

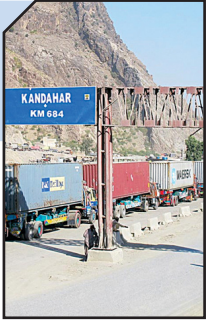
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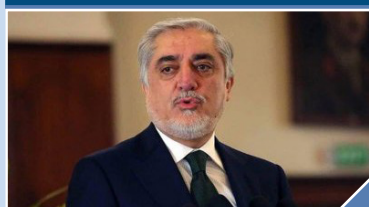
Mol Releases List of Taliban Commanders Killed in South

The Ministry of Interior Affairs on Sunday released a list of 70 Taliban commanders killed in Helmand and Kandahar in Afghan forces operations that were carried out in response to attacks by the group that started more than a month ago.

According to the ministry, 20 of the commanders were from various parts of Helmand and were leading groups of 45 to 100 members.

Rahmatullah, Habibullah, Mawlawi Musa Jan, Qari Mohammad, Rohullah, Mullah Nek Mohammad, Atiqullah, Mullah Sardar, Mullah Anargul, Wali Mohammad, Mullah Idris, Mullah Samad, Sharifullah, Mullah Mohammad Isa and Mullah Amanullah are the Taliban commanders killed in Helmand, according to the ministry.

The list shows that 10 Taliban commanders who were killed in Helmand came from Uruzgan, ... **P3**



Abdullah: Taliban Prisoners Released in Hope for Peace

Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, on Saturday said the Taliban prisoners were released in the hope for ending the war or reducing violence in the country, but the expectations from the move were not met.

Addressing Herat Security Dialogue, Abdullah said the Afghan government will never shut the doors for peace.

"The release of the Taliban's prisoners was done with the hope that they will end the war with the start of the talks or at least agree on a humanitarian ceasefire," said Abdullah.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has said that over 7,600 civilians were killed and wounded in conflicts in Afghanistan so far this year. "From the figure, 2,342 were killed. Among those killed are 253 women and 452 children," said Naeem Nazari, the deputy of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

At the same event, families of war victims criticized the absence of their representatives in the peace ... **P3**

Govt Calls on UNSC to Investigate Pakistan's Claims, Terrorist Attacks in Afghanistan



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in a statement on Sunday rejected the claims by the Pakistani military about the use of Afghan soil against Pakistan as baseless and said the top priority for

Afghanistan's foreign policy is to become the center of cooperation for fighting terrorism.

The ministry said Afghanistan has been the main victim of terrorism in the world.

"We are committed to the policy of combating all forms of terrorism in the world without any discrimination," the ministry said in a statement. "We will never allow Afghan soil to be used for disruptive

activities against other countries." This comes as Pakistan's military spokesman Major-general Babar Iftikhar on Saturday claimed that they have "verifiable evidence of terrorist funding by India."

He claimed that "Indian diplomats in Afghanistan have been regularly supervising various terrorist activities."

"In one such instance," he claimed, "Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan and Indian Consular in Jalalabad had detailed discussions with collaborators to provide financial support to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and dissident Baloch elements."

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi at a joint news conference Saturday said Pakistan will present evidence to the UN and other international bodies that India, its neighbor is involved with militant organizations on its soil.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry said the Afghan government and the people will continue to coordinate their efforts with the international community to jointly fight terrorism and its sources of financing and equipping as well as their safe havens in the region.

Kandahar Gardeners' Demand Market, Storages

The Afghan gardeners have called on the government for markets and storages for their products.

During an exhibition held by Kandahar's local officials and DI organization, the Afghan gardeners stated that their products have increased but faced a lack of markets. The exhibition was held in 34 booths, aimed at finding markets for Kandahar's pomegranates.

The officials, however, promised to accelerate their efforts to find markets for the pomegranates.



PTM Holds 'Massive Gathering' in North Waziristan

The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) held a "massive gathering" in Miranshah, North Waziristan, on Sunday, members of the movement said.

