

Headlines:

- **Covid-19: 4,000 Variants of Coronavirus around the World, British Minister says**
- **US Report Highlights Pakistan-China Closeness in Afghanistan**
- **UK Tribunal to Hear Witnesses on China Genocide Accusations**

Details:

Covid-19: 4,000 Variants of Coronavirus around the World, British Minister Says

There are around 4,000 variants of the virus that causes Covid-19 around the world now so all vaccine manufacturers including Pfizer Inc. and AstraZeneca Plc are trying to improve their vaccines, a British minister said. Thousands of variants of the type of coronavirus that causes Covid-19 have been documented as the virus mutates, including the so-called British, South African and Brazilian variants which appear to spread more swiftly than others. "Its very unlikely that the current vaccine won't be effective on the variants whether in Kent or other variants especially when it comes to severe illness and hospitalisation," Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi told Sky News. "All manufacturers, Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca and others are looking at how they can improve their vaccine to make sure that we are ready for any variant - there are about 4,000 variants around the world of Covid now." While thousands of variants have arisen as the virus mutates on replication, only a very small minority are likely to be important and to change the virus in an appreciable way, according to the British Medical Journal. "We have the largest genome sequencing industry - we have about 50% of the world's genome sequencing industry - and we are keeping a library of all the variants so that we are ready to respond - whether in the autumn or beyond - to any challenge that the virus may present and produce the next vaccine," Zahawi said. The novel coronavirus - known by scientists as SARS-CoV-2 - has killed 2.268 million people worldwide since it emerged in China in late 2019, according to Johns Hopkins University of Medicine. [Source: Khaleej Times].

The truth is finally out: the present vaccines will have to be modified to fight new variants of Covid-19. This means that world population will have to take booster vaccines every year, and probably for life, guaranteeing huge profits for the big pharma industry. From the outset it was hard to believe how a Coronavirus vaccine (never made before) could be produced in relatively short period of time, and remain effective!

US Report Highlights Pakistan-China Closeness in Afghanistan

A bipartisan report to the US Congress claims that there's an understanding between China and Pakistan on how to protect their interests in Afghanistan and Islamabad enjoys a leading role in this strategy. "The increasing closeness of the China-Pakistan relationship means that, for the most part, Beijing's Afghanistan policy has hewed closely to that of Islamabad, with Islamabad taking the lead," the report adds. The report, sent to Congress on Wednesday, recognises Pakistan's key role in the Afghan peace process and urges the Biden administration to work with Islamabad to end decades of war and destruction in Afghanistan. The report also urges new US leaders to postpone a May deadline for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, warning that an early exit would allow terrorist groups to reemerge. A US-Taliban agreement signed in Doha last year calls for a complete US withdrawal from Afghanistan by May. But the report from the Afghanistan Study Group, commissioned by Congress in 2019, recommends an "immediate diplomatic effort to extend the current May 2021 withdrawal date in order to give the peace process sufficient time to produce an acceptable result." Explaining the change in the US attitude towards Afghanistan, the report argues that "the Taliban are not an international terrorist organisation, and there is no evidence that they have any intention to attack the United States." The report claims that even within the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, "there is broad regional support for a US withdrawal that is responsible rather than precipitate and chaotic". Underlining Pakistan's role in the peace process, the report notes that "Pakistan has generally supported the US effort to negotiate with the Taliban," a role also publicly acknowledged by US officials. "Many countries in the region, especially Pakistan, have influence over the Taliban and other participants in the peace process," the report claims, adding: "They should actively use this influence to make the peace process successful because they will ultimately benefit

from its success.” But the report clarifies that while Pakistan has influence over the Taliban, “it does not have total control over the movement.” The report notes that while Islamabad has always tried to maintain a close relationship with the United States, this did not prevent it from maintaining ties with the Taliban as well. “There are, however, indications that Pakistan is reevaluating some elements of its strategy, given the economic opportunities that would arise from a more stable Afghanistan and the possibility of the Taliban gaining a meaningful share of power,” the report adds. Yet, the report argues, a fundamental change in Pakistan’s Afghan policy, “particularly in the strategic thinking of Pakistan’s politically powerful army and intelligence services,” seems unlikely. [The Dawn]

The report already confirms what many people know and that is Pakistan holds all the cards in stabilizing Afghanistan. After almost two decades of fighting and occupation, America has no choice but to rely on Pakistan to solve the Afghanistan mess. Nevertheless, Pakistan’s leadership is either unwilling or incompetent to recognize Pakistan’s immense strength and power to use Afghanistan to expel America from the region for good.

UK Tribunal to Hear Witnesses on China Genocide Accusations

An independent tribunal in Britain aiming to establish whether the Chinese government’s alleged rights abuses against Uighur Muslims in the far western Xinjiang region constitute genocide is expected to hear dozens of witness testimonies when it holds its first public hearing in London in May. Organizer Nick Vetch said Thursday an eight-member panel that will act as a jury has been finalized, and that researchers for the tribunal were sifting through about 1,500 documents and pieces of evidence submitted from different countries. The tribunal, which doesn't have government backing, will be chaired by prominent barrister Geoffrey Nice, who previously led the prosecution of ex-Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and worked with the International Criminal Court. Panel members will consider allegations that Chinese authorities are perpetrating crimes against the Uighur minority including torture, rape, enslavement, forced separation of children from their parents and forced sterilization. While the tribunal’s judgment is not binding on any government, organizers hoped that the process of publicly laying out evidence will compel international action in tackling the alleged abuses in Xinjiang. Around 30 witnesses and experts are expected to give evidence at the first public hearing, set for May 7 to May 10 in central London. A second session is expected to take place in mid-September, and the tribunal hopes to issue a judgment by the end of the year. Written witness testimonies include submissions from “people who have had direct experience or tangential experience, alleging relations or family members are missing,” Vetch said, as well as a substantial number of expert witness accounts, some not yet published. The evidence will be considered by a panel consisting of academics, lawyers and an ex-diplomat. The panel has been selected to represent diverse backgrounds and no expert on China was included on purpose, Vetch said. The tribunal is the latest attempt to hold China accountable for its treatment of the Uighurs and other predominantly Muslim and ethnic Turkic minorities, who have been subjected to an unprecedented crackdown that is increasingly drawing international concern. Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared before he left office that China’s policies against Xinjiang’s Muslims and ethnic minorities constituted crimes against humanity and genocide. His successor, Antony Blinken, reiterated the statement on his first day in office. Researchers and rights groups estimate that China has rounded up a million or more Uighurs and other minorities into prisons and vast indoctrination camps that the state calls training centers since 2016. In declaring genocide, Pompeo cited widespread forced birth control and forced labor among Uighurs. The Associated Press reported last year that the Chinese government was systematically forcing sterilization and abortion on Uighur and other Muslim women, and sent many to camps simply for having too many children. China denies any abuses and insists that the steps it has taken are necessary to combat terrorism and a separatist movement. Officials have lambasted Pompeo's declaration and accused him of trying to undermine Beijing’s relations with President Joe Biden. Vetch said the tribunal has written to the former and current Chinese ambassadors to London to request the Chinese government’s presence and cooperation, but so far received no response. [Source: Spectrum News]

Let us be clear the West is no friend of Uighur Muslims, and is exploiting China’s maltreatment of Muslims for political gains. Nevertheless, the real tragedy is inaction of the Muslim world to deal with this issue, just like every other atrocity perpetrated against Muslim populations worldwide. Unless, Muslims have their own state to look after their affairs these problems will only increase in magnitude and scope.