the highest was 2.5pc.

Among individual South Asian nations, Pakistan imported \$07 billion worth of military goods and services in 2006, which increased to \$1.4 billion in 2007 and 2008. In 2009, it increased further to \$1.7 billion and reached a record high of \$3.4 billion in 2010 but dropped to \$2.0 billion in 2011. In 2012, it went down to \$1.5 billion, to \$1.3 billion in 2013, and to \$1.0 billion in 2014. In 2015, it was \$1.2 billion and went further down to \$0.9 billion in 2016.

During this 11-year period, Pakistan's total imports of goods and services also continued to increase, from \$35.1 billion in 2006 to \$47.9 billion in 2008. It increased to \$51.1 billion in 2014, dropped slightly to \$48.6 billion in 2015 and increased to \$51.6 billion in 2016.

Pakistan arms imports as percentage of all imports was 2.0pc in 2006, 3.8pc in 2007, 3.0pc in 2008, 4.8pc in 2009, 8.4pc in 2010, 4.2pc in 2011, 3.0pc in 2012, 2.5pc in 2013, 1.9pc in 2014, 2.5pc in 2015 and 1.7pc in 2016.

In 2014, Pakistan exported \$0.1 billion of military hardware. Since it was lower in other years, the data is not mentioned in the statistics released with the report.

In 2006, 2007 and 2008, Pakistan's arms exports as percentage of all exports was 0.1pc. It was 0.0pc in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. In 2014, it went up to 0.2pc of all exports but went back to 0.0pc in 2015 and 2016.

Pakistan's arms balance as per cent of trade balance was 4.6pc in 2006, 9.1pc in 2007, 6.3pc in 2008, 13.0pc in 2009, 28.3pc in 2010, 12.5pc in 2011, 8.5pc in 2012, 6.5pc in 2013, 4.5pc in 2014 , 6.1pc in 2015 and 3.4pc in 2016.

Pakistan's total exports, including goods and services, in 2006 was \$20.5 billion, in 2007 it was \$21.9, in 2008 it was \$25.5 billion, in 2009 it was \$22.3 billion, in 2010 it was \$28.1 billion, in 2011 it was \$31.4 billion, in 2012 it was \$31.4 billion, in 2013 it was \$30.0, in 2014 it was \$30.6 billion, in 2015 it was \$28.6 billion and it reached a new low of \$26.8 billion in 2016.

During 2006-16, India's arms exports were not very impressive either.

Published in Dawn, February 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1463961/south-asia-has-more-troops-than-other-regions-report>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEB 4th TO FEB 10th 2019

46-NATION AMAN-19 NAVAL EXERCISE KICKS OFF IN KARACHI

Dawn.com February 08, 2019

The five-day multinational naval exercise Aman-2019, in which 46 nations are taking part, kicked off in Karachi on Friday.

As the ceremony began, the flags of all participating nations were hoisted, and contingents of the Pakistan Navy presented a march-past.

The principal purpose of the exercise, conducted after every two years since it was initiated in 2007, is to provide a forum for understanding of each other's maritime concepts and operational cultures and come up with ways and means to combat common threats at sea.

The Pakistan Navy's ships, submarines, boats, marines and special forces will all take part in the exercise, along with the Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Army and Pakistan Rangers.

Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi was the chief guest at the opening ceremony, Radio Pakistan reported. Ambassadors and delegates of various countries were also present at the inauguration ceremony.

The exercise will be conducted in two phases. The harbour phase from Friday to Sunday will be followed by a sea phase on Feb 11 and 12.

Harbour activities will include seminars, discussions and demonstrations along with a three-day international maritime conference on 'Global geopolitics in transition: rethinking maritime dynamics in the Indian Ocean region'.

'Aman-19 allows navies to benefit from each other'

Addressing the ceremony, Vice Admiral Niazi said that the Aman-19 exercise seeks to enhance cooperation between countries and allows them to take benefit from mutual advantages and understand each other.

He said that maritime security is pivotal for national security and protection of maritime routes is also necessary for the economy.

At a media briefing on Thursday, Vice Admiral Niazi had said that maritime security should be quintessentially cooperative instead of being competitive.

He had said that the exercise also provided participating countries the chance to foster friendships, which could lead them to develop and practice common tactics, procedures and mechanics to deal with the maritime threats that affected them all: "Overall, the Aman Exercise is about bridging gaps and making it possible to operate together in pursuance of shared objectives."

He said Aman-2019 was mostly a non-firing exercise as live weapon firing was only carried out in a marked area known to all ships. "But Aman-2019 will reinforce the confidence of [other] countries in Pakistan and the Pakistan Navy. So the message goes out as relations, especially diplomatic relations, between countries are improved."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1462579/46-nation-aman-19-naval-exercise-kicks-off-in-karachi>

ANOTHER NUCLEAR PACT WITH US IN TROUBLE: RUSSIA

AP Updated February 08, 2019

MOSCOW: Another US-Russia nuclear pact is in danger following the US move to withdraw from a Cold War-era arms control treaty, a senior Russian diplomat said on Thursday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov charged that the US refusal to negotiate an extension to the New Start treaty signals Washington's intention to let it expire in 2021. He warned that time is running out to save the pact, which was signed in 2010 by US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Ryabkov said that the US has shown "no readiness or desire" to engage in substantive talks on extending the pact, which limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers.

US Undersecretary of State Andrea Thompson argued in Wednesday's phone call with reporters that there is enough time to discuss the treaty's extension.

"We have until 2021," Thompson said. "It is a relatively simple treaty to extend, so we have time with that." But Ryabkov warned that the procedure isn't going to be simple. He noted that the US said it has converted 56 Trident submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missiles and 41 B-52H strategic bombers that carried nuclear weapons for use with conventional weapons, but stonewalled Russia's repeated requests for a verifiable way to exclude their conversion back to nuclear status.

"In the worst-case scenario, they may carry 1,286 nuclear warheads," he said, meaning that the US could nearly double the number of deployed warheads allowed by the New Start treaty.

He said "that there is almost no time left" to discuss that and other issues for the treaty to be extended by another five years as envisaged during the signing.

"It gives reason to suspect our American counterparts of setting ground to avoid those discussions ... and just let the treaty quietly expire," Ryabkov said.

Ryabkov also said Russia stands ready for talks on a possible successor to the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.

"We are ready for dialogue," Ryabkov said. "If the US is interested, it should spell out its proposal." Citing Russian violations, the US on Saturday formally suspended its obligations under the INF that bans all land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres, setting the stage for the treaty to terminate in six months. Russia, which has denied any breaches, has followed suit.

Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed the military over the weekend to work on developing new land-based weapons that were previously forbidden by the INF treaty, but emphasised that such new weapons won't be deployed to the European part of Russia or any other region unless the US does so in those areas.

Ryabkov expressed particular worry about US plans to produce new, low-yield nuclear weapons, warning that it could dramatically lower the threshold for their use.

"It's very alarming," he said, adding that the plans could revive old Cold War era concepts.

Published in Dawn, February 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1462554/another-nuclear-pact-with-us-in-trouble-russia>

45 COUNTRIES TAKING PART IN NAVAL EXERCISE 'AMAN-2019'

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 8TH, 2019 | KARACHI

The multinational naval exercise AMAN-2019 is scheduled from February 08 to 12, 2019, where over 45 countries are participating with ships and observers. Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi briefed the media about the AMAN 2019 and explained the details of the exercise. He said beginning in 2007, Exercise AMAN has regularly been conducted every 2 years. This year's edition is scheduled from 08-12 February. As many as 45 countries are participating with ships and observers. He said the exercise has two major phases: harbour and sea phases. Harbour activities

would include seminars, discussions and demonstrations. In tandem, three days international maritime conference will also be held on the topic “Global geopolitics in transition; Rethinking maritime dynamics in the Indian Ocean region”.

Pakistan has had a turbulent phase of its contemporary history, but it remained steadfast in fighting the forces of terror and tyranny. Despite countless sacrifices and losses, Pakistan continues to be responsible state cognizant of its role and significance in the international system. Like any maritime nation, Pakistan has substantial stakes in the maritime domain. “Our interest in safer and crime-free seas is rooted into three conspicuous realities: 1) Our extraordinary dependence on the seas for trade, 2) Operationalization of CPEC project; and 3) Our strategic location astride the global energy highway. Cumulatively, these realities make the maritime stability as the top agenda of our national security”, he said.

Pakistan considers that maritime security isn't just important for itself but for all other countries whose prosperity and progress are strongly bonded with the seas. “We truly believe in the centuries old dictum that ‘Sea unites while land divides’.”

Commander Pakistan Fleet said that, the principle purpose of this exercise is to provide a forum for understanding of each other's maritime concepts, operational cultures and identifying ways & means to combat common threats at sea. This occasion would help foster friendships amongst participating countries, which will lead to develop and practice common tactics, procedures and mechanics to deal with the maritime threats that affect us all today. Overall, Exercise AMAN is about bridging gaps and making it possible to operate together in pursuance of shared objectives.

Admiral Niazi emphasized that appropriate media coverage would help project the true purpose of the Exercise AMAN and real image of this effort of Pakistan Navy.

At the heart of this entire endeavour is to work out possibilities for keeping the seas safe so that all positive maritime activities may go on without fear, threat or danger. Exercise AMAN signifies creation and sustenance of environment where navies from various countries can operate together under one theme: “Together for Peace”.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190208445536/>

RUSSIA PLANS NEW MISSILE SYSTEMS

Reuters February 06, 2019

MOSCOW: Russia will race to develop two new land-based missile launch systems before 2021 to respond to Washington's planned exit from a landmark nuclear arms control pact, it said on Tuesday. President Vladimir Putin said at the weekend that Russia had suspended the Cold War-era Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which bans both nations from stationing short- and intermediate-range land-based missiles in Europe.

Moscow and Washington accuse each other of violating the treaty and Putin said Russia had acted after the United States announced it was withdrawing from the pact.

Washington had made clear it planned to start research, development and design work on new missile systems and Moscow would do the same, Putin said.

The Russian military should start work on creating land-based launch systems for an existing ship-launched cruise missile, the Kalibr, and for longer-range hypersonic missiles which travel at least five times the speed of sound, he said.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on Tuesday ordered work to begin on developing the new systems. Shoigu, a close Putin ally, said he wanted the work completed by the end of next year so the new systems were ready by 2021.

“From Feb 2, the United States suspended its obligations under the INF treaty,” Shoigu told a meeting of defence chiefs.

“At the same time they are actively working to create a land-based missile with a range of more than 500km which is outside the treaty’s limits. President Putin has given the defence ministry the task of taking symmetrical measures.”

Moscow denies flouting the 1987 pact. It says Washington is the one violating it and has accused the United States of inventing a false pretext to exit a treaty it wanted to leave anyway in order to develop new missiles. Washington denies that.

US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood told a UN-sponsored Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on Tuesday that the United States would reconsider its withdrawal from the INF treaty “should Russia return to full and verifiable compliance”. “This is Russia’s final opportunity to return to compliance,” Wood said.

Published in Dawn, February 6th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1462125/russia-plans-new-missile-systems>

N. KOREA PROTECTING N-MISSILES, SAY UN MONITORS

Reuters February 06, 2019

UNITED NATIONS: North Korea is working to ensure its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities cannot be destroyed by military strikes, UN monitors said ahead of a meeting between US and North Korean officials to prepare a second denuclearisation summit.

The US special envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, will meet his North Korean counterpart on Wednesday in Pyongyang to prepare for a summit later this month between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the US State Department said on Monday.

Biegun has said he hoped the meeting with new North Korean counterpart Kim Hyok Chol would map out “a set of concrete deliverables” for the summit between Trump and Kim Jong Un.

Biegun, who held talks with South Korean officials in Seoul and Monday, said he would be aiming for “a roadmap of negotiations and declarations going forward, and a shared understanding of the desired outcomes of our joint efforts”.

South Korean officials said they and the United States could be looking at a compromise that could expedite North Korea’s denuclearisation — the dismantling of the North’s main Yongbyon nuclear complex, which could be reciprocated by US measures including formally ending the 1950-53 Korean War and setting up a liaison office.

But UN sanctions monitors said in a confidential report, submitted to a 15-member UN Security Council sanctions committee, said it “found evidence of a consistent trend on the part of the DPRK to disperse its assembly, storage and testing locations”, using the abbreviation for North Korea’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The North Korean mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report, which was submitted to Security Council members on Friday.

Published in Dawn, February 6th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1462128/n-korea-protecting-n-missiles-say-un-monitors>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JAN 28th TO FEB 3rd 2019

US BOLTS COLD WAR MISSILE TREATY AS RUSSIA WARNS OF ARMS RACE

2019/02/02

WASHINGTON: The United States said Friday it would exit a landmark Cold War nuclear missile treaty due to purported violations by Russia, which has warned of a new arms race in Europe.

Washington says a new Russian medium-range missile system breaches the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, although US officials also have an eye on China as the 1987 pact constrains the United States but not the rising Asian power.

President Donald Trump said the United States was suspending its obligations under the INF treaty as of Saturday and starting a process to withdraw in six months.

Brokered by then US president Ronald Reagan and last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the treaty ended a superpower buildup of warheads that had frightened Europeans, banning ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers (around 300 to 3,400 miles).

“The United States has fully adhered to the INF treaty for more than 30 years, but we will not remain constrained by its terms while Russia misrepresents its actions,” Trump said in a statement.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States, which formally announced its concerns two months ago, had raised the alleged treaty violation with Russia more than 30 times.

“Russia’s violation puts millions of Europeans and Americans at greater risk, it aims to put the United States at a military disadvantage and it undercuts the chances of moving our bilateral relationship in a better direction,” Pompeo said.

But Pompeo said the United States was still willing to talk to Russia in hopes that it comes into compliance.

“The United States is hopeful that we can put our relationship with Russia back on better footing, but the onus is on Russia to change course from a pattern of destabilizing activity, not just on this issue but on many others as well,” Pompeo said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has sought a warm relationship with Trump but is widely reviled by the US establishment, has declared that the US withdrawal would set off a new arms race. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Friday’s decision was not about Russia but rather “the strategy of the United States to get out of its international legal obligations in different areas.”

Zakharova told television channel Rossiya 1 the US had provided “no evidence, no satellite photo... no evidence” to back its allegations and that, once Washington leaves the treaty, Russia “reserves the right to an appropriate response.”

NATO said in a statement that the US allies “fully support” the US withdrawal and agreed that Russia’s 9M729 ground-launched cruise missile systems, whose range is the cause of US concerns, violated the treaty.

But Europeans also voiced fears over the consequences of the treaty’s demise and held out hope for a breakthrough before the United States leaves in six months.

“To us it’s clear that Russia violated this treaty, and that’s why we must talk with Russia,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel said.

EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini, speaking as the bloc’s foreign ministers gathered in Bucharest, said that Europeans did not want “our continent going back to being a battlefield or place where other superpowers confront themselves — this belongs to a faraway history.”

Trump also faced criticism at home, where Democrats voiced alarm that the “America First” president had rejected yet another international agreement.

The INF move “risks precisely the sort of nuclear arms buildup that the treaty was designed to guard against,” said Representative Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.

To add further to Europe’s worries, Moscow’s top INF negotiator, deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov, warned that after the collapse of the treaty another key arms control agreement — the New START treaty — could follow.

That agreement, which caps the number of nuclear warheads held by Washington and Moscow, expires in 2021 and Ryabkov said there was a “big question” over what would happen next.

A US official, addressing reporters on condition of anonymity, rejected the idea that the United States was opening up an arms race and said it would take time to see how Washington would proceed when unbound from the INF treaty.

“Because we have been adhering to this treaty for so long,” the official said, “we are some time away from being in a position to know what we might want to deploy, where we might want to deploy.”

While relations remain tense with Russia, US defense planners have put a major focus on China with its fast-growing military spending and growing assertiveness in the dispute-ridden waters of Asia.

US officials say that some 95 percent of China’s ballistic and cruise missiles, a core part of Beijing’s defense strategy, would violate the INF Treaty if China were obliged by it.—AFP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/02/02/6-page/761418-news.html>

US CALLS FOR RUSSIAN, CHINESE NUCLEAR TRANSPARENCY

By AFP Published: January 30, 2019

BEIJING: The United States accused Russia and China of not fully reporting their nuclear programmes Wednesday and called for more transparency, amid US threats to withdraw from a key arms control treaty.

A senior US official made the remarks as the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — all of them nuclear-armed powers — met in Beijing for talks on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Andrea Thompson, US undersecretary for arms control and international security, said there were “uneven results” in efforts to advance transparency under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

“We previously agreed to set (a) format for reporting, but the gap between the reports of the United States on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other, is great,” Thompson said in her opening remarks.

“I cannot overemphasise the value of transparency,” she said.

Officials from Russia, China, France and Britain — countries under the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) treaty — also attended the meeting, which will continue on Thursday.

Russia has also proposed holding a new round of talks with the US in Beijing on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF) — a source of raging tensions between Moscow and Washington.

“If Americans accept our proposal, they (the talks) will take place,” Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters on Wednesday.

The talks, if conducted, would come just before the February 2 expiration date of US President Donald Trump’s 60-day deadline to start withdrawing from the INF treaty.

Signed in 1987 by then US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the arms control agreement is now under threat, with Washington accusing Russia of violating the treaty.

Trump has promised to withdraw from the agreement, while President Vladimir Putin has threatened a new arms race, saying Europe would be its main victim.

Earlier this month, talks in Geneva between senior diplomats from both countries fell through as Washington and Moscow blamed each other for pushing the INF treaty to the brink of collapse.

Last week, Russia unveiled its missile system in a bid to reassure foreign officials that its weapons were in compliance with the arms control agreement.

But Washington has said the missile system should be destroyed in a verifiable manner if Moscow wants to keep the INF alive.

At Wednesday’s conference in Beijing, deputy Russian foreign minister Sergey Ryabkov pointed to “the spread of unilateral attitudes” as a threat to nuclear non-proliferation.

“Many issues continue to be unsettled due to the lack of political will,” he added, and said that there is an “evident lack of mutual trust” between the five NPT states.

“This (NPT) regime is being loosened, which is fraught with serious and negative impacts for nuclear non-proliferation,” he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1900162/3-us-calls-russian-chinese-nuclear-transparency/>

March 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 4th TO MARCH 10th 2019

INDIA SIGNS \$3 BN SUBMARINE DEAL WITH RUSSIA: REPORTS

AFP March 08, 2019

India has signed a \$3 billion deal to lease a third Russian nuclear-powered submarine for 10 years, giving Delhi a boost in the Indian Ocean against arch-rivals Pakistan and China, media reports said. The deal — which according to the reports took months to negotiate — comes as tensions run high between India and Pakistan following their biggest standoff in years, and as Chinese influence grows in the region.

A defence ministry spokesman declined to confirm the agreement to AFP but the reports said that the submarine, the third India has leased from Russia, would be delivered by 2025.

Russia, India’s Cold War ally, remains a major supplier of arms to India, irking the United States which has imposed sanctions on nations buying military hardware from Moscow.

Last October, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met and inked a deal for Delhi to buy Russia’s S-400 surface-to-air missile defence system for \$5.2 billion. But India also shares US fears about China’s growing assertiveness in the Indian Ocean, where New Delhi has traditionally held sway.

In 2017, India and China had a military standoff over a Himalayan plateau claimed by both Beijing and Bhutan, a close ally of India.

