

UN slams India for seeking deportation of Rohingyas

India came under fire from the UN Human Rights Council over its threat to deport 40,000 Rohingyas.

Earlier this year, the UN body had criticised India for rising communalism, caste violence and attacks on Africans besides criminalisation of same sex relationships, reports Indian news portal The Times of India.

Kicking off the 36th session of the Council in Geneva on Monday, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein criticised New Delhi's current measures to deport Rohingyas "at a time of such violence against them".

According to the news portal, while New Delhi did not make any official comment, India believes it is taking a balanced approach to the Rohingya issue in Myanmar, which is much more than a humanitarian crisis.

"India cannot carry out collective expulsions, or return people to a place where they risk torture or other serious violations, by virtue of customary law, India's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the obligations of due process and the universal principle of non-refoulement", Zeid was quoted as saying according to The Times of India.

The human rights chief also expressed dismay over "a broader rise of intolerance towards religious and other minorities in India". He condemned the current wave of violent mob attacks in the name of cow protection, calling it "alarming". He also drew attention to the recent killing of journalist Gauri Lankesh.

However, he said he was "heartened by the subsequent marches

calling for protection of the right to freedom of expression, and by demonstrations in 12 cities”, reports The Times of India.

Courtesy: The Daily Star

Pakistan Tells US to Eliminate Terror Safe Havens in Afghanistan

Pakistan, in its formal comprehensive response to U.S. President Donald Trump’s South Asia strategy, rejected allegations it is harboring Taliban insurgents who are staging deadly attacks against American forces in Afghanistan.

The rebuttal was issued Thursday after a meeting the National Security Committee of top civilian and military leaders chaired by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in Islamabad.

“The Afghan war cannot be fought in Pakistan... To scapegoat Pakistan will not help in stabilizing Afghanistan,” Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif said while reading the statement to the Senate, the upper house of parliament.

Trump’s speech

President Trump in his policy speech Monday said that Pakistan is taking billions of dollars from the United States but housing the very terrorists attacking U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Pakistani security forces have taken “indiscriminate actions” against all terrorist networks and sacrificed tens of

thousands of troops and civilians in this fight, Minister Asif said. In turn, he asked the United States to move against fugitive anti-state militants hiding in Afghanistan.

“We would like to see effective and immediate U.S. military efforts to eliminate sanctuaries harboring terrorists and miscreants on the Afghan soil including those responsible for fomenting terror in Pakistan,” said the foreign minister.

Instead of any financial or material assistance, there should be understanding and recognition of Pakistan’s efforts, contributions and sacrifice of thousands of its citizens and over 120 billion U.S. dollars of economic losses, Asif said.

“The claims of billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan are also misleading to the extent that the reimbursements to Pakistan since 2001 only account for part of the cost of ground facilities and air corridors used by the United States for its operations in Afghanistan, rather than any financial aid or assistance,” the minister explained.

He said that Islamabad has consistently worked with both Washington and Kabul to promote a negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict to bring an end to years of bloodshed in the neighboring country.

India’s role

Foreign Minister Asif also took aim at the Trump administration’s attempt to give India, archrival of Pakistan, a role in regional security efforts.

“India cannot be a net security provider in the South Asia region when it has conflictual relationships with all its neighbors and is pursuing a policy of destabilizing Pakistan from the east and the west,” he said.

Pakistani leaders have consistently maintained that the Indian intelligence agency is using its growing influence with Afghan

counterparts to sponsor terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Kabul and New Delhi deny the charges.

Meanwhile, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan said Thursday the new war strategy Trump announced earlier this week will result in an increase in train, advise and assist efforts as well as stepped up air power to Afghan security forces battling the Taliban.

General John Nicholson told reporters in Kabul U.S. and NATO are determined to enable Afghan forces defeat Taliban, and terrorists linked to Islamic State and remnants of al-Qaida. He also asked the Taliban to quit violence and enter into peace talks with the Afghan government.

“I say you have a simple choice: Stop fighting against your countrymen. Stop killing innocent civilians. Stop bringing hardship and misery to the Afghan people. Lay down your arms and join Afghan society. Help build a better future for this country and your own children,” Nicholson said.