Afrasiab Khattak, a former member of the Senate of Pakistan, said in a tweet that the PTM members "are expressing opposition to a new war being imposed on both sides of Durand Line."

"PTM is trail blazer in resistance to war state repression. Glad that other political parties have mustered the courage to point out the real usurpers," he said.

Khor Bibi, human rights activist and supporter of PTM, in a tweet said: "Thousands of Pashtuns gathered at Miranshah in North Waziristan from all over Pashtunkhwa against state brutalities with Pashtuns."



PTM is a rights group that has called for the de-mining of the former tribal areas and greater freedom of movement within tribal areas. It has called for an end to "extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and unlawful detentions," according to reports. According to PTM members, at least 30,000 people from the two

provinces - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan - have gone missing over the past 10 years. Previously, the PTM members have called on the international community and human rights defenders to assign a fact-finding committee to investigate the "systematic murders" of Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line.

'Makes no...

over the matter. "I am just saying people need to look at this from a balanced perspective."

Saudi Arabia was the world's top arms importer, spending \$16.9bn on weapons in the period between 2014 and 2018, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a defence think-tank.

At least \$4.9bn of that was spent on European arms.

Play Video

Rights groups have criticised the Saudi-led coalition for air raids that have killed civilians at hospitals, schools and markets, and urged Western governments to halt arms exports to Saudi Arabia and its allies in the stalemated conflict.

More than 100,000 people have been killed in the war, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data – including 12,000 civilians.

According to the UN's World Food Programme, 24 million Yemenis are in need of humanitarian assistance, while 20 million are food-insecure.

Clash erupts...

at violent rallies across the country over the last four years.

Trump himself drove past the rally earlier on Saturday, waving to his supporters from the presidential motorcade. "People are not going to stand for having this Election stolen from them by a privately owned Radical Left company, Dominion," he later tweeted, referring to the voting machine firm whose hardware was used in 28 states and has been blamed for awarding Biden votes through "glitches."

By Salman Rafi Sheikh

Will Biden 'Re-set' U.S. Foreign Relations?

JOE Biden's victory in the US presidential elections has raised prospects of a major shift in the US foreign policy. The presidential debates showed that Biden and Trump have different approaches to almost all major foreign policy issues, including China, Iran, Russia, and Afghanistan. While Donald Trump had his 'America First' policy principle, Joe Biden does not have any such apparently grand and populist idea. Yet, it doesn't mean he will not bring significant policy changes. At the same time, however, expecting a radical change in the US foreign policy, making the US 'a responsible player' once again, will be naïve. The idea of change, therefore, would be just a political spectacle with no real, substantive change taking place in many foreign policy theatres. The Democrat president-elect will make changes that suit his rule and continue Trump's policies elsewhere.

A fundamental reason for this is that many of the policies that Trump followed were rooted in the decreasing US influence in the world and the related rise of other powers, particularly Russia and China, challenging US unilateralism in the world. This remains unchanged, which means that Joe Biden's rise to the White House will have a limited impact only.

Russia-China and Joe Biden

AS IT stands, US-Russia and US-China competition was not a product of the Trump administration. Indeed, the policies the Trump administration were following were, in many ways, only a variant of the Obama administration. For instance, while the Trump administration came up with its China and Russia centric 'Indio-Pacific' strategy, the Obama administration had its so-called 'Asia Pivot'. 'Asia Pivot', like the 'Indo-Pacific' strategy, was fundamentally anti-China and anti-Russia. Let's not forget here that Joe Biden, being Obama's vice-president, was one of the key architects of 'Asia Pivot' policy, which shows that Joe Biden certainly subscribes to the American 'deep-state's' notions about China and Russia ie, how their rise is a threat to the US and why they need to be tackled both economically and militarily.

While Joe Biden, unlike Trump, will not pursue a 'trade war' with China or contemplate a 'de-coupling', there is little gainsaying that the underlying construct of Biden's policy will be his 'Asia Pivot' 2.0 whereby the US will maintain its economic ties with China and pursue



aggressive military and economic build ups in Asia, closer to China, to 'contain' its rise and military and economic expansion.

