

*"Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over."*

*Octavia E. Butler*

## Ashraf Ghani: We Must Reach a Political Settlement

KABUL - President in an exclusive interview with BBC said, "We must reach a political settlement", referring to the peace he added, that there is a "window of opportunity to accelerate the peace process" following NATO's no final decision on troops' withdrawal.

According to BBC, NATO currently has 10,000 troops in war-weary Afghanistan, and under the US-Taliban deal, they were due to leave the country by May 2021.

President Ghani told BBC that NATO's announcement provided an opportunity for "all parties to the conflict to recalculate and reach a conclusion that we've long reached, that use of force is not the solution", he added pointing to the increased violence that there is a need for a "concrete effort" globally "to send signals that certain types of behavior are unacceptable".

The stay time and the number of international troops "depends on the intensity of the war" president Ghani told BBC.

As Biden Administration continues to review the US-Taliban deal during Trump's presidency, while most US troops are not US forces, NATO forces will find it hard if US troops pullout from the country, BBC reported.

After 9/11 US troops invaded Afghanistan to remove the Taliban but the movement regrouped by 2018 and two-thirds of the country threatened the elected government, according to BBC.

President Ghani said he was delighted with his relationship with the Biden administration and found a new coherence among the international community towards Afghanistan.



"The force of coherence is what I'm counting on to avoid the tragedies. There's so many fears of collapse into civil war," he said, acknowledging that both sides were preparing for warfare.

But he dismissed fears of a Taliban military victory. "This is not Vietnam. The government is not collapsing", BBC reported.

In the matter of the growing calls about interim government, President Ghani said, "the future will be determined by the people of Afghanistan, not by somebody sitting behind the desk, dreaming".

According to Ghani had decisions and sacrifices lie ahead in a year where peace be won or lost.

From our side, we have a sense of urgency, we're willing to make the hard decisions, and there are going to be hard decisions required. Forty years of violence in this country is enough," BBC quoted Ghani.

As Trump's team saw the Taliban as worthier partners than the government, President Ghani with the new administration feels he is being listened to but is "ready to pay a price" because the US won't unnecessarily stay for a long time in Afghanistan.

(Khaama Press)

## Wolesi Jirga Approves Thrice-Revised Budget Draft

KABUL - The Wolesi Jirga on Monday approved the thrice-revised draft budget for 2021 fiscal year by a majority of votes.

The lower house had twice rejected the draft budget for 1400 solar year over elimination of 1,100 provincial projects and a surge in funds for government's codes.

However, today the draft was presented to the Wolesi Jirga session and was approved by a majority of votes.

Mir Afghan Safi, who heads the Budget Finance Commission, briefed lawmakers on the third draft for 1400 solar year, saying the government had accommodated most of the house's demands.



According to him, based on the amendments in the budget document, the increase of 2,000 afghanis in salaries of low-ranking officials will require 10.7 billion afghanis, of which five billion will be included in the budget...

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## Jamiat Will Not Remain Indifferent Over Peace Efforts: Qanooni

KABUL - Former vice president Mohammad Younus Qanooni, who was one of the participants of the 2001 Bonn Conference, said the Jamiat-e-Islami party of Afghanistan, to which he belongs, will not stay indifferent to the peace process as it supports efforts to end the conflict through a political solution.

Addressing an event on the 3 Hoot uprising, a week of major

civil unrest in Kabul in February 1980, Qanooni said that Jamiat-e-Islami and the people have made the most sacrifices in the war, but they still support the peace talks with the Taliban despite a delay in the process.

"The peace process will move forward and reconciliation will be done, but the way the reconciliation takes form and the way...

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## HR be Main Topic on Doha Talks Agenda: Danish



KABUL - Second vice-president Sarwar Danish on Monday said human rights should be one of the main subjects to be taken up with the Taliban in peace talks.

Sarwar Danish made these remarks during a meeting with Fiona Fries, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in Afghanistan, on Monday morning. Danish said there were no signs the Taliban wanted to respect or protect those rights, and there was need for the international community and parties involved in the Afghan peace process to put pressure on the Taliban in this regard.

Referring to growing violence and new war tactics of anti-government groups in targeting civilians, human rights activists, journalists, and civil society members, Danish said that all allies of Afghanistan should stand united against escalation of unrest.