China has made inroads in Sri Lanka and Maldives, countries that India considers to be in its sphere of influence, through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

India has raised concerns about the initiative as a major section passes through Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

On Feb 26, India claimed its warplanes hit a militant training camp in Pakistan in response to a suicide bombing in Kashmir, which killed 40 paramilitary officers and was claimed by a militant group based in Pakistan.

Pakistan, a day later, carried out its own air raid, triggering a dogfight in which an Indian plane was shot down. India also said it shot down a Pakistan plane but Islamabad denied this.

Tensions cooled after Pakistan last Friday returned the Indian pilot of the downed aircraft, although both nations have continued to fire shells and mortars over the Line of Control.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468375/india-signs-3-bn-submarine-deal-with-russia-reports>

April 2019

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1st TO APRIL 7th
2019***

US TO DECLARE IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS AS TERRORIST GROUP: WSJ

AFP April 06, 2019

The United States will designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organisation, an unprecedented move that would ramp up pressure on the elite force, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

The newspaper, quoting unnamed officials, said President Donald Trump's administration would announce the long-mulled decision as soon as Monday and that concerned defence officials were bracing for the impact.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp was formed after the 1979 Islamic revolution with a mission to defend the clerical regime, in contrast to more traditional military units that protect borders.

The Revolutionary Guards have amassed strong power within Iran, including with significant economic interests.

The Guards' prized unit is the Quds Force, named for the Arabic word for Jerusalem, which supports forces allied with Iran around the region including Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The Trump administration has already imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran after withdrawing last year from an international agreement under which Tehran drastically scaled back its nuclear program. A foreign terrorist designation would make any activities of the group toxic for the United States, with any transactions involving US institutions or individuals subject to punishment.

The Wall Street Journal said that the Pentagon and the CIA had reservations about the move, saying it would increase risks for US troops without doing much more to damage the Iranian economy.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1474326/us-to-declare-irans-revolutionary-guards-as-terrorist-group-wsj>

PAKISTAN ALL SET TO RELEASE 360 INDIAN PRISONERS IN APRIL

By Our Correspondent Published: April 5, 2019

ISLAMABAD: As a goodwill gesture amid tense relations with India, Pakistan on Friday announced it will release 360 Indian prisoners, including 355 fishermen and five civilians, during the month of April.

"The prisoners will be released in four batches, scheduled as 100 each on April 8, 15 and 29 while 60 prisoners, including 55 fishermen and five civilians, will be freed on April 29," Foreign Office spokesperson Dr Mohammad Faisal said at the weekly press briefing.

"The decision has been taken for 360 out of the total of 537 Indian prisoners, who had completed their sentence," said the spokesperson.

"Pakistan expects India will respond to the gesture by releasing 347 Pakistani prisoners, including 249 civilians and 98 fishermen, currently languishing in Indian jails," he said.

In response to a question on Special Envoy of US State Secretary Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad pressing Pakistan to deliver more on Afghanistan, the spokesperson said, "Pakistan will take every decision in its national interests." Ambassador Khalilzad, who is currently in Islamabad, met Foreign

Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and updated him on the recent Doha talks on Afghan reconciliation and intra-Afghan dialogue, he said.

On possibility of a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Imran Khan following the desire of the former, the spokesperson said there was no update on the matter.

He expressed disappointment over India's decision to postpone the Kartarpur meeting scheduled for April 2, saying talks are vital to finalise the modalities for opening the corridor before the upcoming 550th anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak in November.

He said, "Pakistan is committed to the opening of the corridor as per the commitment of Prime Minister Imran Khan with the Sikh community."

When asked to comment on a statement by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi that some elements were fanning unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan, he said, "It was none other than India which was involved in subversive activities in Pakistan as in case of its spy Kulbhushan Jadhav."

On a note verbale from the Indian government seeking consular access to Jadhav, he said Pakistan was awaiting the verdict of the International Court of Justice which had reserved its decision after completion of hearing of the case.

In response to India's recent deals with other countries on purchase of weapons, he said Pakistan was concerned about the arms race which could undermine the region's peace.

He said Pakistan was cognisant of its defence needs and would take every measure to secure its geographical boundaries.

To a question on conferment of Sheikh Zayed medal – the highest award of the United Arab Emirates – on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the spokesperson said it was a bilateral matter pertaining to two sovereign countries and Pakistan had nothing to comment on it.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1944499/1-pakistan-set-release-360-indian-prisoners-april/>

MAOISTS KILL FOUR INDIAN TROOPS IN AMBUSH

AFP April 05, 2019

NEW DELHI: Maoist rebels on Thursday ambushed an Indian military patrol and killed four soldiers in a jolt to security ahead of a national election starting next week, officials said.

Authorities also faced protests over the closure of a major highway in India-held Kashmir for two days a week during voting so it could be used for military convoys.

Border Security Force troops were on a foot patrol in a remote forested district of Chhattisgarh state when attacked. Six BSF troops were wounded in the attack.

State police chief, D.M. Awasthi, who gave the toll, said the wounded soldiers had been evacuated from Kanker district.

Indian forces have been fighting Maoists for decades in the mineral-rich central state, which will vote on April 11, the first day of the multi-stage nationwide election which will only end on May 19.

The rebels often call for a boycott of elections as part of their campaign against the Indian state.

The Maoists are believed to be present in at least 20 other states but are most active in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Their insurgency has left tens of thousands dead.

Tens of thousands have also been killed in the past three decades in India-held Kashmir where authorities have ordered the main Udhampur-Baramulla highway — a 300-kilometre 'lifeline' from the occupied valley to India — on Wednesdays and Sundays to prevent suicide attacks.

India has stepped up security in the disputed Himalayan region since a February suicide bomb attack on a convoy which killed over 40 paramilitary personnel.

The road closure order issued on Wednesday night sparked angry protests from politicians, businesses and residents in the region.

Omar Abdullah, a former chief minister in the region, said patients would not be able to reach hospitals, students would not get to schools and many people would not get to work.

“There has to be a better, less people unfriendly way of protecting forces using the highway,” he said on Twitter.

“This is martial law. We have never seen this kind of ban here and it will hugely affect trade between Kashmir and states in India,” Yasin Khan, a business leader, said.

The only other road connecting the landlocked valley to Jammu in the south is in bad shape and closed for many months each year.

A railway link under construction for nearly 15 years has missed several completion deadlines.

“Last I checked, we were a democracy. But this sounds like a diktat of martial law,” said Mehbooba Mufti, another former chief minister and ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The government was inflicting “collective punishment on Kashmiris”, she said on Twitter.

Published in Dawn, April 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1474042/maoists-kill-four-indian-troops-in-ambush>

US APPROVES ANTI-SUBMARINE HELICOPTER SALE TO INDIA

AFP Updated April 03, 2019

The United States said on Tuesday it had approved the sale of 24 MH-60R helicopters to India, significantly boosting its emerging ally’s firepower to target submarines as China expands in the Indian Ocean.

In a quick reply to an Indian request submitted late last year, the US State Department said it was informing the US Congress as legally required that it was giving the green light for India to buy the 24 helicopters worth a total of \$2.6 billion.

Nicknamed the Romeo, the MH-60R helicopters manufactured by Lockheed Martin are designed for hunting submarines as well as knocking out ships and conducting search-and-rescue operations at sea.

“This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the US by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defensive partner,” the State Department said in a statement.

It called India “a major defensive partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region”.

India, which had estranged relations with the US since the Cold War, has emerged as one of its leading defense partner with the interests of the world’s two largest democracies largely overlapping amid their concerns over a rising China and extremism.

India has been alarmed by China’s growing interest in the Indian Ocean as it becomes a global naval power.

In a strategy dubbed by Indian and US observers as the “string of pearls”, China has made use of a growing number of naval bases in the Indian Ocean, most notably the Gwadar port.

Indian naval planners have responded with a doctrine to ensure freedom of movement throughout the Indian Ocean, stretching from the Strait of Hormuz to the Strait of Malacca.

The Romeos would replenish India’s aging fleet of British-made Sea King helicopters.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473639/us-approves-anti-submarine-helicopter-sale-to-india>

MILITARY COURTS CEASE TO FUNCTION TODAY

Amir Wasim Updated March 31, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The military courts that had been set up under the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2015 to try civilians on terrorism charges finally ceased to function today (Sunday) as their second two-year constitutional term expired at midnight.

The government, which has already decided in principle to give another extension to the military courts for two more years, is still struggling to seek the cooperation of the opposition parties over the issue as it does not have the required two-thirds majority in any of the two houses of the Parliament to carry out the constitutional amendment for the purpose.

The government had earlier planned a meeting of the parliamentary leaders and heads of political parties for a briefing on the issue of implementation of the NAP on March 28, but it had to cancel it following the opposition parties' decision to boycott the event due to the prevailing tense political atmosphere in the country.

Short of majority in parliament, PTI govt faces an uphill task of giving a new lease of life to these courts

Sources in the government told Dawn that the draft law to give second extension to the military courts had been prepared and the two ministries concerned — law and interior — had already initiated the process of reinstating the military courts even before the expiry of their two-year term on March 30. There has been no official data available about the cases heard and tried by these military courts. The National Assembly, however, had been informed in November last year that the military authorities had to decide 185 terrorism-related cases before expiry of their two-year term in March.

In a written reply to a question raised by MNA Mohsin Dawar, Defence Minister Pervez Khattak had informed the National Assembly that since the launch of the military operation Zarb-i-Azb, the interior ministry had referred a total of 717 cases of terrorism to the military courts. Of the total cases, 185 were still under process and they had to be decided by March 30 when the two-year term of the courts would expire.

Giving details of the cases decided by the military courts, the minister had said that a total of 478 cases had been decided, which meant that the conviction rate of the cases was more than 60 per cent. He said a total of 284 convicts had been awarded death sentences and 56 of them had already been executed. Similarly, he said, 192 convicts had been awarded rigorous imprisonment, two accused acquitted and 54 cases dropped due to technical reasons.

Federal Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhry, when contacted, said the government had already decided to engage the opposition to take it into confidence over the issue as without their support the period of the military courts could not be extended.

He said the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf believed that the military courts set up through a political consensus under the NAP against terrorism in 2015 had delivered and even the Supreme Court had upheld the establishment of these courts.

On the other hand, the Pakistan Peoples Party, which had previously taken a tough stance on the issue and extended only conditional support to the previous government of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz over the issue, is again opposed to the idea of giving an extension to the military courts to try civilians on terrorism charges.

Published in Dawn, March 31st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472947/military-courts-cess-to-function-today>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 8th TO APRIL 14th 2019

SUICIDE BOMBER HEAPS TRAUMA ON HAZARAS

Saleem Shahid April 13, 2019

QUETTA: At least 20 people, including security personnel and children, were killed and 60 others injured in a suicide attack at the Hazarganji fruit and vegetable market of Quetta and a motorcycle bomb blast in the border town of Chaman on Friday.

At least eight people from the Hazara community and two children were among 19 victims of the suicide attack that was later claimed by a faction of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The group said it collaborated with the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ), though there was no confirmation from the latter.

In Chaman, the target of the motorbike blast was a vehicle of security forces carrying personnel of the Frontier Corps (FC), officials said. They said it left one dead and 12 others, including two FC personnel, wounded.

Eight Shia community members among 20 dead in Quetta, Chaman blasts • Taliban faction claims it collaborated with Lashkar-i-Jhangvi over attack

About the Quetta attack, official sources said the suicide bomber blew himself up when Hazara community members, after purchasing vegetable and fruit, were loading their vehicles. The community members had earlier arrived at the market under the security cover of FC.

“As result of the suicide attack, 19 people lost their lives and 48 were injured,” Home Minister Ziaullah Langove told a press conference while confirming that it was a suicide blast.

Earlier, Deputy Inspector General of Police in Quetta Abdul Razzaq Cheema had put the death toll at 18 with 30 injured. He said it emerged during initial investigations that an explosive device, planted in a potato sack, had been detonated by remote control.

However, police investigators later confirmed that it was a suicide attack, explaining that the head and other parts of the suicide bomber were found in the area.

Soon after the blast security forces, including FC and police, rushed to the explosion site and cordoned off the entrance. They started rescue operation and shifted the bodies and the injured to Civil Hospital, where a state of emergency was declared.

“We received 19 bodies and 48 injured at civil hospital,” said Saleem Abro, medical superintendent of the hospital.

Hospital sources said the death toll could rise as condition of at least 10 injured people was serious. Later, heavy contingents of FC and police took the Hazara community members in their protection and shifted them to Hazara Town. Meanwhile, a bomb disposal squad rushed to the explosion site and collected evidences.

Home Minister Zia Langove said for the past many years, the people of Hazara community running vegetable and fruit business came to Hazar Ganji every morning in FC and police protection in a convoy from Hazara Town and Marriabad areas of the city.

The minister, however, believed that the Hazara community was not the specific target, because people from other communities, too, lost their lives in the attack.

DIG Cheema told reporters that heavy contingent had been deployed at all important places after receiving a security alert a few days ago about the threat of such attack. However, he said, they were not expecting the attack in the Hazar Ganji area.

Hours after the explosion in Quetta, another blast took place in Chaman, a town at Pak-Afghan border, leaving nearly a dozen people injured.

In the Chaman blast, 13 people were injured who were rushed to district hospital where one of them died.

Police said the bomb was planted in a motorcycle parked outside a shop at the Mall Road roundabout. They said it was detonated when a vehicle of security personnel was passing through the area.

One man was killed and 12 others were injured in the explosion.

“The target of the blast was the vehicle of security forces, which was carrying FC personnel,” officials said, adding that the vehicle remained safe.

However, an official later confirmed that two FC personnel were among the injured. Meanwhile, the Qari Hussain faction of the banned TTP claimed responsibility of the Quetta attack. The group said it collaborated with the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ) for the joint action. “We targeted Hazara community in the joint attack,” stated a message sent to the media in Quetta.

Expressing his grave concern and deep sorrow with the families of victims, Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani strongly condemned the attack and ordered the law enforcement agencies to submit a detailed report to him.

He also ordered the relevant authorities to provide best possible medical facilities to the injured and announced that the provincial government would bear the medical expenses.

Mr Alyani said such kind of timid attacks could never undermine their commitment against extremism and terrorism. The culprits were enemies of humanity, he remarked.

On Friday evening, hundreds of people offered funeral prayers for the Hazara community victims who were later laid to rest in the Hazara Town graveyard. Home Minister Ziaullah Langove, Health Minister Mir Nasibullah Marri and security officials were also present.

Burial of other victims was also held in other areas of Quetta, while the bodies of some victims who belonged to other cities were shifted to their native towns.

Later, men, women and children from the Hazara community staged a protest rally on the main road and later converged at the Quetta Press Club where they chanted slogans against the government. They condemned the ongoing ‘genocide’ of Hazara community, demanded proper implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) without any discrimination and arrest of elements involved in this inhuman act. They said it was responsibility of the state to provide security to its people.

Published in Dawn, April 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475779/suicide-bomber-heaps-trauma-on-hazaras>

GOVERNMENT TAKES MAJOR STEP TO MEET FATF REQUIREMENTS

ALI HUSSAIN & SOHAIL SARFRAZ | APR 13TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Friday launched new guidelines for implementation of the UNSC 1267 sanctions against individuals and entities designated by the UN Security Council to comply with the international standards and requirements of Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The guidelines, which were launched at a ceremony by Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua, have been prepared in compliance with international standards especially the requirements of the UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee and the FATF by interagency national committee for overseeing implementation of sanctions against individuals and entities designated by the UN Security Council 1267 al Qaeda/Da’esh Sanctions regime and Security Council 1988 (Taliban Sanctions regime), the Foreign Office said.

Speaking on the occasion, Janjua underscored that Pakistan has managed to turn the tide in the fight against terrorism for which there are no parallels and it is important to further consolidate these gains through full implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP).

She said that Pakistan also had to be mindful of fulfilling its international legal obligations, including the implementation of the UNSC sanctions which have been adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Janjua expressed the hope that the guidelines would assist all stakeholders in better discharging their responsibilities for the effective implementation of the UN sanctions.

On March 4, 2019, the government had issued the UN Security Council (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019. The guidelines would supplement the Order.

The objective of the guidelines is to help officials in various ministries, departments and agencies at the federal and provincial levels understand the provisions of the UNSC 1267 Sanctions regime including 1989/2253/2368 (al Qaeda/Da'esh Sanctions Committee) and Security Council 1988/2254 (Taliban Sanctions Committee); understand the domestic enabling legislation to implement the resolutions in Pakistan; and to provide a common understanding of the obligations of each stakeholder and of the operational issues for implementation of relevant UNSC resolutions.

The guidelines also provide information, which would strengthen the capacity of government agencies through increased knowledge of what is required for effective implementation.

According to the guidelines, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (CT Division) shall immediately upon revision/update in the consolidated list, notified by the respective UNSC Sanctions Committee, issue an SRO on the same day, to give legal effect to the update in Pakistan.

The SRO would be shared electronically as well as by post with all concerned focal persons at federal and provincial levels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) would also maintain the updated consolidated list of designated individuals and entities on its official website.

All federal and provincial stakeholders should regularly access the UNSC Consolidated List to ensure compliance with sanction measures.

Upon receiving the SROs, the following actions would be initiated by the various stakeholders.

Regarding funds, financial assets or economic resources or related services held in the form of bank accounts, stocks or insurance policies, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) and Pakistan Post would issue necessary guidelines to their regulated entities requiring them to freeze funds, financial assets and economic resources of the designated individuals and entities without delay upon receiving the SRO.

In case, there is a target match, the regulated entities would immediately freeze such assets and would stop providing services to them.

In case, the search in the databases leads not to a target match but a potential match, the concerned regulated entity would immediately convey this information to the regulators (SBP, SECP, CDNS & Pakistan Post), which would immediately forward full particulars of the potential match and the designated individual or entity to the focal point in Ministry of Interior (MoI) for verification of identity.

On receipt of such particulars, the focal point from MOI would undertake verification through the relevant law enforcement and security agencies for confirmation of the identity. This verification would be completed within a period not exceeding 5 working days from the date of receipt of such particulars.

During this interim period, the entities would place a temporary freeze on the assets of the potential match to prevent the funds from being utilised in case an affirmative report is received from the MoI. In case, the results of the verification indicate that the potential match is in fact the target match, the concerned regulated entity would immediately freeze the assets under intimation to the respective regulators.

Regarding financial assets or economic resources of the nature of immovable and movable properties, immovable assets: the CT Division of MOFA would electronically forward SROs to focal points in all MoD (for cantonment boards and DHAs), MoI, Home Departments, and ICT.

They will take actions to identify immovable assets registered in the names of the designated individuals/entities, from the relevant land registration authorities under their jurisdiction and freeze the titles and seize the assets in accordance with Chapter II and IV of the UNSC (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019.

The search criteria should include assets owned directly or indirectly or for the benefit of the designated individual or entity. In case, there is a target match, the land registration authorities will

immediately freeze the title to such assets to prevent the sale or transfer of those assets and convey the details of such assets to the respective controlling authorities and the home departments. The home departments will seize the assets in accordance with the Article 15 of the UNSC (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019.

In case, the search in the databases leads not to a target match but a potential match, the relevant land registration authority would immediately convey this information to the requesting department, which would immediately forward full particulars of the potential match and the designated individual or entity to the focal point in the MOI for verification of identity.