Iran-Israel and Joe Biden

AS FAR as Iran and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is concerned, Joe Biden has already expressed his willingness to become a party to the agreement once again. While this may look promising, there are at least two significant bottlenecks that might erode prospects of a fundamental reversal to normalisation. First, Iran's supreme leader has already said that US is untrustworthy regardless who is in the White House. For Iran, therefore, its concerns vis-à-vis the US go beyond the occupier of the Oval Office. Its concerns are deep-rooted in the American mindset vis-à-vis Iran and how this mindset has roots in Israel and Saudi Arabia. If Joe Biden moves to make the US a part of the JCPOA once again, this will surely upset Netanyahu and many other US allies in the Middle East. Will Joe Biden be willing to take this risk at a time when he is actually looking to reverse Trump's policy of retrenchment to keep American entrenched in the Middle East?

While Joe Biden has criticised Israel's annexation of Palestinian territories and Israel-US relations may enter a period of uneasy adjustment, a soft approach to

Iran will cost Biden the Middle East, leaving the region open to Russian and Chinese economic expansion. Both the Russians and Chinese will be happy to quickly satisfy the Middle Eastern powers' growing appetite for modern weapons and advanced defence systems. Such a situation will do little to nothing to advance Joe Biden's agenda of making the US the world's supreme power.

But the US under Joe Biden will not be making a fundamental about turn. Biden also has a history of cordial relations with Netanyahu, and has even said he would not reverse Trump's transfer of the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. Recently passed legislation, unless Biden can reverse, ensure US support for Israel.

End of war in Afghanistan and Joe Biden

THE US is withdrawing from Afghanistan. Joe Biden has been openly supporting US withdrawal from Afghanistan, and he apparently agrees with the Trump administration's plans. However, what Biden has in his pocket is not just a military withdrawal, but also a long-term and covert intelligence presence in Afghanistan to tackle Daesh. Unlike Trump, Biden doesn't consider it a 'useless war.' He, therefore, aims to maintain a deep and a covert presence in Afghanistan. ... **P3**

By Daniel L. Davis

Nothing 'reckless' about U.S. withdrawing from unwinnable Afghan war

In the aftermath of the firing of Secretary of Defense Mark Esper last week, the elevation of Christopher Miller to the role of acting secretary, and the installation of Douglas Macgregor as senior adviser to the acting Pentagon chief, many analysts in Washington believe President Trump intends to accelerate America's withdrawal from Afghanistan — and possibly Iraq and Syria — before the end of his term. While many pundits raise alarm bells over the reported move, others, some of whom have most experience in Afghanistan, rightly hail the potential withdrawal as long overdue.

Marc Polymeropoulos, a retired CIA senior operations officer, told Politico late Wednesday he considered the "precipitous and what appears to be near total withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan" as "reckless." Views like those shared by Mr. Polymeropoulos do not stand up to even

cursory scrutiny.

At the most fundamental level, it is difficult to consider a withdrawal from Afghanistan — after more than 19 years — "precipitous" in any definition of the word. Since an agreement signed between the United States and the Taliban in February of this year, Mr. Trump has been clear about his intention to withdraw all our troops. Last May, The New York Times reported the Pentagon was drafting plans to have all the troops out by May 2021. Accelerating the plan by four months — again, after almost two decades of far-from-successful war — is hardly "precipitous."

Moreover, there seems to be much consternation among many of these same experts that Mr. Trump is trying "to impose his will" on the generals in requiring a quicker exit. This argument itself should be a sign of concern. Let us be clear: The U.S. Constitution provides that civilians run the military.

Article 2 designates the president as the commander in chief and therefore the generals are obligated to execute his orders.

Top military brass should be counted on to provide advice and recommendations, but once the commander in chief gives a legal order, it is incumbent on the generals to execute, not question the directives. It is also important to note that our elected leaders and military officers exist to serve the interests and will of the American people. Large majorities of the American population and even larger percentages of veterans support Mr. Trump's desire to withdraw; even 60% of Biden voters favor withdrawal.

