

# The Business

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## BLA attack

According to reports, four assailants launched a grenade and gun attack at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) gate, where their attempt to enter the main building was foiled by the police, PSX guards and security forces. After fierce exchange of fire, all four attackers were killed whilst one police officer and three guards embraced martyrdom. In addition to weapons, including AK-47 rifles and grenades, water and food were recovered from them. That meant they had planned to seize hostages to attract maximum international attention. But thanks to the prompt and brave response from those responsible for security, all terrorists were neutralized within just eight minutes, and routine activity inside and outside the PSX restored within 25 minutes. The so-called Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) said it was responsible for the attack. The motive behind selection of the target appeared to be to undermine the economy, and also to show to the world that Pakistan is an unsafe destination for any prospective visitors/investors.

However, the militant group later claimed in a statement its purpose was to attack both Pakistan's economy and China because of the latter's involvement in Balochistan. As a press report points out, Chinese have made major investments in Pakistan's stock market having acquired 40 percent of its shares back in 2016. It is worth noting also that this is not the first time this militant group has targeted the Chinese. In 2018, it attacked the Chinese Consulate in Karachi, and earlier in the same year, it took credit for bombing a bus carrying Chinese engineers near Dalbandin in district Chaghi of Balochistan. The Baloch insurgents have problems with Islamabad, not the Chinese. So why target them? The ostensible reason is that they are engaged in various development projects, including the CPEC and the deep sea Gwadar Port. As far as different Baloch nationalist parties are concerned, they have no objection to development projects with or without Chinese assistance, as long as the people of that province command control over them.

It makes little sense therefore for the insurgents to focus on Chinese interests. But a reference to the context makes the picture clearer. BLA is known to be based in Afghanistan, and have a nexus with India, whose stated policy is to destabilise this country and also undermine the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It is also pertinent to recall here that Kulbhushan Jadhav, an operative of the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, arrested from Balochistan a while ago, had admitted in his confessional statement that his mission was to foment terrorism in Balochistan and Karachi. Whatever be the BLA's claim, India will continue to use its proxies, the BLA and others of its ilk, for the achievement of its objectives. We need to keep the vigilance levels high, especially in places that could be in the crosshairs of those out to cause harm to both Pakistan and China.

# The fate of Tipu's Tiger

RAFIA ZAKARIA

The trustees of the British Museum have become the world's largest receivers of their loot is not even on public display. The words were spoken by notable British human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson QC last year. Robertson has been leading an initiative that is urging British and US museums to return looted objects they have pilfered from around the world. In the particular case, Robertson also mentioned an alleged 'secret' tour in which visitors would be shown the most famous looted objects, the Easter Island statues, the Benin Bronzes and the Elgin Marbles.

The allegation set off a debate among the British and Americans, who, despite the truth of it, felt it required a counter-narrative. "We're trying to reset the balance a little bit. A lot of our collections are not from a colonial context; not everything here was acquired by Europeans by looting," one curator from the British Museum said. We get it; not everything from the museum is looted, but a good bit of it might be. Of course, that isn't really news to the rest of us, those who belong to nations that lost the material history of their past to the British.

The looted item that would be of interest in the subcontinent is not held at the British Museum but the Victoria and Albert Museum, which as it happens is another repository for stolen artefacts from various colonised countries. Here, in a display case, is Tipu's

Tiger. The mechanical tiger, which stands atop the body of a British soldier, is an example of 18th century mastery. The top of it opens to reveal a musical instrument which can still be played. It is displayed next to some of Tipu Sultan's clothes and his turban. The tiger, it must be reiterated, was Tipu Sultan's symbol, displayed on all of his swords and armour and his throne. Even the bronze grenades made for his armies were in the shape of a tiger's claw. It was a symbol of resistance for a man and an army that were unwilling to simply cede to the British.

The tiger was stolen right after the British won the siege of Seringapatam in 1799. After the brave and martial Tipu Sultan, a man who tried to unite Indians and build a coalition against the British, died on the battlefield, the town and Tipu's treasury were looted. The items in the treasury were distributed among the British soldiers by rank. The wooden tiger, however, was shipped off to London, where it was displayed at the newly created East India Company Museum, which was created for the express purpose of displaying objects taken in conquest and establishing the domination of the British over India.

That was more than 200 years ago, and it is time that the tiger came to Pakistan, which, being the Muslim

successor state after colonial India, should have a right to it. While most people in Pakistan have heard the story of Tipu Sultan, very few of them have been able to see this creation that represents the resistance of colonial Muslim rulers against the British. This piece of history, of the mastery that produced the tiger and the valour of the man who owned the tiger, has never been seen by those whose historical ancestry is integrally connected to the history of Muslims in the subcontinent.