On receipt of such particulars, the focal point from MOI would undertake verification through the relevant law-enforcement and security agencies to confirm the identity within a period not exceeding 5 working days from the date of receipt of such particulars.

During this interim period, the land registration authorities would place a temporary freeze on the assets of the potential match to prevent the assets from being transferred.

In case, the results of the verification indicate that the potential match is in fact the target match, the concerned land registration authority would immediately freeze the title of the immovable assets under intimation to requesting authority and the home departments which would seize the assets.

The land registration authorities would be advised to maintain updated lists in electronic form and run a check on the given parameters on an ongoing basis to verify whether individuals or entities, designated in the SROs issued by MOFA, are holding any immovable assets. The MoD, MoI, home departments, and ICT would share monthly compliance reports with focal point in the MoFA.

Rents derived from immovable assets: the home departments will also direct the land registration authorities and excise departments to search from their databases if the designated individuals and entities are deriving rent from the properties. In such a case, the home department will have the rent deposited in a special account in accordance with Article 9 of the UNSC (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019.

In case of moveable assets, the home departments would also forward SROs to the excise departments with the instruction to have the names of the designated individuals/entities, verified from their respective motor vehicle registration records.

In case, there is a target match, the excise departments will immediately freeze the title of the vehicle in the relevant database to prevent its sale or transfer to a third person and convey the details of such assets to the respective home departments.

The home departments will seize the assets in accordance with the Article 14 of the United Nations Security Council (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019.

In case the search in the databases leads not to a target match but a potential match, the excise departments would immediately convey this information to the home departments, which would immediately forward full particulars of the potential match to the focal point in Ministry of Interior for verification of identity.

On receipt of such particulars, the focal point from MOI would undertake verification through the relevant law-enforcement and security agencies to confirm the identity within a period not exceeding 5 working days from the date of receipt of such particulars.

During this interim period, the excise departments would place a temporary freeze on the title of the motor vehicles of the potential match to prevent the assets from being transferred.

In case, the results of the verification indicate that the potential match is in fact the target match, the concerned excise departments would immediately freeze the title of the immovable assets under intimation to the home departments which would seize the assets in accordance with the Article 14 of the UNSC (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019.

For prohibition on fund raising activities by individuals and entities: the home departments (with assistance from LEAs, security agencies and SBP/SECP) shall continue to monitor activities of the

designated individuals/entities to ensure that they do not engage in any fundraising activities and that no funds, financial assets or economic resources are made available, directly or indirectly for such persons' benefit, by any person (natural or legal); and no person shall make donations to designated individuals and entities or those acting on behalf of or at the direction of the entities.

Fund raising activities through following means would be strictly monitored: No designated entity or individual would be allowed to raise funds through collection of sacrificial hides. Only those charitable organisations, which are not designated and have the requisite "No Objection Certificate" from the local district administration, would be able to collect hides.

In this regard, focal points from the provincial authorities would share consolidated list of designated individuals and entities with district administrators to ensure that NOCs are not granted to designated entities/individuals.

In case of violation, legal action would be taken by respective LEAs in accordance with Sections 11F, 11H, 11I and 11J of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997, as applicable.

Chanda/Donation Boxes: No designated entity or individual would be allowed to raise funds through "Chanda/Donation Boxes". Respective LEAs, under supervision of the home departments, shall continue to monitor activities of the designated individuals/entities and immediately dismantle/seize donation boxes.

The MoI and home departments would take out advertisements in the media periodically to advise the public about the prohibition to make available any funds or financial resources to the designated individuals and entities.

For the purpose of inter-agency cooperation and for detection of additional assets being owned directly or indirectly by the designated entities and individuals or on their behalf, the home departments would share details of the assets frozen with focal points in MoFA, MoI, NACTA, Task Force on Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT), Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU), and FIA.

Prohibition of raising funds online: No designated entity or individual would be allowed to raise funds through internet or social media. The focal point from the MOFA would share the consolidated list (SROs) with Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). The Cyber Crime Wing of FIA and PTA will continuously monitor the internet to prevent any online fundraising activities by the designated individuals/entities within Pakistan.

In case any designated individual/entity is reportedly using internet and social media platform for fund raising activities, the PTA would immediately block the respective webpage/URL under intimation to the focal point in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In case the webpage is hosted on a secured server hosted outside Pakistan, the PTA would approach the company hosting the server for having the link blocked. If there is lack of cooperation from that company, the PTA would share details of such links with focal point in MOFA which would take up the issue with concerned host government through proper diplomatic channels.

The PTA would also maintain a database of blocked links/websites which are being used by designated individuals and entities. Details of such blocked links/URLs would be shared with FIA cyber crime wing for further investigations and legal action under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016.

Role of Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU): The focal point from the FMU would regularly receive Suspicious Transactions Reports (STRs) and Cash Transaction Reports (CTRs) from financial institutions and such non-financial businesses and professions as may be necessary to ensure compliance with SROs issued by MOFA and in accordance with Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010. The FMU would analyse all the STRs and CTRs. In this respect, the FMU may call for record and information from any agency or person in Pakistan related to the transaction in question in accordance with Section 4 (b) of the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010.

All such agencies or persons shall be required to promptly provide the requested information. The FMU would also disseminate, after having considered the reports and having reasonable grounds to suspect involvement of any designated individual/entity, the STRs/CTRs and any necessary information, to FIA for further inquiry and legal action.

Implementation of Travel Ban: The CT Division of MOFA, shall forward the SRO (electronically and manually) to Ministry of Interior, FIA, Directorate General of Immigration & Passports (IMPASS), National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and security agencies. Following actions will be taken including names of the designated individuals would immediately be placed in the block list maintained by FIA and IMPASS.

If there is a positive match for a designated individual who is a foreign national, attempting to enter or transit Pakistan, the person will be refused entry or transit and the matter will be reported to the focal point at FIA Headquarters.

The focal point from FIA will report the matter to the focal point at MOI, who will in turn report to the DG (CT), MoFA.

If there is a positive match for a designated individual who is a Pakistani national attempting to enter or transit Pakistan, the person will be allowed entry but transit would be refused and the matter will be reported to the focal point at FIA Headquarters. The focal point from FIA will report the matter to the focal point at MOI, who will in turn report to the DG (CT), MoFA.

If there is a positive match for a designated individual who is a Pakistani national attempting to exit Pakistan, the person will be refused exit and the matter will be reported to the focal point at FIA Headquarters.

The focal point from FIA will report the matter to the focal point at MoI, who will in turn report to the DG (CT), MoFA. The focal point from MoFA will also share the SROs and the consolidated list with the Pakistan embassies and consulates abroad.

The concerned visa officer would ensure if there is a positive match for an individual applying for a visa to enter Pakistan, the visa should not be issued and the matter will be reported to Director General (CT), MoFA.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190413464082/>

FUNDS FOR HAQQANIA

Editorial Updated April 11, 2019

THE relationship between the PTI and the late Maulana Samiul Haq's party is not new.

While the ruling party may have initially been drawn to the murdered cleric's JUI-S due to the mutual animus between the PTI and the JUI-F, the KP government appears to be constant in its support for Darul Uloom Haqqania, the controversial seminary located in Nowshera and known as 'jihad university'.

This sobriquet is, of course, well earned, as the madressah has been churning out fighters since the days of the Afghan jihad, while it counts members of the Afghan Taliban amongst its alumni.

As reported in this paper on Wednesday, the KP government has diverted Rs30m meant for higher secondary schools and given them to the Haqqania madressah. This would be the third time the KP administration has showered its munificence on the seminary; in the 2016-17 budget, it had allocated a whopping Rs300m, while in February, Rs277m were reportedly allocated to the Haqqania madressah.

It is not clear if contributing funds to seminaries — that too have courted a fair bit of controversy over the years — is part of the PTI's naya Pakistan vision.

By all means, madressahs need to be mainstreamed, so that their alumni can contribute to the national economy along with studying religious subjects.

However, mainstreaming must be done across the board, and state largesse must not be limited to handpicked seminaries, that too with political considerations underlying the generosity.

More importantly, funds should not be diverted from the education department at the cost of mainstream schools.

The PTI should realise that these are public funds and not those of the party; therefore, it needs to explain to taxpayers why money meant for secondary schools is ending up subsidising a madressah. Furthermore, when the prime minister has hinted that he wants to take Pakistan in a more tolerant direction, is giving funds to a madressah with such a hard-core reputation the best way to go about it? Published in Dawn, April 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475323/funds-for-haqqania>

FM WANTS GLOBAL POWERS TO REVIEW SOUTH ASIA POLICY

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter April 11, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said South Asia's peace and stability is being undermined by imprudent actions of global powers alongside certain unwelcome developments in the region.

"We have also been witness to how strategic stability in South Asia can be impacted not only by regional developments but also by the approach of international community, in particular that of the major powers, towards the region," the foreign minister said at a conference organised by Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS) on Wednesday.

Mr Qureshi asked the world powers to "be mindful of their responsibility in terms of arms supplies to the region in pursuit of their geo-political strategies" and avoid designations like "net security providers" for states, which encouraged them to acquire capabilities beyond genuine national security requirements. This, he maintained, was a dangerous proposition.

Patronising Indian military beyond national security requirements undermines regional stability, says Qureshi

The foreign minister did not name any global power for being responsible for unstable regional security environment. However, his reference to India's modernisation of its forces through massive acquisition of conventional arms, adoption of offensive doctrines like Cold Start, expansion of strategic assets including nuclear submarines, introduction of anti-ballistic missile systems, anti-satellite test, exemption by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and S-400 anti-ballistic missile system, showed that he was talking about all countries patronising Indian actions. The support of world powers for Indian military acquisitions and technological advancements in disregard of proliferation concerns, he said, had serious security implications for Pakistan and also undermined regional stability.

"They can encourage misadventure by an adversary under a false sense of security against a counterattack," the foreign minister maintained and expressed the hope that the world would "recognise the need for objective and even-handed approach which is not tainted by considerations of geo-political dominance and defining new regional security paradigms".

Recent military stand-off after the Pulwama incident was a clear manifestation of threats to stability in the region, he said. However, the restraint shown by Pakistan proved that the country was committed to peaceful and normal relations with its neighbours, he said, adding the foreign policy would continue to be defined by "restraint and responsibility". The hallmark of Pakistani policy would be continued adherence to credible minimum deterrence, and opposition to nuclear or conventional arms race, the foreign minister said.

However, he made it clear that despite its quest for peace, Pakistan was equally determined to frustrate any attempt to create a so-called “new normal”.

The foreign minister highlighted the need for conflict resolution in the region as a guarantee of peace and stability. “The abiding threat to the long-term peace and stability of this region emanates from the Kashmir dispute that has remained unresolved for more than half a century. It lies at the heart of every crisis between Pakistan and India, including the events in February,” he maintained. Renewing the call for dialogue on outstanding issues, he said Pakistan needed “a willing and constructive partner to tackle myriads of daunting challenges that beset our region including disease, poverty, illiteracy, climate change and environmental degradation”.

The Kartarpur corridor inauguration, he said, was a manifestation of Pakistan’s desire for better ties with India. About Indian action of postponing the April 2 round of negotiations on the Kartarpur corridor agreement, he expressed the hope that the people of India would soon realise the way forward was dialogue and not its suspension.

Federal Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari, who has also been a defence academic, said India engaged in dangerous brinkmanship after Pulwama because of Pakistan’s defensive response to Indian aggression in the past including Line of Control violations. Pakistan’s firm response to Indian aggression alongside the de-escalatory moves, she contended, conveyed to India that if compelled, Pakistan “could prevail at any level of conflict”.

She proposed seven steps for establishing strategic stability, which included, pre-crisis management mechanism possibly through raising the level of military hotlines; strategic dialogue on reduction in missile deployments; improving the advance missile test notification system; expanding the lists of nuclear installations exchanged annually; freezing deployment of S-400 ABM systems; conventional force reduction including offensive weapon system; and establishing a strategic dialogue structure.

Published in Dawn, April 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475285/fm-wants-global-powers-to-review-south-asia-policy>

PM URGES CONTINUED MILITARY COOPERATION WITH US

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter April 09, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday called for continued military cooperation between Pakistan and the United States for dealing with emerging security threats, specifically the militant Islamic State group or Daesh.

He was talking to the new commander of the US Central Command (Centcom) Gen Kenneth McKenzie Jr., who is on a familiarisation tour to the region after assuming his responsibilities on March 28. The new Centcom commander was on a two-day visit to Pakistan.

Mr Khan, during his conversation, emphasised the start of intra-Afghan dialogue as the best way forward for ending the protracted conflict in Afghanistan.

The US has lately shared its new plan for holding “Moscow format” like talks to break the deadlock on intra-Afghan dialogue.

“The stakeholders should sit together to discuss the contours of their future polity after the withdrawal of foreign troops,” he maintained and reiterated the Pakistan government’s long-standing commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan through political settlement.

Mr Khan also mentioned his government’s commitment to implement the National Action Plan, which had the backing of all political parties in the country. Sharing the priorities of his government

including human development and vigorous economic reforms, he reiterated Pakistan's vision for normalisation of relations with all its neighbours including India.

Gen McKenzie, during his stay in Islamabad, besides meeting PM Khan also met Defence Minister Pervez Khattak, Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua, Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Bajwa, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen Zubair Hayat, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshall Mujahid Anwar and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Abbasi.

In his meetings, the US embassy in a statement said, Gen McKenzie reaffirmed United States' commitment to security and stability in the region.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1474840/pm-urges-continued-military-cooperation-with-us>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 15th TO APRIL 21st 2019

THE ROOTS OF EXTREMISM

I.A. Rehman April 18, 2019

EXTREMIST militants receive considerable support from their apologists who take exception to criticism of religious extremism and claim this is not the only form of extremism. The point is valid though there can be no bar to examining faith-based intolerance alone. A brief inquiry will show that the various forms of extremism have common roots.

For want of a standard definition in the context of Pakistan's environment, extremism may be defined as irreconcilable hostility to other people's religion or sect, their culture and customs, rejection of the rights of minority communities and women, and determination to convert them through inducement or intimidation or eliminate them through physical violence, including terrorist acts.

Women constitute the largest single group of people in Pakistan that are victims of extremists' violence. A recently released report of a survey conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in cooperation with the Bureau of Statistics and the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, shows that one-third of women in Punjab, aged 15 to 64, have suffered violence. The situation elsewhere in the country could be only marginally different. Almost every day, the media reports a woman being burnt alive or killed otherwise. The practice of killing women for men's honour has spread to cities where it was unknown till recently. Women are attacked for choosing their spouses, for failing to meet intermittent dowry demands, and for venturing out wearing clothes and sporting hairstyles tabooed by orthodox priests of morality. There are areas where girls are not allowed to go to school.

Women and girls belonging to bonded labour families, working in agriculture or at brick kilns and in various other sectors, suffer extremists' excesses in several forms: their labour is exploited, they are denied freedom of movement, they cannot seek alternative employment, and they have no defence against abduction and sexual abuse. Non-Muslim women and girls suffer greater violence than their Muslim counterparts, and those still identified by the state as the scheduled castes suffer much more than upper caste Hindus and other non-Muslim groups.

Can the state be absolved of crime by negligence?

Children outside the category mentioned above constitute another large group that suffers extremists' violence. A large number of street children suffer economic exploitation and physical and sexual abuse. The number of domestic servants that are subjected to various forms of abuse has been rising for quite some time. The state has failed to eradicate corporal punishment in schools. Only the other day a small girl died after falling (or jumping) from a rooftop. She dreaded going to school where she was mercilessly thrashed for lagging behind in her studies. Her mother added to her misery by tying

up her hands and feet and throwing her in a dark room. Enforced disappearances are one of the ugliest forms of extremism.

Now we may take a look at the incidence of faith-related violence. The Hazara Shias are mowed down for their beliefs. Many hate preachers openly instigate murder. The Ahmadis continue to be victims of target killing. The anti-minorities knights are not content with instituting cases under the blasphemy law; they try to exterminate their quarry in police custody or in the street. Anyone acquitted of blasphemy charges cannot find a safe place to live in the country. And there is no doubt that the killing of non-Muslims in prayer houses and Muslims in mosques and schools is done in the name of religion.

Even a cursory reading of the evidence of violence committed by extremists will bring out the fact that use of extremist violence due to completely non-religious factors, such as exploitation of bonded labour and street children, and corporal punishment in schools and even in madressahs, is not unknown in Pakistan. The causes of violence against women include patriarchal excesses, feudal culture and misogynous tendencies, but do not exclude misinterpretation of religious injunctions. As regards the extremists' and militants' narrative of terrorism in the name of religion, it has been attributed to a wrong interpretation of Islam by no less an internationally recognised Islamic scholar than Dr Khalid Masud, formerly chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology and at present a judge of the Shariat Appellate Court.

Unfortunately, the roots of all forms of extremist violence lie in the state's acts of omission or commission. If women's suffering due to the curses of patriarchy, misogyny or feudal culture has increased, the state is responsible for having failed to liberate the Pakistani society of anachronistic social mores which are, among other things, one of the major obstacles to the growth of a democratic system and a democratic culture. If children at schools and madressahs are at the mercy of sadists in the garb of teachers, and if savages at institutions of higher learning can kill a student like Mashal Khan and a teacher like Khalid Hameed, can the state be absolved of crime by negligence? The bonded workers, their women folk and their children continue to suffer because their tormentors enjoy political clout. Has the state taken any action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour despite having signed the relevant ILO convention? Can the state wash away the ignominy of allowing enforced disappearances, the ultimate form of extremist violence?

As regards extremist violence in the name of religion, the state has been inviting censure for acts of both omission and commission. On the one hand, it has done practically nothing to save the people from what is described as wrong interpretation of their faith and, on the other hand, it continues to associate with the religious elements that openly denounce democracy, human rights and pluralism. All past governments increased their and the people's tribulations by appeasing the quasi-religious lobby. It is time the present government asked itself whether it is surpassing its predecessors in pandering to the orthodoxy that has done incalculable harm to Islam and Muslims over many centuries.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476874/the-roots-of-extremism>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 22nd TO APRIL 28th 2019

EASTER BLASTS AT SRI LANKA HOTELS AND CHURCHES KILL AT LEAST 207

Shoaib Ur Rehman April 22, 2019

COLOMBO: A series of eight devastating bomb blasts ripped through high-end hotels and churches holding Easter services in Sri Lanka on Sunday, killing at least 207 people, including dozens of foreigners.

The attacks were the worst act of violence to hit the country in the decade since the end of a bloody civil war that killed up to 100,000 people.

For many in Sri Lanka, the apparently coordinated attacks brought back painful memories of life during the long-running conflict, when bomb blasts were a frequent occurrence.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the government said eight people had been arrested and investigators would look into whether the attackers had “overseas links”.

The government also imposed a nationwide curfew and curbed social media access to prevent “wrong information” from spreading in the country of 21 million people.

The powerful blasts — six in quick succession and then two more hours later — injured hundreds.

At least two of them involved suicide bombers, including one who lined up at a hotel breakfast buffet before unleashing carnage.

By late Sunday, the toll stood at 207 dead and 450 people injured.

Police said 35 foreigners were among the dead, including American, British, Chinese, Dutch and Portuguese citizens. Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said three Indians were killed, while Washington and London also confirmed an unspecified number of their nationals were among the dead.