The UN commissioner, Fries, shared information about her agency's activities in Afghanistan and said that the organization was working under the UN Security Council for supporting civilians, civil society activists, human rights defenders, prevention of torture and peace.

She expressed concern over increased threats and targeted attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, civil society activists and civilians. (Pajhwok)

## Taliban Say No to Possible Delay in US Withdrawal of Troops from Afghanistan



KABUL - Taliban will never agree to possible delay in US withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan which is scheduled to be completed by May 1 as per the deal, according to the spokesman of the group.

Zabihullah Mujahid told Germany's DPA news agency that NATO and US must understand

that implementing the deal is the only solution to the current crisis in Afghanistan.

He suggested that Taliban will resume fighting against foreign troops if they don't leave the country by the mentioned date. The statement comes as US is reviewing its deal with the Taliban amid...

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## Probe Team in Herat to Assess Islam Qala Fire Incident



HERAT CITY - An authorized government team on Monday arrived in western Herat province to assess and investigate what caused the fire outbreak in Islam Qala port.

Ghulam Bahauddin Jailani, state minister for natural disasters management, heads the 13-member powerful probing

team.

During a meeting in Herat, the minister said the team was comprised of 13 individuals from relevant organs.

All causes of the fire would be comprehensively assessed and then a solution for compensating the losses would be decided, he added. ...

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## Security Forces Destroy Major Heroin Factory in Nangarhar



NANGARHAR - A large heroin production factory of the Taliban was destroyed by the Afghan forces in eastern Nangarhar province.

In a statement released late Sunday, the Defense Ministry stated that the Afghan Defense Forces conducted a clearance operation in the Toto village in the Shirzad

district of the province.

The village was cleared of Taliban presence, the statement said. At least 150 militants were killed during the operation, the MoD claimed.

The Afghan forces have also defused 120 IEDs during the operation. The statement added...

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## Saleh Says Taliban Use New Bombing Tactics in Kabul



KABUL - First vice president Amrullah Saleh on Monday claimed the Taliban now used new tactics in planting landmines on roads of capital Kabul.

Amrullah Saleh in summary of his 6:30am meeting wrote that a new tactic had been used in Kabul's Baraki area explosion.

The Sunday evening's explosion took place at around 4:30pm in limits of Baraki square on a police vehicle.

Kabul police spokesman, Firdaws Faramarz on Sunday said two individuals were killed and five others wounded as a result of the explosion.

But vice president Amrullah Saleh said four individuals were killed in the explosion.

The VP also shared images of the new tactics Taliban used in planting bombs and landmines on Kabul roads on his Facebook page.

"As you see in the images, the Taliban are using new ways of planting landmines on Kabul roads and according to the evidence that we have, the Taliban have received special drills from Pakistan to plant bombs," he added.

Saleh said these drills are usually carried in compact type vehicles and could dig up to 10cm in one to two minutes. The bomb has road type color.

Saleh said from now on police are instructed to fully search all compact type vehicles and vehicles without back seating.

The Taliban have not yet commented in this regard. (Pajhwok)

## AZIZI BANK INTERNET BANKING

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## MoE Procurement Head Among 2 Held on Graft Charge

KABUL - The Attorney General Office (AGO) on Monday said the procurement director of the Ministry of Education and head of a private company have been arrested over corruption charges.

A statement from the AGO received by Pajhwok Afghan News said that the two figures were detained after some investigations on Sunday.

The AGO said Waris Seyar Company smuggled a used power generator to Afghanistan and the MoE procurement director purchased it for 12 million afghanis which caused loss to the government.

"The AGO is committed to fighting corruption and investigating relevant cases independently and based on the country laws", the statement added.

The statement said corruption



related cases were usually investigated by the AGO and their results shared with the media and the public. (Pajhwok)

## Ex-Head of Prison Authority Banned from Leaving Country



KABUL - The former head of the prisons regulatory authority, Ahmad Rashid Totakhil, has been referred to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and has been banned from traveling abroad and the institution has been led by its deputy for the last two weeks, according to sources.

Sources said that Mr. Totakhil did not appear at the Attorney General's Office so his arrest warrant was issued by the AGO.

But his colleagues said Totakhil has resigned from his post.

"Mr. Totakhil is not here," the deputy head of the authority Nizamuddin Nuristani said at

a press conference, referring to Totakhil's absence. "His resignation has been approved by the president."