It is crucial and necessary and advisable for the government of Pakistan, like the governments of other countries whose artefacts are displayed in the British Museum, to send a formal request that the tiger be returned. The question on the Pakistani side is where the tiger, and anything else that the British may return, would be kept and displayed. One terrible and annoying problem with historical artefacts in this country is that as soon as they are on Pakistani soil, or excavated from it, they are taken away and secretly purchased by the Pakistani elite. The pages of the original Akbarnama have suffered this sort of hiding and hoarding; the pieces of tombs from Chawkandi and the heads of Buddhist sculptures are all items I have seen displayed in drawing rooms. One worries, then, that even if the tiger were re-

turned, it would never actually be seen by the public. (Given that the tiger symbol has been appropriated by the PML-N, one worries that there would be a particular interest in the animal from that quarter!) One despairs that the tiger, once returned, would become part of the drawing room décor of the elite, and destroyed as it is transported and displayed and touched and battered and bruised.

This is the question for Pakistan and many other postcolonial nations. Being robbed of history has meant that local publics have little appreciation for it, that corrupt rulers and other elites want to hoard and hide it. Even if these publics are entitled to have the objects of their heritage returned, the governments of these countries have the job of creating that appreciation. All current museums in Pakistan are the subject of neglect and disrepair, with the most precious artworks simply 'disappearing' from view.

Undoubtedly, the worst thing about the tiger would be that it, too, after being returned to Pakistan, would disappear. In this sense, Tipu's Tiger would face the same consequence that it suffers from now: most Pakistanis could not see and appreciate it, and most Pakistanis would not be able to see it. Here, then, is the ultimate post-colonial conundrum: whether it is Tipu's Tiger, or any other historical object, or colonialism that has left us loathing ourselves and, in turn, our history. A population robbed of its history can demand that it be returned, but then comes the yet unanswered question of what must be done with it.

## Academic gurus of a feather

PARVEZ JAMIL

Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoj and the LUMS Management are the focal points of discussion by the concerned academic circles home and abroad. The point is not what Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoj advocates and his debatable exit as a celebrated faculty by LUMS management. The one and the only point is how these academic and communication gurus, trend-setters for students, faculty and management, are at an unfortunate short and loss of tact and technique to communicate and convince on their respective stands with grace, dignity and honor amid vociferous alarms of chaos and callousness.

It is humbly submitted 'to err is human' even with the 'gurus' of brands and brand-makers! In question here is mostly a rampant crisis of communication referring to students, faculty, researchers, professionals and mass media so erroneously addressed by brand names in communication without naming but sharing respect-fully for rectification.

The reality check of academic, professional and corporate nature and for social, print and electronic media shows an alarming lack of concentration span in verbal and written communication.

Despite lofty ideals and rosy claims in educational, business and media excellence, lack of communication skills, continues to rip social fabric apart at personal, professional and political

levels. Lack of concentration span and lack of communication skills are two glaring question marks in this regard. First, 'gurus, experts, specialists' can answer with all the wisdom linked to their branded names or titles.

For example, communication experts cut a 'sorry figure' when they present marathon, complicated and distracting courses in communication skills.

It is a test of their devising and conducting courses catering to low concentration span of students, teachers, researchers, media and professionals; for instance, reducing four long and boring pages of a course into a couple of clear, comprehensive and convincing paragraphs of a course outline! That means short, crisp, interesting, value-adding.

Secondly, with all the worldly and branded dignity and honor associated with our communication maestros and mistresses, they are expected to deviate from the set and stereotype methods in communication skills to innovate and present the same with convincing and overwhelming traits and habits in positive thinking so that future professionals and politicians become accustomed to and acclimatized with learning to co-exist mutually and cheerfully with conflicting views. Tough ask in innovation and insight from none but our illustrious and branded communication gurus!

-The writer contributes to media on national and international affairs

## Unfair restrictions

It is no surprise that repressive policies against immigrants are born out of the US—especially during the time of a pandemic. With the immigration status of international students under threat, widespread confusion poses concerns about whether the students of today will be able to become productive members of society

part of a system that promotes institutionalised discrimination and robs them of the standard of education their peers are awarded.

The aspiration of many in Pakistan is to be able to qualify for an admission into a well-established university of the west. Higher education, exposure to different cultures and socialising with peers is part of the experience of studying abroad, ultimately resulting in the rise of a more informed generation. Since their institutions will only be continuing with online instruction in the near future, F-1 holders are being forced to return to their home countries prematurely in a time when international travel is near impossible, dangerous and stressful. Not only is this detrimental to their personal growth but it also puts into question the ethics behind such a prejudiced change in policy—are immigrants by virtue of being humans, and present in the US legally, not entitled to the same protection offered to other members of society?

Active international students are now faced with two courses of action; switch to a different college that offers in-person instruction which would increase their exposure to COVID-19, or return to their respective countries—isolated from their peers and away from university life. What's more bewildering is that this reform would deprive the US of \$41 billion worth of revenue generated by foreign students. Instead, it promotes the market of giant competitors like China, Europe and even Japan. At this time, self-reflection is paramount for the American government

## Saudi economy in light of Covid-19

ARHAMA SIDDIQA

The global economic slowdown as a result of Covid-19 has meant that in order to cover losses in revenue, governments have had to choose fiscal stimuli to help ensure a system of welfare protection for their citizens. The Saudi Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman's Vision 2030 was revealed in 2016, in the backdrop of falling oil prices that started in 2014. It envisioned an economy which branched away from reliance on oil revenues and also purported the transformation of the Saudi kingdom into a global nucleus of transportation, cross-linking between Europe, Asia and Africa. About \$1 trillion each was to be invested in mega-projects and to draw in foreign capital. It also predicted that the Public Investment Fund's (PIF) assets would reach \$2 trillion by 2030. However, despite a growth of 3.3% in non-oil income this year, a reversal of such gains is anticipated.