Among the churches targeted was the historic St Anthony’s Shrine, a Catholic church in Colombo, where the blast blew out much of the roof.

Bodies lay on the ground of the church, covered in patterned scarves and white sheets, some of them stained with blood.

Shattered roof tiles and shards of glass littered the floor, along with chunks of plaster blasted from the walls by the explosion.

Documents seen by AFP show that Sri Lanka’s police chief Pujuth Jayasundara issued an intelligence alert to top officers 10 days ago, warning that suicide bombers planned to hit “prominent churches”.

“A foreign intelligence agency has reported that the NTJ (National Thowheeth Jama’ath) is planning to carry out suicide attacks targeting prominent churches as well as the Indian high commission in Colombo”, the alert said.

The NTJ is a radical Muslim group in Sri Lanka that was linked last year to the vandalism of Buddhist statues.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe acknowledged that “information was there” about possible attacks and that an investigation would look into “why adequate precautions were not taken”.

Rucki Fernando, a Christian Sri Lankan, told AFP: “We haven’t experienced anything like this in the last 10 years.”

“There is a lot of fear, not just in the Christian community, but among everyone,” he added.

Sri Lanka’s Minister of Economic Reforms, Harsha de Silva, described “horrible scenes” at St Anthony’s church.

“I saw many body parts strewn all over,” he tweeted, adding that there were “many casualties,” including foreigners.

Witness N. A. Sumanapala was near the church when the blast happened.

“I ran inside to help. The priest came out and he was covered in blood,” he told AFP. “It was a river of blood.”

A second blast hit St Sebastian’s Church in Negombo, north of the capital during Easter Mass.

Gabriel, who declined to give his family name, said his brother was injured in the explosion.

“We are all in shock. We don’t want the country to go back to that dark past where we had to live in fear of suicide blasts all the time,” he said.

Soon after the first two church blasts, police confirmed that the Zion church in the east coast town of Batticaloa had been hit, along with three high-end hotels in the capital — the Cinnamon Grand, the Shangri-La and the Kingsbury.

A manager at the Cinnamon Grand, near the prime minister's official residence in Colombo, said a suicide bomber blew himself up at the hotel's restaurant.

"He came up to the top of the queue and set off the blast," the manager said.

Later in the afternoon, two people died in a strike at a hotel in the south of Colombo, and a suicide bomber killed three police officers as they raided a house in a northern suburb of the city.

Wickremesinghe urged people to "hold our unity as Sri Lankans" and pledged to "wipe out this menace once and for all".

The archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Ranjith, described the attackers as "animals" and called on authorities to "punish them mercilessly".

US President Donald Trump tweeted his condolences about the "horrible terrorist attacks", and Pope Francis in his Easter address at the Vatican spoke of his "affectionate closeness with the Christian community, attacked while it was at prayer".

Embassies in Colombo warned their citizens to stay inside, and Sri Lankan Airlines told passengers to arrive at the airport four hours ahead of flights because of ramped-up security.

Only around six percent of mainly Buddhist Sri Lanka is Catholic, and the country is a patchwork of different religious and ethnic groups, dominated by Buddhist Sinhalese.

Recent years have seen growing sectarian tensions, including accusations of hate crimes by extremist Buddhist monks against minority Muslims.

There have been no attacks in Sri Lanka linked to foreign militant groups, but in January, Sri Lankan police seized a haul of explosives and detonators following the arrest of four men from a newly formed radical group.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/04/22/491310/easter-blasts-at-sri-lanka-hotels-and-churches-kill-at-least-207/a>

MAY, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 6th TO MAY 12th 2019

TERROR IN GWADAR AS GUNMEN STORM LUXURY HOTEL

Saleem Shahid | Behram Baloch Updated May 12, 2019

QUETTA/GWADAR: Three security guards were killed and four people were injured when gunmen stormed the Pearl Continental Hotel here on Saturday.

Official sources said that the attackers wearing uniform of security forces and armed with modern weapons barged into the hotel and opened fire after taking the hotel staff hostage. Security guards deployed at the hotel offered resistance but three of them were shot dead by the attackers. Two of the deceased were identified as Rasheed and Zahoor.

Gunshots fired by the assailants also left Anwar, Ali Raza, Jawed and an unidentified man injured who were taken to hospital.

At least three security guards lose their lives; AP news agency claims four assailants killed Security forces rushed to the hotel and launched an operation. According to AP news agency, the four attackers have also been killed.

The banned Baloch Liberation Army's (BLA) Majeed Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack and named the militants involved in it.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations, four terrorists attempted forced entry into the PC hotel in the afternoon. Security forces cordoned off the area and safely evacuated the people present in the hotel.

“Terrorists [have been] encircled by security forces in staircase leading to top floor [of the hotel],” the ISPR said, adding that a clearance operation was in progress.

Later, DIG of Makran range Muneer Ahmed Zia Rao said the first, second and third floor of the hotel had been cleared and the attackers had taken refuge on the fourth floor where a shootout between them and security forces continued.

Sources said that the gunmen entered the hotel premises at around 5pm. Soon Navy commandos and Army and Frontier Corps troops launched an operation. Navy helicopters landed on the roof of the hotel.

Official sources denied rumours about the presence of Chinese and other foreigners in the hotel.

“There was no foreigner staying in the hotel when it came under attack,” Balochistan Home Minister Ziaullah Langove said. “There are reports of a few people sustaining minor injuries,” he told AFP.

A police official said that there was no guest in the hotel and only local staff was present there, adding that the staff was also evacuated safely by security forces.

Security officials said that the security forces after taking control of the hotel had cleared the first floor of the hotel. “The terrorists have been confined in a portion of the hotel where an exchange of fire continues with brief intervals,” they said.

“We have been hearing heavy firing from the hotel since around 5.30pm onwards. A blast was also heard in Gwadar,” Musa Baloch, a resident of the port city told Dawn.

He said the roads leading to Koh-i-Batil, the hill on which the five-star hotel is located, had been closed by a heavy contingent of security forces. “No one is allowed to travel to Koh-i-Batil.”

Meanwhile, reports suggested that the security forces were still busy in clearing the hotel and the gunmen were still in the hotel when this news report was filed.

Mohammad Aslam, the on-duty officer in Gwadar, said ambulances and rescue officers were waiting at a road leading to the hotel, and that he could hear the rattle of gunfire but that the operation was coming to an end.

Spokesman Jeeyand Baloch claimed responsibility for the attack on behalf of the BLA’s Majeed Brigade and also released the pictures of four attackers, identifying them as Hammal Fateh Baloch alias Habib, Asad Baloch alias Mehrab, Munseeb Baloch alias Kareem and Kochkol Baloch alias Commando.

Published in Dawn, May 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481731/terror-in-gwadar-as-gunmen-storm-luxury-hotel>

11 GROUPS BANNED FOR HAVING LINKS WITH JUD, OTHERS

Iftikhar A. Khan May 12, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The interior ministry has outlawed as many as 11 organisations affiliated with the banned outfits of Jamaatud Dawa (JuD), Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM).

These include seven affiliates of the JuD and two each of the FIF and the JeM.

The seven JuD affiliates to have been proscribed are namely Al-Anfal Trust, Lahore; Idara Khidmat-i-Khalq, Lahore; Al-Dawatul Irshad, Lahore; Al-Hamad Trust, Lahore/Faisalabad; Mosques & Welfare Trust, Lahore; Al-Medina Foundation, Lahore, and Mazz-Bin-Jabel Education Trust, Lahore.

Names placed on Nacta website that maintains a list of 71 outfits and affiliates banned since 2001

The two affiliated organisations of FIF outlawed are Al-Fazal Foundation/Trust, Lahore and Al-Easar Foundation, Lahore. The two affiliated organizations of JeM to have been banned are Al-Rehmat Trust Organisation, Bahawalpur, and Al-Furqan Trust, Karachi.

The decision to ban Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) and Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) was taken at a meeting of the National Security Committee, headed by the prime minister and comprising key cabinet members and military leaders, on Feb 21, but a notification by the interior ministry to that effect was issued on March 5.

In February last year, then president Mamnoon Hussain had promulgated an ordinance amending the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, with regard to proscription of individuals and organisations to include entities listed by the UN Security Council in a move to declare JuD and FIF proscribed groups. However, the ordinance lapsed after the expiry of 120 days and was neither re-promulgated nor brought to parliament as a bill.

Jaish-e-Muhammad had been outlawed in Pakistan back in January 2002.

Names of the organisations affiliated with the three banned outfits have been placed on the website of National Counterterrorism Authority (Nacta) on May 10. Their names appear below their parent organisations and the number of outlawed organisations continues to stand at 71.

The process of maintaining a list of proscribed organisations started on Aug 14, 2001 when Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan were banned. Just five months later the JeM, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, Tehreek-i-Jafria Pakistan, Tehreek-i-Islami and Tehreek-i-Nifaz Shariat-i-Mohammadi were banned.

Al Qaeda was put on the list of proscribed outfits on March 17, 2003, followed by the placement of ban on six organisations namely Millat-i-Islamia Pakistan, Khuddamul Islam, Islami Tehreek Pakistan, Jamiatul Ansar, Jamiatul Furqan and Hizbut Tehrir in November. A year later Khair-un-Naas International Trust was proscribed.

Two more groups placed on the list were Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which was banned on April 7, 2006, and the Islamic Students Movement of Pakistan which was outlawed on Aug 21, 2006. In 2008, Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-i-Islam, Ansarul Islam and Haji Namdar Group were banned.

Five more Balochistan-based organisations — Balochistan Republican Army, Balochistan Liberation Front, Lashkar-i-Balochistan, Balochistan Liberation United Front and Balochistan Musallah Difa Tanzeem — were put on the list in 2010, while three Gilgit-based groups — Markaz Sabeel Organisation, Shia Tulaba Action Committee and Tanzeem Naujawan-i-Ahle Sunnat — and the Karachi-based Peoples Aman Committee were banned the following year.

Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, a reincarnation of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, Al Harmain Foundation and Rabita Trust, Anjuman-i-Imamia, Muslim Students Organisation, Tanzeem Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, Balochistan Bunyad Parast Army, Tehreek Nafaz-i-Aman, Tahaffuz Hadudullah, Balochistan Waja Liberation Army, Islam Mujahideen, Jaish-i-Islam and Balochistan National Liberation Army were proscribed in 2012.

The list was further expanded in 2013 with the addition of 14 groups namely Khana-i-Hikmat Gilgit-Baltistan, Tehreek-i-Taliban Swat, Tehreek-i-Taliban Mohmand, Tariq Jeedar Group, Abdullah Azam Brigade, East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, 313 Brigade, Tehreek-i-Taliban Bajaur, Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi Anil Munkir (Haji Namdar Group), Baloch Student Organisation-Azad, United Baloch Army and Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz in March.

The list of proscribed militant outfits remained unchanged till July 15, 2015 when Daesh — the Arabic acronym for the militant Islamic State group — was banned. Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Alami and Ansarul Hussain were banned next year.

Tehreek-i-Azadi Jammu and Kashmir and Jundullah were added to the list by the previous government in 2017 and 18, respectively.

The first organisation banned by the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government was the Yemen-based Al-Rahmah Welfare Trust Organisation. It was added to the list of proscribed outfits on Dec 13, 2018. This year, the government banned Balwaristan National Front (Abdul Hameed Khan Group), the JuD, the FIF and the Pak-Turk International CAG foundation besides the 11 affiliates of the JuD, the FIF and the JeM.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481728/11-groups-banned-for-having-links-with-jud-others>

THE HANGING SWORD OF FATF

By M Ziauddin Published: May 11, 2019

A face-to-face meeting between Asia Pacific Group (APG) of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Pakistan is scheduled later this month, to be followed by the Task Force undertaking its penultimate review of Pakistan's progress early next month. The sword of the FATF, it seems, will continue to hang over our heads until after September this year when we would know our fate: whether we continue to remain in the grey list or are taken out of it or consigned to the black list. It is perhaps because of our entanglement with the FATF that the IMF was seen to be dragging its feet on the matter of finalising a programme that we needed urgently as our foreign exchange reserves of around nine billion dollars mobilised through short-term loans from friendly countries have already disappeared.

What is extremely worrying is the very governing structure of the APG which is exceptionally unfriendly. A very hostile US is the President of the FATF represented by Marshall Billingslea, a serving Assistant Secretary of US Treasury who also heads the office of Terrorist Financing Crimes. Australia which is part of the anti-China (read Pakistan as well) Indo-Pacific alliance is the President of the APG and India which has already vowed to isolate Pakistan economically is the Co-chair of the APG. With such a formidable combination of hostile forces sitting on the review panel, one cannot rule out the possibility of handing out a rigged judgment. The only redeeming feature in the administrative set-up is China which sits on the FATF as its Vice-President represented by Liu Xiangmin, Director General of the Legal Department at the People's Bank of China.

Equally worrisome is the fact that the European Commission (EC) has already placed Pakistan in its list of inadequate jurisdiction on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terror Financing regimes. If in such a situation we are pushed into the 'black list' by the FATF for no genuine fault of ours, it will unleash serious economic and financial impact down the stream causing immense damage to Pakistan's economy.

The most obvious result would be the cost of doing a financial transaction through established banking/ financial system, increased premium on Pakistani instruments in the international capital markets, and the multilateral financing organisations would add risk premiums to any money borrowed. Black listing will squeeze Pakistan's economy further and make it harder for the country to meet its mounting foreign financing needs, including potential future borrowings from the IMF. And if we remain in the 'grey list' it could lead to a downgrade in Pakistan's debt ratings, making it more difficult to tap into the international bond markets. Further, it would lead to the downgrading of Pakistan's financial viability.

The situation becomes all the more critical when seen in the context of the country's current economic data: exports \$23 billion, imports \$42 billion, remittances \$19 billion, fiscal deficit 6% of GDP, tax-to-GDP ratio 12% and inflation 8%.

And if this data is analysed against the projections of GDP growth rate by the three major multilateral aid agencies, we seem to be falling off the cliff sooner than later. According to World Economic Outlook report of the IMF, Pakistan's GDP will grow at 2.9% in FY 19 and 2.8% in FY20. Similar projections have been made by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

This would mean Pakistan's GDP currently estimated at \$320 billion would shrink by 2020 to around \$280 billion which would mean our revenue collection ability would decline further even with accelerated efforts to expand the tax base ending next financial year with a fiscal deficit much larger than the current estimate of an unsustainable 6%.

In the meanwhile, the indirect costs like increase in inflation, increase in the discount rates, decline in industrial productivity, decline in exports, deterioration in currency etc, and stagnant inflow of FDI will adversely impact the overall economy.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 11th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1970174/6-hanging-sword-fatf/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 13st TO MAY 19th 2019

SECOND ATTACK IN THREE DAYS ROCKS

BALUCHISTAN

Saleem Shahid May 14, 2019

QUETTA: At least four police personnel were martyred and 12 others, including some policemen, wounded in a blast near a mosque in the Satellite Town area of the provincial capital on Monday night.

The blast took place shortly after a police van arrived at the site to provide security to the people offering taraveeh prayers at the mosque, officials said.

This was the second major terrorist attack in Balochistan within the last three days, as previously a luxury hotel in Gwadar came under attack.

“The police vehicle carrying personnel for mosque security was targeted in the blast in which our four personnel of Rapid Response Group (RRG) lost their lives, while the condition of another was stated to be serious,” said Quetta DIG Razzaq Cheema while speaking to Dawn.

Four policemen martyred in Quetta bomb blast; Taliban claim responsibility

The officer said an improvised explosive device planted in a motorcycle went off close to the police van. Sources said unidentified people parked the explosive-laden motorbike near the mosque in Satellite Town area and detonated it by remote control when the police van arrived there.

As a result, one police constable died on the spot while 15 others, including seven police personnel, were wounded.

Police, Frontier Corps personnel and rescue workers rushed to the site and shifted the body and the wounded victims to the Civil Hospital Quetta.

“Three police officials among the injured died soon after being brought here at the hospital,” officials at the healthcare facility said. They added other wounded were admitted to the hospital. “The condition of another policeman is serious, as he sustained multiple wounds,” said a senior official.

Many vehicles parked in the area were damaged and windowpanes of nearby buildings were shattered due to the impact of the powerful blast though the mosque remained safe in the attack.

Four RRG men who lost their lives in the blast were identified as Mohammad Ishaq, Ghulam Nabi, Mushtaq Shah and Zulfiqar Ali.

Security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to trace the elements involved in the blast.

The Balochistan chief minister strongly condemned the blasts and said they could not demoralise the government and security forces. He vowed that the government and security forces would continue action against terrorists and their facilitators.

He directed law enforcement agencies to take all-out measures against terrorists and bring them to justice. He expressed sympathies with families of the martyred police personnel and said their sacrifices would always be remembered.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the motorcycle bomb blast targeting the police vehicle.

Published in Dawn, May 14th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1482172/second-attack-in-three-days-rocks-balochistan>

NIGHT OF TERROR AT GWADAR HOTEL ENDS AFTER 12-HOUR OPERATION

Baqir Sajjad Syed | Saleem Shahid May 13, 2019

QUETTA / ISLAMABAD: The Army announced on Sunday successful completion of the clearance operation at Gwadar's five-star hotel that was attacked by terrorists the previous day, saying four hotel employees and a Navy soldier embraced martyrdom while all three attackers were eliminated. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that security forces had completed the clearance operation at the Pearl Continental Hotel.

All three terrorists were killed and their bodies have been retained for identification.

Four hotel employees and a Pakistan Navy soldier embraced martyrdom and six others — two Army captains, two Navy soldiers and two hotel staffers — suffered injuries.

The attack, claimed by the banned nationalist group Baloch Liberation Army, had started on Saturday evening and it took over 12 hours to complete the clearance operation, which shows the complexity of the operation in which all guests were safely evacuated.

The Army's Quick Reaction Force, troops from Special Services Group and Navy, police and Frontier Corps took part in the operation.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, in a statement, hailed the successful completion of the operation.

Condemning the attack, Mr Khan appreciated "initial response by security guards and security forces" that prevented "greater loss of human lives". He paid tributes to those who lost their lives in the attack or got injured.

The prime minister said the Gwadar attack and similar attacks in Balochistan in recent past were "an effort to sabotage our economic projects and prosperity". He vowed to foil such nefarious agendas. Lately there has been a surge in terrorist activity in Balochistan. Security officials believe the sudden intensification of attacks is linked to the launch of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the progress on border fencing and the fluid situation in Afghanistan.

Navy soldier, four hotel employees martyred; PM terms attack bid to sabotage projects; all three terrorists eliminated

"Terrorists had attempted entry into the hotel to target and take hostage the guests present," the ISPR, the media wing of the military, said. Their plan to take hostages was foiled, a security official said while talking to Dawn.

Recalling the incident, the ISPR said the security guards challenged the terrorists when they forced their way into the hotel. The terrorists then took the stairs to upper floors. One of the hotel guards, identified as Zahoor, embraced martyrdom after the terrorists resorted to firing. "On their way to upper floors, the terrorists kept firing indiscriminately, resulting in martyrdom of three more hotel employees — Farhad, Bilawal and Awais — while two got injured," it said.

The security forces, the ISPR said, reached the hotel soon after the attack got under way. They troops pinned down the three terrorists on the hotel's fourth floor and simultaneously began securing guests and staff.

Officials had initially said that there were no guests in the hotel at the time of the attack.