"The head of the prisons regulatory authority has been referred to the Attorney General's Office and the issue is under the AGO's scrutiny," AGO spokesman Jamshid Rasuli said.

Meanwhile, the deputy head of the authority talked about existing problems in the institution, saying that the prisons in the country meet required standards but phones and drugs are still smuggled inside by prisoners.

At least 30,000 prisoners are kept in the country's prisons, he said.

The authority was changed into an independent institution a year ago.

"I am not rejecting this. Unfortunately, phones exist in detention centers," Nuristani said.

"At least 400 military prisoners have benefited from presidential decrees so far," said Farhad Bayani, head of the office of...

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## Kabul Residents Carry on Despite Daily Blasts

KABUL - Kabul is faced with almost daily blasts, most of which are targeted at attacks or incidents of violent crime.

Qais, a flower seller in Shahr-e-Naw area in Kabul, says he continues to keep his hopes high, knowing that the routine security incidents are dampening people's motivation to keep going on with their daily lives.

"We get fresh flowers from the north in spring and we import it from India and Pakistan in winter," Qais said.

The Emergency Hospital that is located in front of Qais's shop receives those wounded in blasts in Kabul.

"We get upset. Even our customers get upset and lose their morale (when they see the wounded brought to the hospital)," Qais said.

Khodadad, the relative of a wounded person who is being treated at Emergency Hospital, said his son was a police officer and was wounded in an explosion in Kabul's



PD16 some days ago. The blast killed one person and wounded three more, including Khodadad's son.

"We are tired of these explosions. We are tired of the city of Kabul. Whenever we hear a sound, we think that an explosion has occurred," Khodadad said.

Awal Gull, a resident of Nangarhar, says his brother's wife was wounded after a mortar hit their house in Hesarak district in Nangarhar.

"The government is made by the nation, not by lawmakers and ministers. The government will never be fixed if it doesn't have the people's support," Awal Gul said. (TOLO NEWS)

## 4 Female Aid Workers Gunned Down in Waziristan

KABUL - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed four women aid workers in Pakistan's North Waziristan district on Monday. Pakistani media outlets reported that the incident took place in Tandar village of Shewa area near the Afghanistan border.

Local security officials told media representative that unidentified gunmen opened fire at a vehicle of a nongovernmental donor agency and shot dead four female staff and seriously wounded their driver.

Local residents wrote on social



media platforms that the slain women worked for Sabawoon, a non-governmental donor agency, and helped women in creating handicrafts in the area. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the incident. (Pajhwok)

## 4 Gold Miners Killed in Badakhshan Province

BADAKHSAN - Local officials in Badakhshan said 4 people were killed when a goldmine collapsed in Badakhshan province on Sunday.

Sanaullah Rohani, a spokesman for Badakhshan police told the media, that incident happened in the Raghistan district of the province while the workers were busy working and sifting for gold in a mine.

This incident left four workers dead and further three individuals were reported wounded. Reports indicate the wounded workers were transferred to a local hospital.

The area where the incident happened is reportedly under the Taliban influence. No further details were provided in regards to the incident. (Khaama Press)

## Death Toll Rises to Four in Kabul Roadside Bomb Blast

KABUL - The death toll from Sunday's roadside bomb blast in Kabul's Baraki roundabout rose to four, a source said on Monday, adding that six people were wounded in the explosion. The blast took place on Sunday afternoon in which a security forces vehicle was targeted by the roadside bomb, police said.

The target was Sayed Abrar Sadat, an officer of office of the deputy minister of interior in which he, two others official of the ministry and a child were killed and six more, including three children and two women were wounded, a source said on Monday.

The Taliban has denied involvement in the blast but the government often blames the group for such attacks.

Footage shared on social media following the blast shows a woman lying on the ground with two distressed children, presumably the woman's, near



by. Data collected by TOLOnews shows that 66 security and criminal incidents occurred in Kabul over the last month, during which 51 people were killed.

Figures by TOLOnews show that Mubashir Muslimyar, a university lecturer, Abdul Qayum Zazai, head of the operation of the NDS's 909 unit, Zazai's son who was an army officer, two other army officers, an NDS officer, two police officers and a lecturer at Marshal Fahim Military Academy were the victims of the targeted attacks in Kabul over the last 10 days. The...