Others have argued the president should let negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban play out before withdrawing. That would be a mistake on two counts. First, it should now be ... **P3**

IMF: Poverty, Unemployment Still a Challenge for Afghans



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a report has assessed Afghanistan's economic index and has described poverty and unemployment among major challenges for Afghans.

The country report titled "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Request for a 42-Month Arrangement Under the Extended Credit Facility" has assessed Afghanistan's overall economic landscape in the next four years and the impacts driving from the war, politics and COVID-19.

According to the report, armed conflicts and fragility have hindered Afghanistan's development. Growth has been weak, unemployment high, and Afghanistan remains dependent on aid, which finances its large underlying fiscal and current account

deficits, the report says.

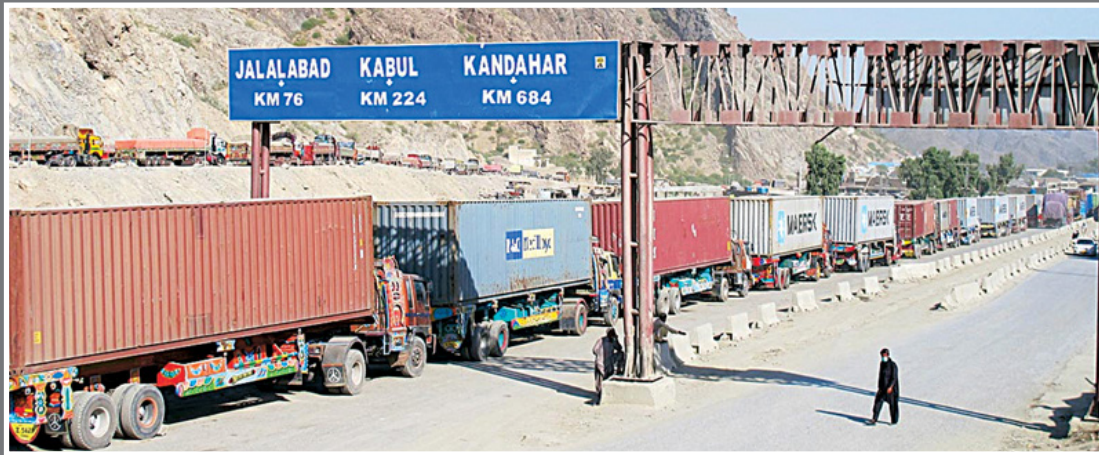
The report has predicted that Afghanistan's economic growth rate will still undergo a -5 percent until the end of the current year and the country's export volume will also decrease by 35 percent.

The report states that the COVID-19 pandemic in Afghanistan has also left significant impacts on the nation's economic development and livelihoods.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted heavy damage to the economy and livelihoods. The pandemic and containment measures led to a collapse in economic activity in the first half of the year. With the easing of containment restrictions since late May, activity is regaining its footing. Assuming the infections don't intensify, the output ... **P3**

Hundreds of Trucks with Fruits Stranded in Torkham

Businessmen and truck drivers in eastern Nangarhar province say hundreds of vehicles loaded with food and non-food items have been stopped at the Torkham port. The drivers say they waited until the legal required time for their turn to cross into Pakistan, but still they are not allowed. Police and other authorities allow vehicles who offer money to customs authorities, they claim. Officials did not deny corruption in Torkham port, but insisted that with introduction of a more comprehensive mechanism, the problem would be addressed. These vehicles are mostly loaded with vegetables and fruits for export to Pakistan and the items get rotten after the vehicles are delayed to cross the border crossing. Jalil, a truck driver, said police often



refused to allow trucks until they were paid money. "Police came to us and demanded 2500 afghanis per truck, we offered them 1500 afs per truck for 11 trucks, then they allowed us to proceed." Nader, another driver, said "Truck

owners who have reference or provide money are allowed on the main road to cross Torkham crossing." Attaullah Khogyani, the governor's spokesperson, did not reject corruption in Torkahm port and said a proper mechanism was being

worked out to resolve all difficulties. Akbar Jan Polad, Policy and Technical Head at the Transport Ministry, said the ministry would install scan machines in all ports and this will help improve transport service at ports.