"By night guests and employees of the hotel had been secured. It took longer to rescue those on the fourth floor," a security source said.

Official sources said that there was no Chinese national or any other foreigner among the guests rescued from the hotel. "No foreigner was present in the hotel when the attack took place," they said. "After ensuring safe evacuation of guests and staff, clearance operation was launched to take on the terrorists," the ISPR said.

"The terrorists had made CCTV cameras dysfunctional and planted IEDs on all entry points leading to the fourth floor. Security forces made special entry points to get to the fourth floor, shot dead all terrorists and removed IEDS," it added.

Pakistan Navy soldier Abbas Khan embraced martyrdom in an exchange of fire with the terrorists while two Army captains and as many Navy soldiers were injured.

ISPR director general Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor thanked the media for responsible reporting and coverage of operation, saying it denied the terrorists possible live updates and thus facilitated security forces in smooth execution of the operation.

The bodies of Zahoor and Bilawal, both brothers, were sent to their village in Badin district of Sindh where they were buried amid moving scenes. One of the injured, Rasheed Lashari, who is the cousin of the two brothers, was shifted to a Karachi hospital due to critical injuries he had received.

Fifteen men from Badin district, who have been staying in Gwadar for the last one year to earn their livelihood, are said to be returning home due to sense of insecurity.

The Chinese embassy in Islamabad condemned the terrorist attack. "The heroic action of Pakistan Army and law enforcement agencies is highly appreciated," it said and condoled with the families of those who lost their lives in the attack.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi also condemned the attack. Reaffirming counterterrorism support for Pakistan, he said: "We are standing alongside the Pakistani nation and government with all our facilities."

Muhammad Hashim Bhurgari and Hanif Sammon from Badin also contributed to this report

Published in Dawn, May 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1482001/night-of-terror-at-gwadar-hotel-ends-after-12-hour-operation>

THE GROWING US PRESENCE IN PAKISTAN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD

By Shahid Javed Burki Published: May 13, 2019

For Pakistan, the arrival of the United States in its neighbourhood cannot be seen as a happy development. Washington has a presence among four out of five Pakistani neighbours. Some of what Washington is doing around Pakistan may pose serious problems for Islamabad. In an earlier article, I explained why India-occupied Kashmir, or IOK, needed to be treated as a full-fledged Pakistani neighbour. The Line of Control (LoC), the boundary between Kashmir and Pakistan, is not an international frontier, but it has a dynamic difference from the Pakistan-India border. Even in IOK, the United States has played a role. Donald Trump, the American President, has drawn close to Narendra Modi who is about to be reelected as India's prime minister for a second five-year term. There is no doubt that the growing relations with the United States had a sanction for New Delhi's approach to Kashmir. Among other things, Modi is committing serious human rights violations in the

part of the state that India occupies. What is the likely impact of that on South Asia is a story for another day. Today, I will concern myself with Washington's rapidly-deteriorating relations with Tehran.

There are two individuals in the US administration who are pushing their country towards a possible all-out war with Iran. The first, of course, is President Trump. He has a problem with Iran for two reasons. He is anti-Islam and anti-Muslim and sees Iran as an aggressive promoter of the Islamic faith. The President is also under the influence of Benjamin Netanyahu, recently elected to the fifth term as prime minister of Israel. The Israeli leader has convinced the American President that Iran presents an existential threat to the Jewish state. Israel has strong support in the United States not only of the powerful Jewish community but also of the Evangelical Christians whose interpretation of their scripture has the Jewish command of all of Palestine as a way towards the second coming of Christ. The other person responsible for the adoption by Washington of a hardline approach towards Iran is the influence of the national security adviser, John Bolton. Dexter Filkins of *The New Yorker* has a long Bolton profile in the magazine's May 6 issue. In it, he tries to explain the long-cultivated hostility of Bolton towards Iran. His office is a few steps away from President Trump's Oval Office. He sees Trump every morning before the President begins his day and every evening when he retires to his private quarters. Filkins, when he went to interview Bolton for the profile, saw on the wall of his office the framed executive order signed by Trump that pulled the United States out of the nuclear deal negotiated with Iran by Barack Obama in 2015. Bolton told Filkins that the day Trump signed that order was the happiest in his long career in public service.

The tit-for-tat relationship between Iran and the United States took the two countries to a near-war situation on Monday, May 6, when the Pentagon decided to dispatch the Aircraft Carrier *Abraham Lincoln* escorted by a fleet of navy ships to the Persian Gulf. The Pentagon issued a statement that cited "heightened Iranian readiness to conduct offensive operations against US forces and our interests" as the reason for moving ships closer to Iran. An agency spokesman said the carrier deployment "ensured we have forces" in the region to "defend American personnel".

The navy move followed two earlier decisions. In one, Washington refused to grant further extension to China, India, Japan and South Korea that had been allowed to import oil from Iran when the United States reimposed sanctions on Iran. Iraq was also treated as a special case as it was allowed to import energy from Iran in the form of electricity. This was done after Washington withdrew from the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran. Under the 2015 arrangement, Iran shipped roughly 97% of its nuclear fuel stockpile out of the country. With that done, experts didn't believe Iran had enough weapon-grade material on hand to make a nuclear bomb. By closing the entire foreign market for Iranian oil, the United States aimed to produce enough pressure on the Iranian economy that would bring people out on the street and possibly cause regime change. That was all along the aim pursued by John Bolton. In response, Iran said that it would protect itself from what it called "economic terrorism".

The second action resulted in placing Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organisations. This was the first time that the terrorist designation was given to an arm of another nation's government. In response, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran declared all American forces in the Middle East terrorists and labelled the United States government a state sponsor of terrorism. In early 2019, Bolton declared that the 5,200 American troops that remained in Iraq should stay there to "watch Iran". There are no known attacks against American troops in Iraq from armed groups known as Popular Mobilisation Forces, some of which are linked to Iran.

According to one account, "there are some 30 armed groups in Iraq that are now part of the Iraqi forces. Most of them were formed to help fight the Islamic State when the Iraqi Army collapsed in 2014, and some were trained and armed by Iran." The fight against the ISIS also involved the United

States. For some time, the two countries were on the same side of the many conflicts in the Middle East.

Every day brings new but adverse developments concerning America's relations with Iran. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo paid a visit to Iraq on April 6 and met senior leaders of the country to ensure that Baghdad does not move fully into the Iranian orbit. There was intelligence that Iran may be positioning missiles that could be used against US forces in the region. This, in other words, is a crisis in development. If it escalates, it will bring serious disturbance right in Pakistan's neighbourhood, hence posing awkward policy choices for Islamabad.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 13th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1971654/6-growing-us-presence-pakistans-neighbourhood/>

JUNE, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 3rd TO JUN 9th 2019

MONEY-LAUNDERING, TERROR-FINANCING: FATF ACKNOWLEDGES PAK PERFORMANCE

Mehtab Haider June 9, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Joint Group (JG) of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has acknowledged Pakistan's performance on some key areas to comply with the action plan in order to combat money-laundering and terror-financing but also identified some weak points where further improvement is required in months ahead.

The JG of FATF has shared its mixed report with Pakistani authorities on the compliance report submitted by Islamabad during last month (May 2019) meeting held at China on key points out of total 27 action plans till its deadline.

The JG of FATF pointed out requirement on Pakistani law enforcing agencies (LEAs) such as FIA, CTD and Nacta to deliver on assigned objectives to fight money-laundering and terror-financing. Some cases proved in court of law and penalised on account of terror-financing but more such instances would be required to display for proving seriousness on this front.

Out of 27 action plans, the FATF has reported 18 as incomplete and demanded actionable steps against eight proscribed outfits. They have written in their report that Pakistan will have to do more till September 2019 when FATF Action Plan is concluded and overall assessment will be done. Pakistani authorities argued that it seemed that some parts of the report were written by Indian officials because Islamabad had taken all required actions but overall report was not so much appreciative of overall steps taken by Pakistan. However, overall the report had not recommended any negative action against Pakistan.

Furthermore, the State Bank of Pakistan and Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan will have to reply back on queries raised by JG of FATF in their latest report. "With effective response Pakistan can be put off the grey list", said one of the top officials dealing with FATF while talking to The News here on Saturday.

Pakistan has received JG of FATF report on Friday evening and its major findings have been shared with Adviser to PM on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh with the expectation that its contents would be shared with the premier as well anytime.

"We cannot fall into blacklist unless someone moves a proposal to put us into further downgrading position in the upcoming FATF plenary meeting scheduled to be held in USA in third week of the ongoing month.

Any proposal at FATF is adopted on the basis of consensus so it is important to raise support of three to four votes out of total 36 member countries of FATF in case of any such recommendation to block any move aimed at slipping Islamabad into category of blacklist,” top official sources confirmed to The News here on Saturday.

Pakistan is required to continue its journey for implementing its National Action Plan (NAP) as it is aimed at improving Pakistan’s image and not only FATF requirements.

The global community has recognised Pakistan’s progress and now there is a need to build on our achievements in months ahead. “We are hopeful that FATF members will also acknowledge our performance”, added the official sources.

The real issue will be handling Indian lobbies at upcoming FATF meeting as there are some risks that need to be handled properly by launching vigorous diplomatic campaign to win support for Pakistan at upcoming meeting scheduled to be held in USA.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/481936-money-laundering-terror-financing-fatf-acknowledges-pak-performance>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 10th TO JUN 16th 2019

BUDGET 2019-20: DEFENCE BUDGET TO GROW NOMINALLY NEXT YEAR

Baqir Sajjad Syed Updated June 12, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Defence budget is proposed to grow nominally in the next financial year by 4.74 per cent as compared to the outgoing year, but its share in the total outlay and the gross domestic product (GDP) is set to decline, according to the budget documents laid before the National Assembly on Tuesday.

The government has proposed to allocate Rs1.15 trillion for ‘Defence Affairs and Services’ for 2019-20 as compared to the original allocation of Rs 1.1tr for the outgoing year. The actual expenditure incurred during the outgoing year slightly overshoot the budgeted amount by nearly 3.4pc and remained at Rs 1.137tr, as per the revised figures for defence budget for 2018-19. The new allocation is almost flat when compared with the revised figures.

While presenting the Finance Bill, 2019, Minister of State for Revenue Hammad Azhar said the defence budget would remain stable at Rs1.15tr during the next fiscal year. He thanked the armed forces for voluntarily cutting their expenditures in view of the economic situation and assured that the defence capability would remain unaffected.

Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa had last week announced that the armed forces were “foregoing routine increase in annual defence budget”. Prime Minister Imran Khan had then said the military had “voluntarily agreed” to cut its expenditures due to “critical financial situation”.

Mr Khan had promised to spend the saved amount on development of Balochistan and the erstwhile tribal areas that have been merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A closer analysis of the proposed defence allocation shows that it makes 14pc of the total outlay and 2.62pc of GDP. In the outgoing year, the amount earmarked for defence was 18.5pc of the total pie and 2.87pc of GDP.

The defence allocation does not give the complete picture of the defence spending, as it does not include Rs327 billion earmarked for pensions of retired soldiers next year. The pension bill for troops would shoot up by nearly 25pc in the coming year over the previous year. Allocations for major procurements and strategic programme are, moreover, never made public.

The virtual freeze on defence budget would affect the ‘civil works’ head the most as it has received a 12.77pc cut. The civil works head accounts for the funds marked for maintenance of existing

infrastructure and construction of new buildings. The other head to get relatively lesser increase is that of operating expenses, which would grow by 4.4pc. Operating expenses cover transport, POL, ration, medical treatment, training, etc. Meanwhile, employee-related expenses, which include salaries and allowances paid to troops in uniform and civilian employees, are proposed to go up by 6.5pc.

In line with the announcement by the civilian and military leadership that defence capacity would not be affected, the expenditure on 'physical assets' is set to increase by 11.7pc. This head provides for local purchase and import of arms and ammunition and related procurements. Last year when the defence budget was hiked by massive 18pc, the physical assets head had received a 16pc raise.

The army traditionally had the lion's share in defence budget. This year the allocation for the army would remain static at Rs523bn. It still accounts for 45.4pc of the total defence allocation. The budget of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), meanwhile, would increase by 9.64pc. Over 22pc of the defence allocation would go to the air force. The Navy's share would expand by 9.6pc. Its share in the defence pie is 11.3pc. The defence establishment/inter-services institutions are getting 8.78pc hike in their budget. They account for 21pc of the remaining defence allocation.

The pink book, which carries the details of budgetary demands, further revealed that initially the government had planned to allocate Rs1.2tr for defence. However, the figure was at the eleventh hour revised downward to Rs1.15tr.

The figure of Rs1.2tr has remained in the book and an addendum had to be added to reflect the changed allocation along with its breakdown. In the original scheme of things, the army's share was static, whereas that of PAF was to increase by 18.31pc, Navy by 19.95pc and defence establishment/inter-services by 18.48pc. Apparently, the PAF, Navy, and defence establishment/inter-services at the last stage agreed to slash their raise and accept on average a 9pc hike.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1487718/budget-2019-20-defence-budget-to-grow-nominally-next-year>

RS 1.15 TRILLION EARMARKED FOR DEFENCE

NUZHAT NAZAR | JUN 12TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Defence was allocated Rs 1.15 trillion for 2019-20 against Rs 1.13 trillion in the revised estimates of 2018-19 reflecting a raise of 1.3 percent well below the projected inflation of between 11 to 13 percent next year. The Chief of Army Staff recently announced that the army would voluntarily take a cut in budgeted allocation but had added that while officers would not get a pay raise this did not apply to the jawans.

The budget does not include several other allocations for the military, including Rs 327 billion for pensions, which is 77 percent of the federal government's total pension bill, as well as Rs 53 billion budgeted for security enhancement, and Rs 2.15 billion for development purposes and other supplementary grants. The expenditure incurred on the country's nuclear and missile programme and expenditure incurred on the UN missions abroad are also not included.

Out of Rs 1.15 trillion the maximum allocated amount (39 percent) is budgeted for employee-related expenses at Rs 450 billion. This covers salaries and allowances paid to troops in uniform and civilian employees. Operating expenses which cover transport, POL (Petroleum, oil and lubricants), rations, medical treatment, training etc, have been budgeted at Rs 264 billion.

Rs 315 billion has been proposed for physical assets utilized for local purchases and import of arms and ammunition and related procurements. Civil works that include funds marked for maintenance of existing infrastructure and construction of new buildings have been budgeted at Rs 123 billion.

The decision by Pakistan's armed forces not to seek any increase in military spending for the coming fiscal year is an acknowledgment of the mounting economic challenges that have forced Pakistan to seek an IMF for a new loan, sources in the military told Business Recorder.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190612485363/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 17th TO JUN 23th 2019

PAKISTAN, JAPAN SIGN MOU ON DEFENCE COOPERATION

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated June 19, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Japan on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation and exchanges.

The MoU was signed after the 10th round of military-to-military talks at the Ministry of Defence in Rawalpindi.

Additional Defence Secretary Rear Admiral Owais Ahmed Bilgrami led the Pakistani delegation, while the director general for International Affairs at Japan's Bureau of Defence Policy led the Japanese side.

The two sides exchanged views on enhancing and diversifying bilateral cooperation and agreed on stronger collaboration for promotion of international peace and security, the officials said.

Rear Admiral Bilgrami recalled the goodwill existing between the armed forces of the two countries and briefed the Japanese delegation on Pakistan's role and efforts in pursuing enduring peace in the region.

The seventh round of Pakistan-Japan security dialogue was, meanwhile, held at the Foreign Office. The Pakistani side was led by Imtiaz Ahmad, Special Secretary (Asia Pacific), while Shigeki Takizaki, Director General, Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, led the Japanese side.

"The two sides exchanged views on security policies and regional as well as global issues. The security situation around Pakistan and Japan was also discussed," the Foreign Office said, adding that the special secretary also briefed the Japanese side on Pakistan's relations with neighbouring countries and highlighted efforts in the fight against terrorism.

Mr Takizaki later called on Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile, Industry, Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1489064/pakistan-japan-sign-mou-on-defence-cooperation>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 24th TO JUNE 30th 2019

DEFENCE SERVICES SECURED BIGGEST SUPPLEMENTARY GRANT

Khaleeq Kiani Updated June 24, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The defence services secured the biggest supplementary grant of more than Rs36 billion during the outgoing fiscal year before seeking about 4.7 per cent higher allocations for next fiscal year.

The Ministry of Finance has reported to the parliament that the government exceeded by Rs222bn its sanctioned expenditure limit without parliamentary approval. Therefore, it sought Rs106bn regular supplementary grant from the parliament as fait accompli. The remaining Rs116bn amount pertained to surrender from one grant to another or foreign grants and would be treated as technical supplementary grants.

Of these regular supplementary grants, the largest supplementary grant of Rs36bn was given to the defence services which spent these funds without prior approval of the parliament. Of these, Rs20bn was spent on fencing and lighting of Pak-Afghan border, Rs5bn as special duty allowance on Pakistan Army and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Rs5.89bn recurring cost of Special Security Division for the army.

As such, the documents showed that the defence services had been allocated about Rs1.100 trillion in the current year's budget which was later increased to Rs1.138tr. The government has allocated

Rs1.152tr to the defence services for next year, showing an increase of about 4.8pc over the original allocation for current year or 1.4pc over the revised budget.

This is in addition to Rs370.5bn allocation for separate development expenditure of the defence division for next fiscal year compared to Rs153.5bn spent under this account during current fiscal year, showing an increase of 160pc or Rs217bn.

When put together, the total allocations for the defence services will amount to Rs1.522tr next year, compared to Rs1.253tr during current year, showing an increase of about 21.5pc.

Another Rs4.3bn was released by the finance ministry as shortfall of petroleum expenditure to the PAF and remaining expenses of community bunkers on the borders, Junior Naval Academy, Ormara, repair and maintenance of Cessna Grand aircraft and a helicopter of Pakistan Rangers.

Another unapproved major expenditure overrun of Rs26bn has now been placed before the parliament for ex-post facto approval that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government announced in its supplementary budget in September 2018 as subsidy on liquefied natural gas (LNG) for industrial consumers, but forgot to include it in budget documents while seeking parliamentary approval at the time.

Also, another major supplementary grant of Rs12.2bn is being sought for the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. The ministry had originally got Rs1.5bn budget but utilised almost 10 times greater funds in disregard to financial rules that do not allow supplementary expenses greater than original budget.

Another major expenditure overrun pertained to diversion of Rs24bn earmarked for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects to development schemes recommended by the parliamentarians through the cabinet division. This also violated the financial rules because the cabinet division had an original budget of about Rs14.8bn and the supplementary grant was greater than the allocation.

The finance ministry also issued Rs520 million supplementary grants to the aviation division to meet expense overruns by the Airport Security Force and Rs190m supplementary budget as litigation cost against the Karkey case being fought against a Turkish power project.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1490070>

JULY, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 1st TO JULY 7th 2019

US DESIGNATES BALOCHISTAN LIBERATION ARMY AS GLOBAL TERRORIST GROUP

AFP | Naveed Siddiqui Updated July 02, 2019

The United States on Tuesday designated militants fighting Pakistani rule in Balochistan as terrorists after it carried out deadly attacks targeting Chinese interests.

The US State Department said it was classifying the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as a global terrorist group, making it a crime for anyone in the US to assist the militants and freezing any US assets they may have.