With Covid-19 at the forefront, challenges including a controversial oil-price war, subsequent OPEC production cutbacks and an ongoing war in Yemen, are all leaving an apparent impression on the Saudi economy.

These have caused disturbances in crucial economic sectors, widening the budgetary downfall and demoted growth outlook—all of which could lead to modifications in government obligation towards Vision 2030. In March and April, Saudi foreign reserves decreased by \$48.6 billion to \$448.6 billion, the lowest level in 19 years. The world's largest public company, Saudi Aramco, experienced a decline of 25% in the net revenue from the first quarter of this year. Meanwhile, the IMF has projected profitability threshold for Saudi oil at \$76 per barrel which is more than double the current price of \$36 per barrel. On top of this is the cancellation of Hajj for international pilgrims given public health concerns. Religious tourism constitutes around 20% of Saudi Arabia's non-oil GDP.

The success of Saudi Vision 2030 is rooted in massive government spending and the ability to draw in foreign investments, principally in PIF-funded mega-projects. The IMF already anticipates a contraction of 2.3% of the Saudi economy in 2020. This signals a predicament for planners of economic diversification since according to data from the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority,

three sectors—commerce, transportation and construction—predominantly make up the private sector (more than 60%). Commerce alone employs around 2 million people and makes up almost 14% of the GDP. In light of Covid-19, many small and medium-size enterprises have had to shut down. The only hope they have is assistance by the government. Taking account of the dismal situation, the Saudi government has employed a number of measures so as to curb consumer spending by more than \$26 billion. These include the threefold increase in the value-added tax and cessation of living allowances for employees in the public sector.

Nevertheless, Covid-19 also presents an opportunity to create a leaner, more proficient economy in the long run and henceforth make critical decisions. For instance, the construction of the \$500 billion megacity, NEOM, is no longer practical and should be shelved. A successful recovery will entail a top-down approach fueled by renewed dedication, orbiting around provisions for youth employment through serious investments in education and human resource development. Moreover, the kingdom can also benefit from the current advancement in the digital arena. The pandemic also provides an ideal cover for the resolution of the Gulf-Qatar dispute since a united GCC bloc will be better equipped to manage challenges collectively.

NAB REVIEWS MEGA GRAFT CASES AGAINST TOP POLITICIANS



## Flying safe

People pay to travel safely and it is the responsibility of the CAA, as regulator as well as the federal government to ensure that this is done. If it takes a few hundred or thousand individuals to be screened out of PIA and CAA, let that be. The welfare of a few retired officers from the paid civil or uniformed services or political cronies cannot take precedence over the lives of citizens. Pakistan's CAA has a dismal record with a series of accidents involving airlines under its jurisdiction, and no meaningful investigation conducted as per international industry practice. The most recent crash involving PIA A320 occurred on May 22, 2020 which on initial approach executed a go-around after both engines touched the runway only to crash while making a second approach hardly kilometres from the airport. This A320 collided with multi-storied residential buildings. The

ATC must have seen the A320 engines scratch the runway. Did the ATC follow the SOPs to meet any such emergency, and alerted rescue agencies? The question arises whether the CAA and PIA had ensured that safety was not compromised. Reports about irregularities in pilot recruitment date back to 1994 when an investigation headed by AVM Mushaf Ali Mir was ordered by the defence ministry. What action was taken for these gross criminal irregularities? If PIA Investment owned Hotel Roosevelt and Scribe are to be sold for salvaging the airline, it should be done transparently at an opportune time with no role for those who were responsible for this royal mess since 2000.

Choudhry Riaz  
CANADA

## Letters to the Editor

### Wake up?

The stories that things are not alright inside the PTI are shocking. Although it is agreed that the PTI has failed to fulfill almost all the promises made during the election campaign, yet it is disturbing to hear of the rifts within the PTI rank and file. This may finish PTI root and branch. The saddest part of the current rising political temperature is the attitude of various ministers. They are undermining their own as well as public interest. A welfare state, once his dream, needs full and dedicated input from present ruling leadership.

Ifthikhar Mirza  
ISLAMABAD

## KE monopoly

This refers to the news story, 'PTI lawmakers demand end to 'KE's monopoly' on first day of protest'. Perhaps a new trend in protest is being set. Party leaders are agitating against their own government for not taking action against the power utility company for tormenting the population with overbilling and loadshedding despite getting a huge subsidy from the govt (Rs60 billion last year alone). While the PM was eager to order a probe against the IPPs and the report was made public, there is no reason why a similar probe cannot be ordered against KE for its poor performance that has disrupted the lives of the citizens of the metropolis and badly impacted the operation of industry there. The federal government is competent to initiate action since the power sector falls under the federal domain.

Huma Arif