Nothing 'reckless'...

abundantly clear to all that whether the U.S. military is on the ground in Afghanistan or not, the violence between the Taliban and government troops continues — even during negotiations. But it is also important to note that the Afghan government troops are holding their own against the Taliban, and there is good reason to believe they will continue doing so once our withdrawal is complete. Besides, the fight is theirs — not ours — to win or lose. Because of America's substantial ability to defend itself worldwide from terror threats through our powerful intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance networks — and unmatched ability to conduct targeted strikes against any direct threats to our country — our security is not at risk. We will be safe without a permanent garrison of troops in Afghanistan. It makes strategic sense for the United States to end our role in the Afghan war and withdraw our troops. If Mr. Trump's Pentagon shakeup sets the ground for ending America's longest war, then it's a praiseworthy move. We should stop asking taxpayers to waste their money on an endless war and we owe it to our service members to stop risking their lives and limbs for this unwinnable war.

Abdullah: Taliban...

process. "Justice has not been served," said Nida-ul-Haq Shamalzai, an activist rallying for the rights of the war victims in the peace process. "It looks like political talks, therefore, we can not expect any social discussions," said Jaffar Mahdawi, a former MP. At the security dialogue, speakers held talks on the solutions that could help end the war in Afghanistan. "We want to raise the shortcomings and the leakages that the Afghan peace has got over the past four decades," said Davood Muradian, chairman of Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS).

Mol Releases...

Kandahar and Ghazni to help their fighters in Helmand. The 10 commanders include Mullah Mohibullah, Mullah Shah Wali, Mullah Ishaq, Abdul Rahman, Mullah Payenda, Mullah Baridad, Mullah Juma Gul, Mullah Mustafa, Mullah Amanullah, Mullah Khairkhwah, Mullah Toryalai, Ejaz-Ul-Haq, and Badri Janan. The data by the Ministry of Interior Affairs shows that 40 Taliban commanders were killed in Kandahar. The commanders killed in Kandahar include Mawlawi Munir, Mullah Saifuddin, Mullah Sazuddin, Qari Labib, Mullah Talib, Mullah Sediq, Abdul Latif, Isa Mohammad, Noorullah, Ainuddin, Musa, Abdul Waris, Mullah Abdullah, Sardar Mohammad, Hamdullah, Mullah Merajuddin, Mullah Saifullah,

Abrar, Mullah Zabihullah, Mawlawi Ainulhaq, Mullah Agha Jan, Mullah Saadullah, Mullah Qasim, Mullah Janan, Mullah Bashir, Ehsanullah, Mohammad Qasim, Mullah Nasib, Mullah Waliullah, Mullah Qadir, Hezbullah, Mawlawi Sabir, Mullah Nematullah, Mullah Baz Mohammad, Mullah Neda Mohammad, Mustaghfir, Shir Ahmad, Sardar Wali, Hafiz Nematullah, and Pir Agha. Presenting the list to reporters, Interior Affairs Ministry's spokesman said 152 Pakistani fighters were killed in Helmand province. The list shows that 65 bodies of Taliban fighters were transferred across the Durand Line, 35 bodies were taken to Farah province, 54 to Helmand, 13 to Zabul and 13 bodies were taken to Uruzgan province. At least 30 Taliban commanders

were wounded in Helmand clashes, Arian said, adding that Taliban attacks were repelled by Afghan forces in Helmand, Kandahar and other southern provinces under the active defense framework. The war in the south was led by Chief of Army Staff Gen. Mohammad Yasin Zia. The clashes are ongoing in parts of Kandahar, Helmand and other southern provinces, but Arian said the Taliban has been defeated the southern province. Meanwhile, Arian said that at least 134 civilians were killed and 289 more were wounded in Taliban attacks in the last 25 days. Arian said that at least "1,100 Taliban commanders have been killed in clashes in the south." Taliban has rejected the statement by the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

Will Biden ...