Take a look: ‘Attack on Chinese consulate in Karachi planned in Afghanistan with support of Indian agency’

The banned BLA “is an armed group that targets security forces and civilians, mainly in Baloch areas of Pakistan,” the State Department said in its designation.

The security forces have been fighting terrorists in Balochistan since 2004, with the militants recently finding a new focus in rallying against China’s investment that is part of its major Belt and Road initiative.

The BLA has targeted Chinese nationals in Pakistan multiple times, including a brazen daylight attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi that killed four people in November 2018.

In May, five people including a soldier were killed after gunmen stormed the only five-star hotel in Gwadar, the port city which Islamabad is hoping to develop into a major commercial hub. Claiming responsibility for the hotel attack, the BLA warned China to stop its “exploitative projects in Balochistan” and threatened further attacks.

The US designation of the group comes despite vocal concerns by Washington over the Belt and Road initiative, with Washington accusing China of imposing debt traps on developing nations. Following the US announcement, the Foreign Office (FO) issued a statement, taking note of the designation by the US administration.

“It is hoped that this designation will ensure that BLA’s space to operate is minimised,” the statement read.

The FO pointed out that the BLA has been a proscribed entity in Pakistan since 2006.

“It is important that the perpetrators, organisers, financiers and external sponsors including those glorifying these acts of terror against Pakistan are held accountable and brought to justice.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1491688>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 15th TO JULY 21st 019

US CONGRESS BLOCKS SAUDI ARMS SALES

July 19, 2019

The US House voted Wednesday to block \$8.1 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other allies, a rebuke of Donald Trump that will likely lead to a veto by the president.

Lawmakers, many of whom are outraged with the kingdom over Riyadh’s role in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi last year, approved three resolutions that would prevent the controversial sales announced under emergency measures earlier this year by Trump.

The resolutions blocking the sales have already cleared the US Senate, and now go to the White House, where Trump is expected to issue the third veto of his presidency.

While the House blocked the sales with a comfortable majority, it was about 50 votes shy of the two-thirds needed to override Trump’s veto.

Trump is seeking 22 separate sales of aircraft support maintenance, precision-guided munitions and other weapons and equipment to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan at a moment of heightened tensions in the Middle East.

Critics say the arms sales would aggravate the devastating war in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is leading a US-backed coalition in a battle against the Iranian-supported Huthi rebels, and which the UN said has triggered the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Trump’s administration took the extraordinary step of bypassing Congress to approve the sale in May, as his administration declared Iran to be a “fundamental threat” to the stability of the Middle East. But lawmakers including some Senate Republicans said there were no legitimate grounds to circumvent Congress, which has the right to disapprove arms sales.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/world/news/us-congress-blocks-saudi-arms-sales-1773787>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 22nd TO JULY 28th 2019

FOUR COPS AMONG EIGHT KILLED IN D.I. KHAN GUN, BOMB ATTACKS

Irfan Mughal July 22, 2019

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: A suicide bomber targeted a government-run hospital here on Sunday, killing six people, two of them policemen, and wounding 28 others, shortly after a gun attack on a police check-post left two policemen dead.

The bodies of the two policemen killed in the check-post attack were shifted to the Trauma Centre of the District Headquarters Hospital where the suicide bomber detonated explosives strapped to his body. At that time, colleagues and relatives of the slain constables had gathered there.

Officials said that the suicide bomber clad in a black 'shuttlecock' burqa was sitting near the entrance of the Trauma Centre. They said that the explosion took place when the bodies of the two policemen were being shifted inside the centre.

District police chief Salim Riaz told the media that two policemen and four civilians, including a minor girl, were killed in the suicide bombing.

The explosion caused damage to the building of the Trauma Centre and several vehicles and motorcycles parked inside the hospital.

According to an AFP report, the suicide bombing was carried out by a woman. The news agency quoted district police chief Riaz as saying "the female bomber, aged around 28 years, came on foot and blew herself up".

Earlier, gunmen on four motorcycles opened fire on policemen at Kotla Saidan check-post around 7.45am, killing two policemen, the official said.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)'s Khorasani group has claimed responsibility for the two attacks on social media networks.

Officials of the bomb disposal squad collected evidence and body parts of the suicide bomber from the spot.

A forensics expert said that explosives weighing at least eight to 10 kilogrammes were used in the suicide attack.

The seriously wounded people were airlifted to Peshawar and Islamabad. Security was put on high alert after the suicide attack and security forces started checking vehicles at entry and exit points of Dera Ismail Khan.

The funeral prayer of the slain policemen was held at the Police Lines and attended by senior civil and military officials. After the funeral prayer, the bodies of the policemen were sent to their hometowns.

Agencies add: Mohammad Khorasani, a spokesman for the TTP, said the suicide attack was carried out in revenge for the killing of two Taliban commanders by counter-terrorism police around a month ago. However, he denied the bomber was a woman.

Later on Sunday, police said they had arrested 16 suspects in the attack, all of whom belong to banned organisations. Police officer Habib Ahmed said authorities also seized weapons during the manhunt. Prime Minister Imran Khan has strongly condemned the terrorist attacks and expressed his deep grief and sorrow over loss of lives in the incidents.

The prime minister prayed for eternal peace of departed souls and the bereaved families to bear the loss with equanimity, the PM office media wing said in a press release said.

He directed for provision of best medical treatment to the injured and prayed for their early recovery. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan has condemned the incident and said that the government shares the grief and loss of the victims' families. He said that such cowardly attacks would not dampen their resolve to maintain peace.

Awami National Party president Asfandyar Wali Khan has also expressed sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the two attacks and urged the government to ensure implementation of the National Action Plan to counter terrorism. He said that the government should take across-the-board action against all proscribed and extremist groups.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1495514>

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MILITARY OPERATION TO GET COMPENSATION

The Newspaper's Correspondent July 26, 2019

TANK: Inspector General Frontier Corps (IGFC-South) Maj Gen Azhar Abbasi on Thursday said that compensation would soon be paid to people whose houses had been damaged in the South Waziristan military operation, codenamed Rah-i-Nijat.

“Compensation cheques would be distributed among owners of the damaged houses in the next few days,” he said while speaking at a grand jirga of Mehsud tribesmen in Makeen area of South Waziristan district.

He informed the jirga that survey teams had been formed to assess the damage to the houses in the Karama area so that the process of payment of compensation amount to the affected people could be started. He further said that work on restoration of power supply to different parts of the area was under way and this process would be speeded up.

Talking to local journalists later, tribal elders said that soon after assuming the charge of his office, the IGFC visited hard-to-reach areas of South Waziristan and that would help address their grievances. They hailed the government for initiating development projects in South Waziristan, including trade route to Afghanistan from Mehsuds’ land, small dams and power projects. “These projects would herald an era of prosperity in the region,” they said.

The tribal elders thanked the IGFC-South for taking keen interest in resolving genuine problems of the residents of the militancy-torn South Waziristan district. They extended their full support to the Frontier Corps to restore peace in their area.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1496217/people-affected-by-military-operation-to-get-compensation>

TRUMP VETOES MEASURES TO BLOCK SAUDI ARMS SALES

AFP July 26, 2019

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Wednesday vetoed three congressional resolutions barring billions of dollars in weapons sales to countries including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are engaged in a devastating war in Yemen.

The resolutions “would weaken America’s global competitiveness and damage the important relationships we share with our allies and partners”, Trump said in letters to the Senate justifying blocking them.

It is the third time the president has employed his veto power since taking office.

The measures cleared Congress this month in a strong rebuke to Trump, whose administration took the extraordinary step of bypassing legislators to approve the sales in May.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had said the administration was responding to an emergency caused by Saudi Arabia’s arch-foe Iran.

But lawmakers including some Senate Republicans said there were no legitimate grounds to circumvent Congress, which has the right to disapprove arms sales.

Senator Lindsey Graham delivered a stinging rebuke to Riyadh last month, saying he hoped his vote against the sales would “send a signal to Saudi Arabia that if you act the way you’re acting, there is no space for a strategic relationship”.

The senator was referring to last year’s brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey at the hands of Saudi agents, an incident that outraged lawmakers and triggered a full-blown crisis in Riyadh’s relations with the West.

Critics also say the arms sales would aggravate the war in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is leading a US-backed coalition that also includes the UAE in a battle against the Iranian-supported Huthi rebels. The UN says the conflict has triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

But Trump argued on Wednesday that barring the sale of US weapons "would likely prolong the conflict in Yemen and deepen the suffering it causes", and that "without precision-guided munitions, more — not fewer — civilians are likely to become casualties".

The US president also pointed to Iran in justifying blocking the resolutions. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are "a bulwark against the malign activities of Iran and its proxies in the region", and the arms sale licences Congress sought to block enhance their "ability to deter and defend against these threats", he argued.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have soared since Trump pulled the US out of a deal with Iran last year that was aimed at curbing its nuclear programme, and imposed punishing sanctions.

Trump has said that the choice between war and diplomacy with Iran "could go either way", and that he is "okay either way it goes".

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1496288/trump-vetoes-measures-to-block-saudi-arms-sales>

US RESUMES MILITARY SALES WITH \$125M F-16S SUPPORT DEAL

Anwar Iqbal July 28, 2019

WASHINGTON: The United States has approved \$125 million for Pakistan to provide technical support to its fleet of F-16 aircraft, practically ending a freeze on military assistance to the country. "The US State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale (FMS) to Pakistan for Technical Security Team (TST) in continued support of the F-16 programme for an estimated cost of \$125 million," said an official notification sent to the US Congress on Friday. The approval was announced days after a White House meeting between Prime Minister Imran Khan and US President Donald Trump, which sought to "reset" troubled US-Pakistan ties. Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa accompanied the prime minister and remained in Washington after his departure as well for a series of meetings with US defence officials.

Another official notification said the Trump administration has also approved an Indian request to provide \$670m worth of support for its C-17 transport planes. Apparently, India will provide the funds for these support services.

The support programmes for the two South Asian rivals were both approved by the State Department and announced simultaneously by the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).

The US media, while reporting the resumption of military sales to Pakistan, called the prime minister's July 20-23 visit to Washington as "ice-breaking". During his three-hour stay at the White House, the prime minister also had a one-on-one meeting with President Trump. Later, in an unprecedented 47-minute joint press talk, President Trump offered to mediate between India and Pakistan to help them resolve the 70-year-old Kashmir dispute.

Pakistan had earlier requested a continuation of technical support services, which includes US government and contractor technical and logistics support services. The request also includes related elements of logistics support to assist in the oversight of operations in support of the Pakistan Peace Drive advanced F-16 programme. The total estimated programme cost is \$125m.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by protecting US technology through the continued presence of US personnel that provide 24/7 end-use monitoring," the notification to Congress said.

"The proposed sale of this support will not alter the basic military balance in the region," it added, in a bid to assuage possible Indian irritation. Pakistan used the F-16 fighter jets to bring down an Indian aircraft that had intruded into the Pakistani territory a day after India bombed a civilian facility in Balakot in February.

India urged the United States to stop Pakistan from using the F-16s against its air force, but Washington rejected New Delhi's complaint, saying relevant bilateral agreements allow Islamabad to use the US-built fighter jets in its defence.

The principal contractor for the \$125m support programme is Booz Allen Hamilton Engineering Services LLC, Fairborn, Ohio.

Implementation of this proposed sale will require the assignment of 60 contractor representatives to Pakistan to assist in the oversight of operations as part of the Peace Drive F-16 programme.

The DSCA informed Congress that "there will be no adverse impact on US defence readiness as a result of this proposed sale".

This notice of a potential sale is required by law and does not mean the sale has been concluded.

Almost all such requests, however, are approved after a debate.

Even in case Congress rejects the proposal, the administration can still use a waiver to provide the requested services.

Early last year, the Trump administration halted all military support programmes for Pakistan after accusing Islamabad of not helping Washington in achieving its objectives in Afghanistan.

But during the prime minister's visit to Washington, both sides announced they were now on the same page on Afghanistan.

The prime minister said that he would soon meet Taliban leaders in Islamabad and persuade them to hold direct talks with the Afghan government. President Trump thanked him for Pakistan's support that enabled direct talks between the US and Taliban delegations in Doha, Qatar.

Since the prime minister's return, the Taliban have conveyed their willingness to visit Islamabad to meet Mr Khan while President Trump has dispatched his top general and a senior diplomat to Kabul to brief the Afghan government.

On Friday, the DSCA informed Congress that India has asked to buy spare parts and test equipment for their Boeing C-17 transport planes, and is seeking personnel training, among other things, "for an estimated cost of \$670 million".

"India needs this follow-on support to maintain its operational readiness and ability to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) assistance in the region.

"India will have no difficulty absorbing this support into its armed forces," the agency announced.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1496640>

U.S. APPROVES SALES TO SUPPORT INDIA'S C-17S, PAKISTAN'S F-16S

Jul 28, 2019 Updated Jul 28, 2019

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Washington on Friday approved \$125 million worth of support for Pakistan's F-16 warplanes, and also \$670 worth of support for India's C-17 transport planes.

Approval to support U.S.-built aircraft for the two south Asian rivals were approved by the State Department, and announced simultaneously by the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

The approval for technical and logistics support for Pakistan's F-16s comes just days after Prime Minister Imran Khan met with President Donald Trump at the White House.

The potential sale will support US foreign policy and national security "by protecting U.S. technology through the continued presence of US personnel that provide 24/7 end-use monitoring," the statement announcing the Pakistan approval read.

Separately, the DSCA said that India asked to buy spare parts and test equipment for their Boeing C-17 transport planes, and is seeking personnel training, among other things, "for an estimated cost of \$670 million."

"India needs this follow-on support to maintain its operational readiness and ability to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) assistance in the region.

"India will have no difficulty absorbing this support into its armed forces," the statement announcing the approval read.

Both statements added that the proposed sales of equipment and support "will not alter the basic military balance in the region."

https://www.indiaabroad.com/diplomacy/u-s-approves-sales-to-support-india-s-c-/article_bbda28e8-b161-11e9-9b4d-17296105425a.html

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 29th TO AUGUST 4th 2019

QUETTA MOTORBIKE BLAST LEAVES FIVE DEAD

Saleem Shahid July 31, 2019

QUETTA: Five people were killed and 30 others injured in a bomb blast near a police station here on Tuesday.

The injured included women and children who were passing through the area when the bomb went off in the heart of the city. The condition of at least six of them was stated to be serious.

It was the second bomb explosion within the last seven days in the provincial capital. On July 23, a blast had occurred in the Eastern Bypass area which left four people dead and 32 injured.

"The target of the blast was a police vehicle parked near the police station," Deputy Inspector General Abdul Razzaq Cheema said.

Police said unknown terrorists planted the bomb in a motorcycle, parked it close to the patrolling vehicle of the police station concerned and detonated it by remote control. Three people died on the spot and 32 were injured.

Soon after the blast, security forces rushed to the site along with rescue workers and shifted the injured to the Civil Hospital.

The Balochistan health minister declared emergency in all government hospitals after the blast.

"We have received four bodies and 32 injured," Saleem Abro, Medical Superintendent of Civil Hospital, told Dawn. "Two injured later succumbed to their injuries," he said.

Several cars and motorcycles were badly damaged in the powerful blast. Nearby buildings were also damaged due to the impact of the blast that was heard in a vast area.

Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) personnel collected evidence from the blast site. "The bomb was planted in a motorbike and detonated by remote control," BDS officials said.

The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the blast.

Balochistan Governor retired Justice Amanullah Khan Yasinzai, Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan and his cabinet members strongly condemned the bomb blast and expressed their grief and sorrow over the loss of lives of innocent people.

The provincial cabinet, which was in session when the blast took place, vowed to bring terrorists and their facilitators to justice and said that such blasts could not weaken the determination of the government against terrorists and their masters.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497186/quetta-motorbike-blast-leaves-five-dead>

INDIA FIRES CLUSTER MUNITIONS ON AREAS ALONG LOC

Baqir Sajjad Syed | Tariq Naqash August 04, 2019

ISLAMABAD/MUZAFFARABAD: Outraged over the firing of cluster munitions on civilian populated areas of Azad Kashmir, Pakistan on Saturday called for world attention to the disregard of the widely accepted international ban on the weapons by India and massive human rights abuses being committed by Indian forces inside occupied Kashmir.

In a major escalation in the ceasefire violations, India has begun using cluster munitions on civilian population living close to the Line of Control (LoC). The use of cluster bombs on the Neelum Valley over the past few days has caused multiple fatalities and injuries to several others, including minor children.

Over the past few years, besides a spike in terms of intensity of ceasefire breaches, India has also resorted to calibre escalation and air space violations along LoC. The use of cluster bomb is therefore a step further towards escalation in the situation along LoC.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) confirmed that on the night of July 30 and 31, Indian army targeted civilian population in the Neelum Valley through artillery using cluster ammunition, which led to martyrdom of two civilians, including a four-year old boy, and injuries to 11 others. The ISPR, the media wing of the army, also released pictures of scattered munitions as well as those of the victims.

Meanwhile, a late-night tweet by the ISPR chief rejected Indian allegations of intrusion. “Indian allegations of cross LOC action by Pakistan and possession of bodies are mere propaganda. Such blatant lies/staged dramas are Indian disinformation manoeuvre to divert world attention from increased atrocities by Indian Occupation Forces inside IOJ&K,” he said.

According to Azad Jammu and Kashmir’s State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), the number of casualties has increased to four as another civilian fell victim to the shelling, whereas one of those wounded on Tuesday succumbed to injuries at a hospital. The SDMA has put the number of wounded in shelling incidents at 40.

Use of cluster munitions has been banned by 102 countries, most of which are signatories to the Convention on Cluster Ammunition, because of concerns that the weapon causes disproportionate civilian casualties. Some of the unexploded bomblets released from a cluster bomb may remain unexploded and may kill or maim civilians even afterwards.

The size of bomblets varies from four to five inches and because of their shape — resembling a soft drink can or an orange — villagers refer to them as “toy bombs.”

Military sources say though cluster bombs are designed as anti-personnel and anti-armour weapons, innocent civilians are mostly their primary victims and of them 40 per cent are children who are drawn to the small, toy-like metal objects.

Cluster bombs are believed to be deadlier than landmines, which is why the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions — adopted in May 2008 in Dublin, Ireland, and signed in December 2008 in Oslo, Norway — prohibits their use, production, stockpiling and transfer and requires states to ensure that they claim no further victims.

“India in its war frenzy is not only sabotaging regional peace but also committing gross human rights violations along the LOC. I urge the nations of the world to take strict notice of the ongoing situation in IOK and LOC,” Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi tweeted.

“Strongly condemn the blatant use of cluster ammunition by Indian Security Forces targeting innocent civilians along the Line Of Control. This is clear violation of the Geneva Convention & International Laws,” he further said.

The ISPR, meanwhile, said: “This blatant Indian aggression against all international norms exposes true character of Indian Army and their moral standing.”

ISPR Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor reminded India that no weapon could suppress the determination of Kashmiris to attain their right to self-determination.

“Kashmir runs in blood of every Pakistani. Indigenous freedom struggle of Kashmiris shall succeed, IA,” he tweeted.

In Muzaffarabad, AJK President Sardar Masood Khan and Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider vehemently condemned India’s use of cluster munitions on unarmed, innocent civilian population along LoC.

“In addition to its scorched earth policy inside the occupied territory, India has unleashed a mini war all along the LoC, using prohibited munitions,” President Khan said, in a reference to pellet guns and cluster bombs.