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## Outlook Horoscope

### Aries (Mar. 22-Apr.20)



Feb 23, 2021 - Watch out for the green-eyed monster today, Aries. It can rear up before you can say "jealousy." Most situations that cause these feelings are born out of insecurity. If you aren't secure in your job, relationship, or family, and feel threatened by someone, it's time to take a look at the cause. Why you don't feel as solid as you could? What's causing the insecurity? Look for the answers.

### Taurus (Apr.21-May 20)



Feb 23, 2021 - You may feel insecure about your appearance today, Taurus. This can be a vicious cycle to get into. The result is almost always negative. Rather than pick yourself apart, consider finding ways to accept your looks. Whether it's your weight or age or anything else, if you can't accept yourself, you will always find something wrong no matter how many changes you make.

### Gemini (May 21-June 20)



Feb 23, 2021 - Jealousy might rear its head today, Gemini. The key to it all is to understand where and why you feel insecure. If you're jealous of a mate, what's going on in the relationship? Is trust an issue? If this comes up at work, is it because you don't feel recognized for your contributions? Examine the cause of jealousy. It's almost always a symptom of a deeper problem.

### Cancer (June 21-July 20)



Feb 23, 2021 - Arts and crafts may interest you today, Cancer. Even if you lean more toward sports, an artistic streak will likely run pretty strong in you. The process of creating can be richly satisfying, both in the process and in the satisfaction of a finished product. Allow yourself the opportunity to explore this, as the day's energy will lend much to your abilities.

### Leo (July 21-Aug. 21)



Feb 23, 2021 - Getting along with others may prove challenging today, Leo. The influence from the planetary aspects can have you preferring to withdraw and isolate. You might feel impatient and annoyed. If so, and being alone is an option, go for it. If it isn't, you will need to curb the tendency to be argumentative or confrontational. Exercise patience and avoid conflict.

### Virgo (Aug. 22-Sep 22)



Feb 23, 2021 - Don't be surprised if you're a little weepy today, Virgo. The influence from planets can enhance your sensitivity to almost everything, including your own feelings. Take heart. It's bound to be short-lived. Cry if you need to, since it can be cleansing. Try not to wallow too much. Chances are good that things will look better tomorrow. Take care of yourself today.

### Libra (Sep 23-Oct. 22)



Feb 23, 2021 - Fanaticism or obsessive thinking may be something you need to look at today, Libra. Common areas for such behaviors are in the pursuit of money, power, success, and romance. There's a fine line between ambition and obsession. If you find that you think of nothing else but one fixation, it may be time to talk with someone about it. He or she may see what you don't want to see.

### Scorpio (Oct.23-Nov.22)



Feb 23, 2021 - Don't act impulsively today, Scorpio. It could be easy to confuse this with spontaneity. One has more thought put into it than the other. With this day's influence, be certain to look before you leap. Think everything through, from decisions to projects to contracts. Read the fine print more than once. When it comes to relationships, be careful not to trust too quickly.

### Sagittarius (Nov.23-Dec.20)



Feb 23, 2021 - Is it time to take a more drastic approach to a problem, Sagittarius? If you've made several attempts to resolve your trouble but to no avail, you might consider it. As long as "drastic" doesn't mean "destructive," you may find success trying something far more forward and insistent. Be careful, however. Think things through carefully first. Run any ideas you have past a trusted friend.

### Capricorn (Dec.21-Jan.19)



Feb 23, 2021 - Tap into your creativity to unblock the emotional flow today, Capricorn. This can be a powerful tool. Creativity is a big part of who you are, almost as big as communication. Your emotions link to these two aspects and constantly interact beneath the surface. If one gets blocked, release it by focusing on the other. Express yourself through creativity and consider talking to someone close.

### Aquarius (Jan 20-Feb.18)

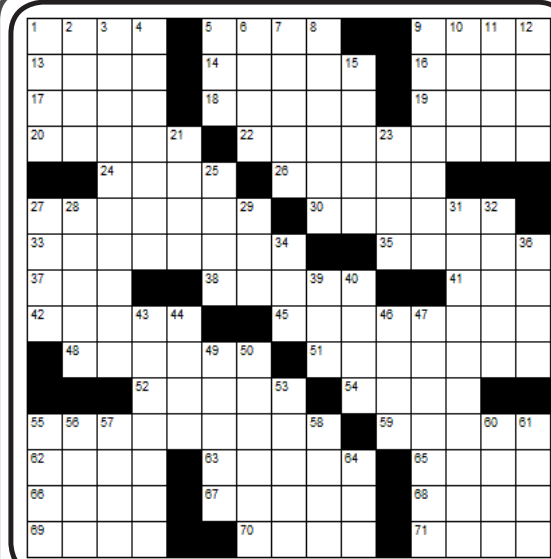


Feb 23, 2021 - You may need to deal with someone's disapproval today, Aquarius. This will likely come from someone you see as either a superior or authority figure, perhaps a parent. While it's important to listen to this person, if what they say involves your job, personal life, or how you choose to live, it's no one's concern but yours. No matter how you do things, someone will disapprove somewhere.