While US military withdrawal might linger on due to no progress being made in 'Intra-Afghan talks', the recent Daesh attack on Kabul University is going to allow Biden to even more forcefully implement his plans of a deep covert intelligence operations in Afghanistan. What it practically

means is that CIA operatives and the CIA-operated Afghan militias will have a free-hand dealing with the Afghanistan-based Daesh and/or the Taliban (both banned in Russia) as well in the wake of no peace agreement a ceasefire. The US, under the Biden administration, therefore, will not see major or radical

policy changes. The idea of fundamental shift is only a political spectacle that Biden sold to his voters in the elections. In reality, however, change will be only be minimal, imperceptible and even drastic in some areas, exacerbating the ground situation in many respects and worsening the US standing in others.

IMF: Poverty,...

is expected to contract by 5 percent this year, down from 3.9 percent growth in 2019," the report said. The report said that Inflation spiked in April due to border closures and panic buying but has moderated since as resumed trade and a new harvest boosted foodstuff supply. "The fiscal deficit has sharply widened, to 1.6 percent of 2020 GDP in January-June, reflecting revenue shortfalls due to the pandemic and increased expenditure to mitigate its impact. Risks to the outlook stem from a deeper and more prolonged impact of the pandemic, the uncertain security conditions, and potential

shortfalls in donor grants," the IMF report said. This comes as Afghanistan prepares for the Geneva Conference. The IMF in its report has said that international aid to Afghanistan must continue. According to the World Bank (WB), the poverty rate has likely increased to 61-72 percent, and the crisis exposed long-standing weaknesses in the health system, largely due to inadequate and ineffective spending and limited capacity. "Our country comes in the category of under developed nations. COVID-19 pandemic will not have any major impacts on impoverished countries. I think the -5 economic growth rate is only a prediction. Such

a prediction can be made by the World Bank and other institutions too," said Hasibullah Muwahid, an economic expert. "We should be authentic while prioritizing our needs. We need financial assistance in the short term, mid term and long period," said Darya Khan Bahir, an economist. Commenting on the report, Shamroz Khan Masjidi, spokesman for the Ministry of Finance, said: "The money that we receive from the IMF is aimed at improving Afghanistan's economic stability and alleviating poverty and unemployment, fighting the impacts of COVID-19 and some other commitments that we are already working on their details together with this institution."

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99.4	£	99.5
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20.8	دولار	20.9
1030	₹	1040

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Asia-Pacific nations sign world's biggest trade deal

Fifteen nations in the Asia-Pacific region on Sunday signed the world's largest free trade agreement.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) was signed on the sidelines of the annual summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held via video link.

The agreement includes 10 ASEAN member states: Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Singapore and Brunei – along with Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.

Indonesia's Trade Ministry said RCEP is the largest regional trade agreement in the world. The pact will take effect once each participating countries ratify the agreement

domestically within the next two years.

India was included in the trade pact, but the country withdrew from it last year.

The agreement covers 29.6% of the world's population, 30.2% of world gross domestic product, around 27.4% of world trade, and 29.8% of world's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), according to Indonesian Trade Ministry data.

The ministry said Indonesia had conceived the idea of RCEP in 2011 and it was signed on Sunday after the negotiation process completed.

The trade pact is expected to bring more imported products in each ASEAN country, especially from China.

After the implementation of RCEP, Indonesia is estimated to have an increase in imports of



up to \$101.9 billion from member countries. Prior to the implementation of RCEP, Indonesia's imports from member countries

amounted to \$100.5 billion. Indonesia's exports after RCEP are estimated to only grow by \$997.7 million to \$91.96 billion.

A look at the world

Pakistani PM: India must face justice for 'terrorism'

India must face justice for killing thousands of innocent Pakistanis in terrorist attacks it has sponsored, Pakistan's prime minister said on Saturday.

Imran Khan's remarks came hours after Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and army spokesman Maj. Gen. Babar Iftikhar's news conference in the capital Islamabad where they presented a dossier with "irrefutable evidence" of New Delhi's sponsorship of terrorism.