Prime Minister Haider noted that tensions at the LoC were aimed at diverting attention from the nefarious plans the fanatic BJP government had conceived for the occupied territory in the wake of its utter failure in curbing the popular public sentiment.

“Wilful use of cluster bombs by Indian troops reflects the devilish designs of their government and warrants immediate international intervention,” he said.

Meanwhile, in a related move, the AJK government on Saturday notified exemption from the payment of licence issuance or renewal fee of non-prohibited weapons for the members of the village defence committees, established within the five kilometres radius of LoC.

The notification stated that the deputy commissioners concerned would notify the names of the members on yearly basis, while the assistant commissioners and station house officers concerned would recommend and certify exemption of fee.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498024>

US WANTS TO QUICKLY DEPLOY NEW MISSILES IN ASIA

AFP Updated August 04, 2019

SYDNEY: Washington wants to quickly deploy new intermediate-range missiles in Asia, US Defence Secretary Mark Esper said on Saturday in a move likely to anger China.

The new Pentagon chief said the US was now free to deploy the weapons following its withdrawal Friday from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Russia.

“Yes I would like to,” Esper said when asked if the US was considering deploying new medium-range conventional weapons in Asia.

“We would like to deploy a capability sooner rather than later,” Esper told reporters on a plane to Sydney at the start of a week-long tour of Asia.

“I would prefer months... But these things tend to take longer than you expect.” The plan to deploy new missiles in Asia is likely to anger China which is vying with Washington for influence in the region, but Esper said Beijing should not be surprised.

“That should be no surprise because we have been talking about that for some time now,” he said. “And I want to say that 80 percent of their inventory is INF range systems.

So that should not surprise that we would want to have a like capability,” he said. But Esper stressed the US was not embarking on a new arms race.

“The traditional sense of an arms race has been in a nuclear context,” he said.

“Right now, we don’t have plans to build nuclear-tipped INF range weapons.

It’s the Russians who have developed non-compliant likely, possibly nuclear-tipped weapons,” he said.

“So I don’t see an arms race happening. I do see us taking corrective measures to develop a capability that we need for both the European theatre and this theatre, the Indo-Pac-Com theatre.”

The INF treaty was considered a cornerstone of the global arms control architecture but the United States said the bilateral pact had given other countries — namely China — free rein to develop their own long-range missiles.

The rise of a militarily more assertive China in the region has worried traditional US allies such as Australia and New Zealand, and Beijing’s actions in the South China Sea have alarmed neighbours with competing territorial claims to the strategic waterway.

Esper did not specify where the US intended to deploy the weapons.

“I would not speculate because those things depend on plans, it’s those things you always discuss with your allies,” he said.

Esper said he chose Asia for his first trip since taking office on July 23 “to affirm our commitment to the region, to reassure our allies and our partners.” The Pentagon chief and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are due to meet with their Australian counterparts on Sunday.

Washington withdrew from the INF treaty on Friday after accusing Russia of violating it for years.

Under the pact signed in 1987 by then US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Washington and Moscow agreed to limit the use of conventional and nuclear medium-range missiles (with a range of 500-5,000 kilometres).

But its unravelling had been on the cards for months amid worsening ties between Russia and the US.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498028>

CHINA REJECTS ALLEGATION OF BUILDING NAVAL BASE AT GWADAR

RECORDER REPORT AUG 4TH, 2019 BEIJING

China has categorically stated that it has no intention building a naval base at Pakistan's deep seaport, Gwadar, reports China Economic Net (CEN) quoting a white-paper issued here on the country's national defence.

The paper scotched rumors and speculations, including recent media reports claiming that China and Cambodia have signed a "secret agreement" which allows China to use a naval base of Cambodia and that, in addition to Gwadar Port, China is also seeking to build a military base in Jiwani, Balochistan. The reports alleged that China's Belt and Road Initiative is moving toward militarization. Some Western scholars even believe China's real purpose behind the initiative is military expansion, and economic cooperation is only as a "bait" to "entrap" countries.

According to the paper, given the current tensions between China and the United States, it has become easier for some to hype the "China conspiracy" theory, which stems from a misunderstanding of China's military strategy and intentions.

To outsiders, China's military growth and defensive defense policy are a contradiction. The US believes that because of its growing military power, China will inevitably seek goals beyond the mere safeguarding of national security. The US also speculates that China, like other powerful countries, will pursue regional or global hegemony using its military power. The new defense white paper clears such misunderstandings.

An increasingly fierce global military competition has made it necessary for China to catch up with the world's leading military powers, implement extensive military reforms and establish a new management and operational command system.

China now has a clearer national defense strategy, which focuses on improving combat readiness: "We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked."

This does not mean China will fundamentally change its defensive defense policy. In fact, the new white paper demonstrates that China has found ways to resolve the contradiction between military expansion and the defensive defense policy by increasing transparency as China's military strength grows.

The white paper not only details the new composition and scale of the combat forces, but also reflects the strategic planning of China's military modernization.

The overall plan is to compress non-combatants, significantly reduce the size of the army's active service, and moderately enhance strategy and combat forces in emerging areas. Which show China's military strategy remains focused on national defense.

The paper made it quite clear that the PLA's goal in the new era is to become a constructive force for maintaining the world order and global peace. China has long believed the purpose of military should not be to bully other countries but instead to maintain peace. This principle will help a rising China to better integrate with the world, the paper added.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190804504224/>

AUGUST, 2019

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 26th TO SEP 1st
2019***

40 KILLED IN US MISSILE STRIKES IN SYRIA

RECORDER REPORT SEP 1ST, 2019 IDLIB

US forces attacked jihadist leaders in Syria Saturday, the Pentagon said, in what a battlefield monitor called a missile strike that left at least 40 dead. The US Defense Department said the attack targeted leaders of Al-Qaeda in Syria north of Idlib. It did not say what kind of weapon was used or give any details. The missiles targeted leaders of jihadist groups and allied factions near Idlib, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Syrian government air strikes on the jihadist-run Idlib region had stopped on Saturday, after the regime agreed to a Russia-backed ceasefire following four months of deadly bombardment, the monitor said. But "a missile attack targeted a meeting held by the leaders of Hurras al-Deen, Ansar al-Tawhid and other allied groups inside a training camp" near Idlib city, said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Observatory. The attack killed at least 40 jihadist leaders, the Britain based monitor said. The US Central Command said in a statement that the attack targeted leaders of Al-Qaeda in Syria (AQ-S) "responsible for attacks threatening US citizens, our partners and innocent civilians. Additionally, the removal of this facility will further degrade their ability to conduct future attacks and destabilize the region." An AFP correspondent saw clouds of black smoke rising over the area after blasts rocked the jihadist stronghold.

Ambulances rushed to the site of the attack, which was closed off to journalists, he said. It was not immediately clear if the missiles were launched from war planes or positions on the ground, the monitor said. CENTCOM declined to say what kind of weaponry was used. The truce that came into effect on Saturday is the second such agreement between the Syrian regime and jihadists since an August 1 ceasefire deal covering the Idlib region broke down only days after going into effect. Russia-backed regime forces have been pressing an offensive against the major opposition stronghold in Idlib since April. But Russia and Damascus are not the only players with a history of strike activity in the area. On July 1 the United States said it had carried out a strike on Hurras al-Deen in northwestern Syria, in its first such operation there in two years.

Al-Qaeda-linked Hurras al-Deen was established in February 2018 and has some 1,800 fighters, including non-Syrians, according to the Observatory. The group and its ally Ansar al-Tawhid both operate in the Idlib region and are members of a joint jihadist operation room that also includes Al-Qaeda's former Syria affiliate, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

Most of Idlib province and parts of neighbouring Aleppo and Latakia provinces are controlled by HTS. Syrian state news agency SANA on Saturday said the government agreed to the Idlib ceasefire deal, which Russia said aimed "to stabilise the situation" in the anti-government bastion. But the army "reserves the right to respond to violations" by jihadists and allied rebel groups, SANA added, citing a Syrian military source.

The Idlib region is home to some three million people, nearly half of whom have been displaced from other parts of Syria. Air strikes by Damascus and Russia have killed more than 950 civilians since the end of April, according to the Observatory. The United Nations says the violence has also displaced more than 400,000 people.

The Idlib region is supposed to be protected from a massive government offensive by a Turkish-Russian deal struck in September 2018 that was never fully implemented as jihadists refused to withdraw from a planned demilitarised cordon.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190901514734/>

SEPTEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 2nd TO SEP 8th 2019

MILITANTS HAND OVER GUNS IN PHILIPPINES PEACE DEAL

September 8, 2019

SULTAN KUDARAT, Philippines: Muslim rebels in the mainly Catholic Philippines began handing over their guns to independent foreign monitors Saturday, as part of a treaty aimed at ending a decades-long separatist insurgency that has left about 150,000 people dead.

Just over a thousand guerrillas in the country's restive south were turning in 940 weapons in a single day, the start of a graduated decommissioning process that aims to turn the country's largest rebel force into a regular political party. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighters who were demobilised on Saturday represent a symbolic first step towards retiring what MILF says is a force of 40,000 in the coming years.

"The war is over... I have no firearms left," Paisal Abdullah Bagundang, 56, a self-described veteran of more than 100 firefights with government security forces since the 1970s, told AFP.

But the disarmament will take time to make an impact in a place where violence is an almost-daily threat. A bomb hidden in a parked motorcycle exploded near a market in Isulan town early on Saturday, just hours before President Rodrigo Duterte was to witness the decommissioning ceremony some 40 kilometres (25 miles) away in Sultan Kudarat.

Police said eight people were injured in the attack that was later claimed by the Islamic State group, according to SITE Intelligence, which monitors jihadist activities worldwide.

The decommissioning process "should not lead to expectations that it is going to result in a major deceleration in attacks", said Francisco Lara, senior conflict adviser for Asia at watchdog International Alert, noting that the general public in the region are also armed.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/523606-militants-hand-over-guns-in-philippines-peace-deal>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 9th TO SEP 15th 2019

APG TO FILE REPORT ON PAKISTAN'S STEPS AGAINST TERROR FINANCING

Khaleeq Kiani Updated September 12, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Based on Pakistan's 'effective' progress report, the Asia-Pacific Joint Group (APG) will submit next month its assessment of Islamabad's progress on strengthening of its systems against money laundering and terror financing.

"The Pakistan delegation effectively presented Pakistan's progress on each of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Action Plan items and provided additional information/clarification to the AP-Joint Group," said a brief statement issued by the Ministry of Finance after two-day face-to-face meetings with the APG in Bangkok. It said the APG, as per the FATF's procedures, would present its

report in the FATF Plenary and Working Group meetings scheduled for October 13-18 in Paris, France.

The FATF plenary will conclude if Pakistan has sufficiently delivered on its 10-point action plan committed at the highest level in June 2018 to fight money laundering and terror financing in order to qualify exit from the grey list or be given some more time to make further progress.

A 15-member Pakistan delegation, led by Minister for Economic Affairs Division Mohammad Hammad Azhar, attended the two-day meetings with the APG to discuss progress on the FATF action plan. The delegation included representatives from the Federal Board of Revenue, State Bank of Pakistan, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, National Counter Terrorism Authority (Necta) and Federal Investigation Agency.

Mr Azhar “conveyed government’s strong commitment to implement the international AML/CFT [anti-money laundering/counter finance terrorism] standards and reaffirmed Pakistan’s unequivocal commitment to work with international community in the fight against money laundering, terrorism financing and other financial crimes”, the statement said.

Informed sources said the delegation briefed the APG about the government’s action against proscribed organisations, particularly confiscation of their assets and blocking movement and activities of their workers and representatives. The face-to-face sessions also reviewed Pakistan’s overall performance against money laundering and terror financing and how Pakistan had tightened its network against illegal movement of currency.

Much of the discussions revolved around Pakistan’s responses to about 127 questions raised by the APG during one of the previous engagements. Islamabad had already shared its answers with the APG and the Bangkok session focused on further clarifications and explanations.

Some of the weak areas about which questions were raised included investments by proscribed organisations through individuals in the black market, including in real estate files and gold, and how the authorities could effectively monitor and control such transactions. Questions were also raised over insufficient coordination among the federal and provincial governments and their agencies over effective control of confiscated assets.

Pakistan is currently being monitored at three different but interlinked levels – the APG, the United States and the FATF – that would determine the country’s possible exit from the FATF grey list. Given significant progress on its 10 point action plan on 27 different standards, authorities expect to secure a couple of months of grace period to be fully compliant when it comes under final review of the FATF by mid-October.

Early last month, Prime Minister Imran Khan had set up a high-powered 12-member National FATF Coordination Committee, led by minister Azhar to ensure execution of all FATF tasks till December 1. Days later, Nacta declared two more outfits — Hizbul Ahrar and Balochistan Raaji Ajoi Sangar — as proscribed organisations under Section 11-B of the Anti-Terrorism Act, putting their members and activities under surveillance, expanding the list to a total of 73.

Following thaw in US-Pakistan relations in the wake of Afghan dialogue, the US has asked Pakistan to show tangible and satisfactory actions against banned organisations and their leaderships to pacify more countries towards supporting its case to move out of the FATF grey list.

Also last month, the APG on Money Laundering downgraded Pakistan to “enhanced follow-up” category over technical deficiencies to meet normal international financial standards by October. This means that the country would now be required to submit quarterly progress reports, instead of biannual, to the APG, starting February 1, 2020, to show improvements in its technical standards on the AML/CFT.

Authorities said Islamabad had made significant progress on FATF standards and action plans. They said the strengthening of AML/CFT laws was a significant development to merit removal from the grey list, but these had to be formally passed by the parliament and signed into law by the president. These were recently cleared by the National Assembly’s standing committee on finance and revenue. With the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Pakistan has engaged technical assistance providers as consultants in key institutions like the FBR, SECP, SBP and Financial Monitoring Unit to complete the action plan and further strengthen the effectiveness of the AML/CFT regime.

The amendments to foreign exchange regulation laws to restrict domestic movement of currency beyond a certain limit have also been cleared by the National Assembly’s standing committee to help

relevant agencies curb the practice of Hawala/Hundi and other forms of illegal foreign exchange transactions act.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1504711>

US APPROVES SALE OF F-35 FIGHTERS TO POLAND

RECORDER REPORT SEP 12TH, 2019 WASHINGTON

The US government announced the approval of the sale of thirty-two F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to Poland Wednesday, boosting the air capabilities of a key NATO ally.

The F-35s will expand Poland's air force and replace aged Russian-made MiG-29 and Su-22 jets, said a statement by the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

Using F-35s will boost the country's interoperability with NATO, which is adopting F-35s for part of its members' fleets.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of a NATO ally, which is an important force for political stability and economic progress in Europe," the agency said.

The planned sale was revealed in June during the visit to Washington by Polish President Andrzej Duda, when two of the advanced planes flew over the White House during Duda's visit to show off their moves.

Trump also announced in June that he would send 1,000 more troops to Poland to counter Russia, while falling short of Poland's long-running hope for a permanent US military base.

About 5,000 US soldiers already deploy along with NATO forces in Poland as part of a rotating pool, rather than a fixed garrison.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190912516831/>

YEMENI REBEL DRONES SPARK FIRES AT TWO SAUDI ARAMCO OIL FACILITIES

AFP Updated September 15, 2019

RIYADH: Drone attacks sparked fires at two Saudi Aramco oil facilities on Saturday, the interior ministry said, the latest such assault claimed by Yemeni rebels following a spike in regional tensions with Iran.

Huge palls of smoke rose into the sky after the pre-dawn attacks on Abqaiq and Khurais, two major Aramco facilities in eastern Saudi Arabia as the state-owned giant prepares for a much-anticipated stock listing.

The attacks highlight how the increasingly advanced weaponry of the Iran-linked Houthi rebels — from ballistic missiles to unmanned drones — poses a serious threat to oil installations in Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter.

"At 4am the industrial security teams of Aramco started dealing with fires at two of its facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais as a result of... drones," the interior ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. "The two fires have been controlled."

The statement added that an investigation had been launched after the attack in the kingdom's Eastern Province, but did not specify whether operations at the two facilities had been affected.

Interior ministry spokesman Mansour al-Turki said there were no casualties. But the full extent of the damage was not immediately clear as reporters were not allowed near the plants where Saudi authorities appeared to have beefed up security.

In recent months, the Houthi rebels have carried out a spate of cross-border missile and drone attacks targeting Saudi air bases and other facilities in what they say is retaliation for a long-running Riyadh-led bombing campaign on rebel-held areas in Yemen.

The rebels launched “a large-scale operation involving 10 drones that targeted refineries in Abqaiq and Khurais in eastern Saudi Arabia”, the group’s Al-Masirah television reported.

Last month, an attack claimed by Houthi rebels sparked a fire at Aramco’s Shaybah natural gas liquefaction facility — close to the Emirati border — but no casualties were reported by the company. Rebel drones also targeted two oil pumping stations on Saudi Arabia’s key east-west pipeline in May, shutting it down for several days.

The latest strikes drew swift condemnation from Riyadh’s Gulf allies, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait.

Growing Houthi attacks underscore how Saudi infrastructure, including oil installations, are increasingly vulnerable to rebel attacks four years after a Saudi-led coalition launched a military intervention in Yemen.

The Abqaiq facility, 60 kilometres southwest of Aramco’s Dhahran headquarters, is home to the company’s largest oil processing plant. Khurais, 250 kilometres from Dhahran, hosts a major Aramco oil field.

“Depending on the extent of the damage and any outages, Aramco will use its contingency plans by tapping into its storage if necessary,” Samir Madani, co-founder of shipping monitoring website Tanker Trackers, said.

“The Saudis are using language in their statements to assure customers that the fires are under control. But there could be supply disruptions if the damage at Abqaiq is extensive.” The Abqaiq plant, which Aramco says plays a “pivotal role” in its operations, has been targeted by militants in the past.

In an attack claimed by Al Qaeda in February 2006, suicide bombers with explosive-laden vehicles attempted to penetrate the processing plant, killing two security guards.

The two bombers also died in the attack, which failed to breach the compound, authorities reported at the time.

Riyadh had reportedly hoped for a quick win against the Houthis, but instead waded into a quagmire that has cost it billions of dollars and tarnished its reputation, while sparking a humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1505314>

TRUMP SAYS HE DISCUSSED ‘MUTUAL DEFENCE’ TREATY WITH NETANYAHU

September 15, 2019

Washington: US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the possibility of moving forward on a "mutual defence" treaty between the allies, just three days before Israeli voters go to the polls.

"I had a call today with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss the possibility of moving forward with a Mutual Defense Treaty, between the United States and Israel," Trump tweeted.

He said such an agreement would "further anchor the tremendous alliance" between the two countries.

"I look forward to continuing those discussions after the Israeli Elections when we meet at the United Nations later this month!" Trump added, giving a tacit last-minute endorsement to Netanyahu’s re-election bid.

"The Jewish State has never had a greater friend in the White House," the Israeli premier tweeted.

"I look forward to our meeting at the UN to advance a historic Defense Treaty between the United States and Israel."

Netanyahu also pledged to "continue full steam ahead with our common battle against terrorism," congratulating Trump "on your latest success against Bin Laden's son."