But a Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, swiftly rejected the general’s call, saying the insurgent group is determined to continue fighting until the last soldier of the “foreign occupation” forces left Afghanistan.

Courtesy: Voice of America

**Pakistan Navy takes over
command of multi-national**

maritime security force from France



Pakistan Navy has been handed over the command of the multi-national naval maritime security and counter-terrorism coalition named Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150) by the French Navy, read a statement issued by the navy's media wing.

Combined Task Force 150 is one of the three Task Forces within the ambit of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), read the statement. "It is a multinational coalition for counter terrorism operations... with the mission to promote maritime security at sea, deter, deny and disrupt acts of terrorism while countering related illicit activities at sea."

"The area of operation of CTF-150 spans over two million square miles, covering the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman," the navy's media wing said.

"This is the 10th time that Pakistan has been given the command of the naval coalition. Command of the CTF-150 is rotated between participating nations on a four to six-month basis."

Rear Admiral Naveed Ahmed Rizvi took over the command of

CTF-150 from Rear Admiral Olivier Lebas of French Navy, said the statement. Rizvi, while addressing the ceremony, assured that his team was fully prepared to shoulder this “prestigious responsibility”.

The senior navy officer also lauded the outgoing French Navy team and their dedicated efforts to achieve objectives of CTF 150 during their tenure of command and reaffirmed his resolve to continue operations with the same zeal and zest.

Rizvi further highlighted that relations between Pakistan Navy and coalition navies continue to strengthen due to the focused commitment in support of collaborative maritime security to bring peace and stability to this region.

The number of participating countries in CMF has risen to 31 over the period of time.

Prior to the present command tenure, Pakistan Navy had the exclusive distinction of commanding CTF-150 for nine times and Multinational Combined Task Force 151 (Counter Piracy Task Force) eight times.

Vice Admiral Kevin M Donegan, Commander US Naval Force Central Command & Commander Combined Maritime Forces presided over the ceremony.

At the outset of the ceremony, Rear Admiral Olivier Lebas, the outgoing CCTF-150, presented resume of CTF 150’s recent accomplishments.

Courtesy: DAWN

Trump administration 'disbands climate change advisory committee'



The administration of President Donald Trump has decided to disband a federal advisory panel on climate change – in a further sign of the White House's view on environmental policy.

The panel is part of the National Climate Assessment, a group aimed at helping officials and policy makers integrate the US Government's climate change analysis into their long-term planning.

A mandate for the 15-member Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment is set to expire on Sunday, and will not be renewed.

The acting administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Ben Friedman, is said to have informed the committee's chair that the agency would not renew the panel, according to a report in The Washington Post.

The National Climate Assessment is supposed to be released every four years, but it has only been put out three times since 1990, when a law calling for such analysis was created.

The advisory panel, made of up of academics and local officials – is supposed to help translate the analysis provided by the assessment into concrete proposals and

guidance for local authorities.

The next National Climate Assessment is due for release in 2018, but a document expected to be a key part of the assessment is currently under review by the Trump administration.

The report, known as the Climate Science Special Report, finds it is “extremely likely” that more than half of the rise in temperatures over the past four decades has been caused by human activity – in contrast to some of Mr Trump’s cabinet members’ views, who consider the magnitude of that contribution to be uncertain.

The draft report – which was leaked – estimates that human impact is responsible for a increase in global temperatures of 1.1 to 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit from 1951 to 2010.

As for disbanding the committee, its chairman thinks it is a bad idea. “It doesn’t seem to be the best course of action,” Richard Moss, an adjunct professor in the University of Maryland’s Department of Geographical Sciences, told The Washington Post.

“We’re going to be running huge risks here and possibly end up hurting the next generation’s economic prospects,” Mr Moss said, referring to infrastructure projects that might rely on the analysis.

However, the NOAA said in a statement that “this action does not impact the completion of the Fourth National Climate Assessment, which remains a key priority.”

Courtesy: Independent.co.uk