### Pisces (Feb.19-Mar.20)



Feb 23, 2021 - Time alone is essential for everyone, Pisces, but make sure you recognize when you're isolated to the point where it's unhealthy. If you realize you're alone because you're avoiding something, you might consider your alternatives. Things will only fester under these conditions. Face whatever it is that's upsetting you so you can begin to work things out.



### Across

1. Faucets, 5. Blabs, 9. Study hard, 13. Skilled, 14. Muse of love poetry, 16. Sharpen, 17. Lascivious look, 18. Thin piece of wood or metal, 19. "Oh my!", 20. A carpenter's device, 22. Lookouts, 24. A type of liquid food, 26. Circumvent, 27. Soft light woolen fabric, 30. Burn, 33. Famous genius, 35. Man-made fiber, 37. Explosive, 38. Friends and acquaintances, 41. East southeast, 42. Creepy, 45. Prorogue, 48. Scheme, 51. Underwater missile, 52. Cabs, 54. Ale, 55. Restricted, 59. Sea eagles, 62. As just mentioned, 63. Anagram of "Incur", 65. Relating to aircraft, 66. List of options, 67. Anxious, 68. Russian emperor, 69. Dines, 70. Give and 71. To be, in old Rome

### Down

1. After-bath powder, 2. Cain's brother, 3. An amusing remark, 4. Preachings, 5. Aye, 6. "and crafts", 7. Peels, 8. Smells, 9. A type of chapel, 10. Part in a play, 11. A Freudian stage, 12. Untidiness, 15. Sight-related, 21. Kick, 23. Press, 25. Glance, 27. Celebration, 28. Queues, 29. 52 in Roman numerals, 31. Ingenuity, 32. Fleece, 34. Greatest possible, 36. Roman emperor, 39. Not cold, 40. Untidy one, 43. A narrow strip of land, 44. French for "State", 46. To endure (archaic), 47. Perform surgery on, 49. Put forth, as effort, 50. Ballroom dance, 53. Ringworm cassia, 55. An indefinite period, 56. Notion, 57. Lady's escort, 58. Data holder, 60. Historical periods, 61. Achy, 64. C

### Yesterday's Solution

TROW ARTS PARCE  
HERS WAIN ULTIAC  
INCONITO BANTU  
STADE SAWBUCKS  
UNALIDED ARA FEBI  
SIGNET ELD SLUR  
AXED ANGLE AURA  
GENS PERICULENT  
EST WHO CELESTE  
IRONSIDES  
GATARAC FLUQU  
DUNES TURN TABLE  
ATOMS ABOUT DONA  
DENISE LAISH YEAIR

able absent banish  
breathe brief cause coun-  
terfeit direct endure errs  
escape gasket gourd grip  
immunity jumpsuit late  
list lucky martial mass  
melon mission nick  
power press sassy seem  
sheep skill splash stale

M D T R E A S O N C S T T  
L R T E K S A G A P I I N  
P U P B Y K C U L E M U E  
H O A S R S S A E N M S G  
A G W S H E S L P D U P R  
B R I E F H A A I E N M U  
S I E R R T M T S A I U L  
E P Y P S Q L E H R T J V  
N L H S I N A B L E Y I E  
T I E F R E T N U O C N I  
T E R R O R I S M T N I A  
M A R T I A L D I R E C T  
M I S S I O N M L L I K S



*In the Name of God, the Most Merciful,  
the Most Kind*



## Breaking Peace Deadlock Will be Welcomed

Peace process began in March 2009. When the US administration showed tendency to negotiations with moderate elements of the Taliban and the Kabul government also wished to secure peace before the US troop pullout to avoid civil war in the country. The effort was proved abortive due to certain reason. Later the second attempt was made with inclusion of civil society in Paris and Tokyo in 2012.