Trump had earlier in the day confirmed that Hamza bin Laden, the son and designated heir of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, was killed in a counter-terrorism operation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

The comments come as the international community awaits the release of Washington's long-delayed Middle East peace plan, which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently said could come within weeks.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/526614-trump-says-he-discussed-mutual-defence-treaty-with-netanyahu>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 16th TO 22nd 2019

IRAN REJECTS US CHARGE IT WAS BEHIND SAUDI OIL ATTACKS

September 16, 2019

TEHRAN: Iran has denied it was involved in Yemen rebel drone attacks targeting the world's biggest oil processing facility and an oil field in Saudi Arabia.

The denial came just hours after America's top diplomat alleged that Tehran was behind the "unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply". The attacks claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels resulted in "the temporary suspension of production operations" at the Abqaiq processing facility and the Khurais oil field, Riyadh said.

That led to the interruption of an estimated 5.7 million barrels in crude supplies, authorities said while pledging the kingdom's stockpiles would make up the difference. While markets remained closed on Sunday, the attack could shock world energy prices. They also increased overall tensions in the region amid an escalating crisis between the US and Iran over Tehran's unravelling nuclear deal with world powers.

Late on Saturday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo directly blamed Iran for the attack on Twitter, without offering evidence to support his claim.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi dismissed Pompeo's remarks as "blind and futile comments". Mousavi said in a statement: "The Americans adopted the 'maximum pressure' policy against Iran, which, due to its failure, is leaning towards 'maximum lies.'" First word of Saturday's assault came in online videos of giant fires at the Abqaiq facility, some 205 miles north east of the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Machine-gun fire could be heard in several clips alongside the day's first call to prayers, suggesting security forces tried to bring down the drones just before dawn. In daylight, Saudi state television aired a segment with its local correspondent near a police checkpoint, a thick plume of smoke visible behind him.

President Donald Trump called Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to offer his support for the kingdom's defence, the White House said. The crown prince assured President Trump that Saudi Arabia is "willing and able to confront and deal with this terrorist aggression", according to a news release from the Saudi Embassy in Washington.

Saudi Aramco describes its Abqaiq oil processing facility in Buqyaq as “the largest crude oil stabilisation plant in the world”. The facility processes sour crude oil into sweet crude, then transports it onto transshipment points on the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea or to refineries for local production. Separately, Baghdad has denied any link to drone attacks on Saudi oil plants, after media speculation that the strikes were launched from Iraq despite being claimed by Yemeni rebels Huthi.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that officials were investigating the possibility the attacks involved missiles launched from Iraq or Iran. Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi denied reports Iraqi territory “was used for drone attacks on Saudi oil facilities”.

He said in a statement: “Iraq is constitutionally committed to preventing any use of its soil to attack its neighbours. The Iraqi government will be extremely firm with whomever tries to violate the constitution.”

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/527003-iran-rejects-us-charge-it-was-behind-saudi-oil-attacks>

OCTOBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCT 28th TO NOV 03rd 2019

DEATH TOLL FROM YEMEN’S WAR HITS 100,000

AP Updated November 01, 2019

CAIRO: Yemen’s civil war has killed more than 100,000 people since 2015, a database project that tracks violence said on Thursday.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED, said in a new report its death toll includes more than 12,000 civilians killed in attacks targeting civilians directly.

The conflict in the Arab world’s poorest nation began with the 2014 takeover of northern and central Yemen by Iran-aligned rebels, driving out the internationally recognised government from the capital, Sanaa. Months later, in March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition launched its air campaign to prevent the rebels, known as Houthis, from overrunning the country’s south.

Saudi-led airstrikes have hit schools, hospitals and wedding parties and killed thousands of Yemeni civilians. The Houthis have used drones and missiles to attack Saudi Arabia and have targeted vessels in the Red Sea.

Civilians have suffered the most in the conflict, which has created what the United Nations says is the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

ACLED said approximately 20,000 people have been killed this year, already making 2019 the second-deadliest year on record after 2018, with 30,800 dead.

The non-governmental organisation said April was the most lethal month so far this year, with over 2,500 reported killed, compared to approximately 1,700 in September.

It said up to 1,100 civilians have been killed so far in 2019, with targeted anti-civilian violence was centered in the provinces of Dhale, Hodeida, Hajjah and Taiz.

The project said the Saudi-led coalition and its allies were responsible for more than 8,000 deaths resulting from the direct targeting of civilians since 2015, and the coalition airstrikes caused around 67pc of all reported civilian deaths.

ACLED said that although the number of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes is at an all-time low, civilian fatalities from air raids have risen for the first time since the end of 2017, more than doubling in the third quarter of 2019, compared to the previous quarter, primarily due to a strike on a prison facility in Dhamar province that killed at least 130 detainees.

The group said it recorded over 19,000 people killed in the southwestern province of Taiz since 2015, making it the most violent province in Yemen, largely due to a four-year siege by the Houthis, the group said.

Published in Dawn, November 1st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514185/death-toll-from-yemens-war-hits-100000>

SINDH DRAFTS LAW TO CURB TERROR FINANCING

By Wakeel Rao Published: November 2, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government has started the legislation process to curb money laundering and terror financing in line with the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) recommendations.

The legislation would help tighten vigilance on donors and receivers of funds for charitable institutions in the country.

The new law would help in combating the misuse of charity funds by any person, group or political party, terror financing and other criminal activities.

In this regard, a bill was submitted during the provincial assembly session on Friday proposing that Sindh should be the first among the provinces to formulate legislation against terror financing in line with the FATF recommendations.

As per the Charity Act 2019, all charitable institutions, their donors and promoters as well as fund raisers must undergo registration while those providing charities must declare their source of income.

A charitable institution must also present an outline of its objectives.

As per the bill, the government would establish a Sindh Charity Commission and a Charity Registration Authority.

The bill also makes it mandatory for charitable institutions to maintain a detailed record of their financial accounts while funds or charities received by them could not be used for personal concerns, businesses or political activities.

The charity organisation would not be allowed to use its funds for purposes not approved by the regulatory authorities.

Those collecting charities and alms would also undergo a registration process. As per the bill, all financial and social activities of charitable organisations would be monitored.

The Sindh Charity Organisation would be empowered to cancel the registration of charitable institutions if they violated the law.

As per the proposal, any charity in excess of Rs50,000 would be deposited in bank accounts.

Furthermore, penalties amounting to Rs1 million would be imposed on institutions and trusts which violated the law.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2091948/1-sindh-drafts-law-curb-terror-financing/>

US SEES GAPS IN PAKISTAN'S FIGHT AGAINST TERROR FUNDING

Anwar Iqbal November 03, 2019

WASHINGTON: Pakistan implements international standards to combat money laundering and terror financing and has also criminalised such acts, "but implementation remains uneven", claims the US State Department's report on terrorism.

The Congress-mandated report, released on Friday, represents official US assessment of the state of global terrorism during last year and includes country reviews.

It notes that Pakistan being a member of the Asia/Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering — a regional body affiliated with the international watchdog, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — has made serious efforts to meet the standards set by the global watchdogs.

However, the government failed to significantly limit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) from “raising money, recruiting, and training in Pakistan — and allowed candidates overtly affiliated with LeT front organisations to contest the July general elections”, the report says.

It also complains that the Pakistani government voiced support for political reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban, but “it did not restrict the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network (HQN) from operating in Pakistan-based safe havens and threatening the US and Afghan forces in Afghanistan”.

Observers say since the report is based on the developments taking place in 2018, it has not taken into account the measures the country adopted during the past 10 months to check terror financing.

The FATF had placed Pakistan on its “grey list” in June last year for deficiencies across its anti-money laundering and terror financing regimes, specifically citing concerns over the failure to fully implement the UN Security Council ISIL (Da’esh) and Al Qaeda sanctions regime.

The FATF claimed that UN-listed entities, including LeT and its affiliates, were not effectively prohibited from raising funds in Pakistan, or being denied financial services.

Confirming the FATF’s claim, the US report notes that although Pakistan’s laws technically comply with international anti-money laundering and terrorism financing standards, the “authorities failed to uniformly implement UN sanctions related to designated entities and individuals such as LeT and its affiliates, which continued to make use of economic resources and raise funds”.

Pakistan has committed to addressing these concerns as part of an agreed FATF Action Plan.

The US report, however, acknowledges that Pakistan’s 2015 National Action Plan to combat terrorism includes efforts to prevent and counter terrorism financing, including by enhancing interagency coordination.

The law designates the use of unlicensed hundi and hawala systems as predicate offences to terrorism and requires banks to report suspicious transactions to Pakistan’s FIU, the State Bank’s Financial Monitoring Unit.

However, “these unlicensed money transfer systems persisted throughout the country and were open to abuse by terrorism financiers operating in the cross-border area”, the report adds.

The State Department points out that Pakistan experienced numerous terrorist attacks in 2018.

Militant and terrorist groups targeted civilians, journalists, community leaders, security forces, law enforcement personnel and schools, killing and injuring hundreds.

The report also lauds Pakistan’s efforts to implement laws which allow enhanced law enforcement and prosecutorial powers for terrorism cases. The laws also allow for preventive detention, permit the death penalty for terrorism offences, and create special Anti-Terrorism Courts.

In 2018, the “military, paramilitary, and civilian security forces conducted counterterrorism operations throughout Pakistan. The Intelligence Bureau has nationwide jurisdiction and is empowered to coordinate with provincial counterterrorism departments,” the report adds.

Pakistan’s interior ministry has more than 10 law enforcement-related entities under its administration and the country collects biometric information at land crossings with its International Border Management Security System, the US State Department report says.

The US is a key member of the FATF and plays an important role in determining which country fulfils its obligations to combat terrorism financing and how to persuade violators to comply.

Published in Dawn, November 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514558>

ATTACK ON MALI MILITARY POST KILLS 49 SOLDIERS

AFP Updated November 03, 2019

BAMAKO: A “terrorist attack” on a military post in strife-torn northeastern Mali has left 49 soldiers dead, the army said on Saturday, revising downward an earlier death toll.

But the attack on Friday at Indelimane, in the Menaka region, close to the border with Niger, was still one of the deadliest strikes against Mali’s military in a region wracked by Islamist violence.

The Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) “have recorded 49 dead, three wounded and material damage, and some 20 survivors have been recovered”, it said on its Facebook page on Saturday.

The situation was now under control and soldiers were sweeping the area, it added.

The government on Friday had said 53 people died in what it described as a “terrorist attack”. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

An army officer said troops arrived at the outpost around 5pm on Friday and “took back control of our positions.

“The terrorists carried out a surprise attack at lunchtime. Army vehicles were destroyed, others taken away,” he said.

The army and the government announced on Friday that reinforcements had been sent to the area.

The attacks comes a month after two jihadist assaults killed 40 soldiers near the border with Burkina Faso. Several sources have said the real death toll was higher.

“This bloodshed that Mali has been living through cannot go on,” imam Mahamound Dicko, an influential religious leader in Mali, said on Saturday.

“Do you want us to resign ourselves to this suffering? We can resist,” he added.

Rights activist Alioune Tine, from Mali’s western neighbour Senegal, called for action across Africa to tackle the threat.

“If Africa does not mobilise for Mali and Burkina (Faso), it won’t be spared the bushfire that is quickly catching West Africa’s coastal countries, the next chosen targets” of the jihadists, he said. It is not just Mali’s army that has been struggling in the face of the jihadist revolt.

The violence has also spilled over into Burkina Faso and Niger where extremists have exploited existing inter-communal strife, leaving hundreds dead.

Published in Dawn, November 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514582>

NINE CHILDREN KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN MINE BLAST

Agencies November 03, 2019

KUNDUZ: A landmine explosion killed nine children in northeastern Afghanistan on Saturday, an official said, amid an increase in civilian casualties in the long-running and brutal war.

The blast happened in volatile Darqad district of Takhar province, when the children stepped on a mine that had been planted on a road in a Taliban-controlled village.

“At 8:30am this morning, tragically, nine schoolchildren were martyred in a landmine blast planted by the Taliban,” Jawad Hejri, a spokesman for the Takhar provincial governor, told AFP.

He said the children — all boys — were aged from seven to 11.

“This area is under Taliban control and since security forces launched attacks to clear it, the Taliban have planted anti-personnel mines,” Khalil Asir, a spokesman for the provincial police, told Reuters.

“Unfortunately, today, one of those mines exploded and killed nine primary school students,” he said. The children included four from what Asir described as a “Taliban family”.

No group claimed responsibility for the blast, and the Taliban did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Civilian casualties have been increasing to record levels this year, despite efforts by the United States and Taliban insurgents to reach a peace deal.

Last month, the United Nations released a report saying an “unprecedented” number of civilians were killed or wounded in Afghanistan from July to September this year.

A record 4,313 civilians were injured or killed between July and September, a 42 per cent increase from the same period last year, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said last month.

The toll included more than 1,000 deaths, the bloodiest period since the mission began collecting figures in 2009. It brought the number of civilian casualties for the first nine months of the year to more than 8,000.

The UN laid most of the blame at the feet of “anti-government elements” such as the Taliban, who have been carrying out an insurgency in Afghanistan for more than 18 years.

In May, a landmine killed seven children and wounded two more in the southern province of Ghazni. A month earlier, seven children were killed and 10 more wounded in the eastern province of Laghman when a mortar shell exploded while they were playing with it.

The insurgents often use roadside bombs and landmines to target Afghan security forces, but the lethal weapons also inflict casualties on civilians. Years of conflict have left Afghanistan strewn with landmines, unexploded mortars, rockets and homemade bombs — and many are picked up by curious children.

Published in Dawn, November 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514557>

NOVEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 04th TO 10th 2019

CIVILIAN DEATHS IN AFGHANISTAN TRIPLE THIS SUMMER: US REPORT

Anwar Iqbal Updated November 04, 2019

WASHINGTON: Civilian deaths in Afghanistan more than tripled during this quarter compared with the same period last year, says an official US report.

Most of these deaths happened in Taliban attacks but the US-backed Afghan official forces also had a significant share in these casualties, says the report compiled by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

The SIGAR report notes that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) blames anti-government elements for this increase in overall civilian casualties from Jan 1 through Sept 30. Anti-government forces, including the Taliban, were responsible for 5,117 civilian casualties during this period, which is 62 per cent of the total. There was a notable increase in casualties attributed to the Taliban as opposed to other groups.

UNAMA attributed 3,823 civilian casualties — 46 per cent of the total — to the Taliban in the first nine months of 2019, an increase of 31 per cent from the same period in 2018.

However, “comparing just this reporting period to the same period in 2018, civilian casualties attributed to the Taliban more than tripled,” the report adds.

The significant increase in civilian casualties this quarter was attributed to suicide and IED attacks by anti-government elements, primarily the Taliban. During the months of July, August, and September, UNAMA documented an alarming 72 per cent increase in civilian casualties caused by IEDs compared to the same period in 2018.

SIGAR, an official watchdog that monitors the Afghan war for the US Congress, notes that the Resolute Support (RS) mission also reported a significant increase in civilian casualties this summer

compared to last summer. The Resolute Support (RS) mission is the official name of the Nato command in Afghanistan.

UNAMA reported a total 4,313 of civilian casualties from July through September, representing a 42 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2018.

The Nato command reported a 39 per cent increase in civilian casualties from June–September 2019, compared to the same period in 2018.

Both UNAMA and RS said the increase in civilian casualties was due to a high number of terrorist and insurgent attacks prior to the presidential elections that included the use of improvised explosive devices. Operations by all the parties to the conflict this quarter also led to high combat casualties, they added.

According to RS, from June 1 through August 31, 2019, Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) total casualties increased by approximately 5 per cent when compared to the same period last year.

Additionally, seven American service members were killed in action in Afghanistan from July 16 to October 16, bringing the 2019 total to 17 killed and 124 wounded in action, the highest annual number of US combat casualties in Afghanistan over the last five years.

Published in Dawn, November 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514717/civilian-deaths-in-afghanistan-triple-this-summer-us-report>

TERROR FIGHT GAINS WON'T BE WASTED TO SUIT 'VESTED AGENDA': COAS

Baqir Sajjad Syed Updated November 05, 2019

RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa presides over the corps commanders' conference at the General Headquarters on Monday.—APP

ISLAMABAD: The army said on Monday that it stood ready to assist 'national institutions' in accordance with the country's Constitution.

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Bajwa, while chairing a corps commanders meeting at the General Headquarters, said: "Pakistan Army as organ of the state will continue to support national institutions as and when asked as per Constitution."

The meeting, which is a monthly feature at the GHQ, is attended by the army's top brass, including corps commanders, principal staff officers at the headquarters, and the chiefs of military's intelligence services.

The Inter-Services Public Relations, which released quotes from the army chief's remarks at the conference, did not say in which context they were made.

The comments, however, came in the backdrop of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl's (JUI-F) ongoing sit-in in Islamabad and demand for resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan and holding of fresh elections in the country.

Bajwa says Army will help national institutions as allowed in Constitution

The government, under Article 245 of the Constitution, can call the armed forces to its aid in emergency situations.

JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman last Friday gave a two-day deadline for the prime minister to resign and had threatened to march to D-Chowk, in front of Parliament House, but was later forced to go soft on that after failing to get backing of key opposition parties — Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples Party.

The multiparty conference convened on Monday to formulate the future strategy for the agitation also failed to deliver the much needed backing for JUI-F's plans as one of the party leaders Maulana

Abdul Ghafoor Haideri soon after the MPC told reporters that the venue of the sit-in, currently in the federal capital's H-9 Sector, was not being changed.

Gen Bajwa, in his comments at the conference, said that security and stability in the country had been achieved through a national approach and sacrifices rendered in the fight against terrorism. "We shall not let it reverse to suit any vested agenda at any cost," the army chief stressed while rejecting moves that could destabilise the country.

The army chief on this occasion further underscored the need for unity among various organs of the state. "While Pakistan Armed Forces with support of national institutions and the nation are fully prepared and committed to thwart all threats including on Eastern Border/LoC, continued cohesion of all national stakeholders on key national issues is essential to defeat inimical forces," he asserted.

These were the first formal remarks from the army chief since the agitation, named Azadi march by its organisers, kicked off from Karachi on Oct 27.

While participating in a private TV programme few days back, Military spokesman Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor had, however, said: "The opposition should understand that the army is an impartial organisation. We believe on the rule of the law and the Constitution. Our support is not for one party but it lies with a democratically elected government."

Maj Gen Ghafoor was then responding to the JUI-F chief's speech at the sit-in on Friday in which he had asked the "institutions" to remain "impartial". He had, however, not specified which institution/s he was addressing.

Published in Dawn, November 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514972>

DECEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DEC 16th TO 22nd 2019

HEAVY CASUALTIES TO INDIA IN PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO CEASEFIRE VIOLATION: ISPR

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated December 22, 2019

KARACHI: Indian army suffered heavy casualties and damage to its posts when Pakistan Army responded to ceasefire violation from across the Line of Control on Saturday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The director general of the media affairs wing of Pakistan Army took to Twitter through @Official DGISPR to share details of the incident.

In the late-night tweet, the ISPR chief said: "Intermittent CFVs by Indian Army continue along LOC, being befittingly responded. In response to CFV in Dewa Sector reports of damage to Indian posts and heavy casualties to Indian soldiers.

"No major exchange of fire in Kiran or Neelum valley as being propagated by Indian Media," the tweet said.

Published in Dawn, December 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523615/heavy-casualties-to-india-in-pakistans-response-to-ceasefire-violation-ispr>