"We have provided irrefutable evidence of India's state sponsored terrorism inside Pak[istan]," he said in a series of Twitter posts.

"Details of financial & material support &



Indian state's direct involvement in terrorism have been given to the world which, in the face of this evidence, cannot remain indifferent or silent."

He said the international community must "force India to end its terrorism & bring to justice those responsible for killing thousands of innocent people in Pakistan." The latest accusations from Islamabad coincide with fresh clashes along the Line of Control (LOC) -- a de facto border that divides the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region between the two nuclear neighbors -- which killed 16 people, including four Indian soldiers.

Hailing the country's security agencies for their fight against terrorism, Khan said they will continue to "give their all to protect our people."

"Let there be no doubt anywhere that we know how to defend our country and will continue to do so with our combined national resolve," he said.

Pakistan and India have a long history of disputes and the Himalayan region of Kashmir has been one of the most prominent issues.

The nuclear neighbors have fought three full-scale wars since partition in 1947, with two of them -- 1948 and 1965 -- over Kashmir.

Clash erupts between extremists in Washington



Supporters of Donald Trump participated in a "Stop the Steal" protest outside the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC on Saturday.

The streets of Washington, DC were filled with US flags and MAGA banners as Trump supporters marched to protest Joe Biden's declared victory, which they see as fraudulent. Crowds sang and prayed, and several fistfights broke out, RT reported.

Billed by its organizers as the "the biggest Trump rally in history," Saturday's #MillionMAGAMarch drew enormous crowds of President Trump's supporters to the nation's capital on Saturday, where they gathered at Freedom Plaza to protest what they see as a fraudulent election.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany claimed that "more than one million" marchers showed up. More conservative estimates put the attendance in the thousands, but aerial shots of the march showed crowds that appeared to dwarf the tens of thousands drawn to Trump's final slew of campaign rallies last month.

Shortly after the rally kicked off at noon, Trump's supporters launched into a rendition of 'The Star-Spangled Banner'. When the marchers headed toward the Supreme Court afterwards, chants of "stop the steal" and "Fox News sucks" were sounded out -- the latter in reference to Fox's recent shift away from its usual enthusiastic support for the president.

After arriving at the Supreme Court, the crowd prayed that God "reveal all the corruption and fraud in this election, and show everyone your will."

The atmosphere wasn't all festive, though. Small groups of black-clad counter-protesters showed up to picket the rally, and scuffles broke out between both sides. DC police quickly broke up any violence and kept the counter-protesters away from a large contingent of right-wing Proud Boys, who have clashed with Antifa rioters... **P2**

'Makes no difference': Saudi minister slams German arms ban

Saudi Arabia has criticised Germany's arms export ban on the Gulf kingdom as "wrong" and "illogical" and said it does not need German military equipment.

Some European nations have halted weapons sales to Riyadh after it launched a military campaign in 2015 in neighbouring Yemen, which the United Nations now calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"The idea that weapon sales were stopped to Saudi Arabia because of the Yemen war I think is illogical," said Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir.

"We think it's wrong because we think the war in Yemen is a legitimate war. It's a war



that we were forced into it," he told the German press agency dpa.

After being extended multiple times, Germany's ban on arms exports will once again be up for discussion in the coming weeks as the latest deadline, December 31, draws closer.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition agreed in March 2018 to prevent arms from being delivered to any country directly involved in the war in Yemen.

Before the ban, Germany did brisk business with the kingdom with an export volume of 450m euros (\$550m) in the third fiscal quarter of 2017, according to German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

'Doesn't make a difference'

Saudi Arabia has been at war in Yemen since March 2015, when a coalition led by the oil-rich kingdom launched a campaign of aerial bombardment aimed at countering the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels and reinstating the internationally recognised government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

"We can buy weapons from a number of countries, and we do so. Saying we're not going to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia doesn't make a difference to us," said al-Jubeir.

He also emphasised that Saudi Arabia did not want to put Germany under pressure... **P2**



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