The next session of the talks between the Taliban leadership and the Afghan government was held in Murree in July 2015. Pakistan was the host of the dialogue, while the United States and China attended the talks as observer. These were the first Afghan-led and Afghan-owned dialogue. The second round of these negotiations could not happen due to killing of the Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in a US drone attack in May 2016.

Moscow hosted a meeting in 2018 where Taliban were for the first time given an international stage. The United States attended the meeting as an observer.

However, the final round of intra-Afghan dialogue began in September in the Qatari capital of Doha after the Trump administration struck a security deal with the Taliban leadership in February last year, based on which the number of US soldiers reduced from nearly 13,000 a year ago to 2,500. But US President Joe Biden's new administration has said it intends to "review" the Trump-Taliban deal.

The talks have stalled as the Taliban walked away from the negotiating table and their delegations traveled to neighboring countries. Recently, the Taliban leadership sent an open letter to the Biden administration in which it called for US troop withdrawal based on the deal signed between Washington and the Taliban. Nonetheless, the Biden administration is not in a hurry to withdraw the US troops and NATO members also declared that it would support the Afghan government and its troop pullout would be condition-based. The main reason behind maintaining troops in Afghanistan is that the Taliban have not honored their deal with Washington as they did not sever their ties with al-Qaeda. Meanwhile the Taliban also did not reduce violence or hold meaningful talks with the Afghan government.

The developing situation suggests that the US-Taliban deal, which was dubbed as historic when it was signed a year ago, is one the verge of collapse. The readout of the latest telephone call between President Ashraf Ghani and the US Secretary of State suggests that Washington wants visible reduction in violence, if not an all-out ceasefire, before it commits to the drawdown plan.

Russia has reportedly launched a "diplomatic initiative" to arrange a meeting of Pakistan, the US, China and Iran so as to develop a "collective mechanism" for the Afghan peace efforts.

Moscow is also pushing for hosting the stalled intra-Afghan talks. It is seeking resumption of talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban and also broader regional consensus.

Meanwhile, Russia is also proposing an interim government. Russian Special Representative for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov has said that Moscow prefers that all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan agree on the establishment of an inclusive and transitional coalition government. He added that the dialogue in Doha has failed, calling for the peace process to proceed in the Moscow format. Kabulov is cited as saying, "I have been assigned a task by the leadership to facilitate the start of intra-Afghan talks by undertaking discussions within the framework of a (three way party meeting) which includes Russia, the US and China. We have agreed about such a meeting with the US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad; there is a possibility that this meeting will be held in Moscow." He also talked about hosting such a meeting with Pakistani officials in his recent visit to Pakistan. The Afghan government has constantly called on regional stakeholders, mainly Pakistan, to play constructive role in the Afghan peace process and use their leverage on the Taliban leadership in this respect. With this in mind, the Ghani administration will welcome Russia's initiative in breaking the stalemate in the talks. Ghani has said that violence will not be a solution to the conflict. Meanwhile, the republic negotiating team has not returned to the country despite the Taliban's refusal to continue negotiations with them. It is important to note that no country should keep the Afghan government out of the loop in case of hosting the Taliban since the government is one of the main sides of the negotiations. It goes without saying that if the intra-Afghan dialogue is failed and abandoned, violence will increase to a great extent. Hence, regional and global actors will be welcomed to put their weight behind the peace process and breaking the stalemate.



## Are Security Officials and Others Alive in Afghanistan?

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Unfortunately, Afghanistan has become the slaughterhouse of human and humanity. No day is begun and ended without bloodshed and carnage of humans and humanity in Afghanistan. Yesterday, a video was circulating in media showing that two bloodied children were over the lifeless body of their mother crying and screaming to get up! A similar event happened earlier when a newborn baby and several mothers who were giving birth at a maternity hospital were targeted and killed by crazy terrorist groups. Accordingly, dozens of students were killed in the educational centers and sports club but now the terrorist groups have begun to demonstrate their atrocity and success in Kabul roads and streets. Unbelievably, none of these tragedies woke up the security officials and the claimants of humanitarianism and Muslim brotherhood in Afghanistan. The terrorist events become so regular as if there is no security system, no humanity, and no one responsible to protect the citizens. Everyone is surprised why such successive tragedies cannot impel the security officials and the claimants of humanitarianism and also the Muslim world do something in this country. If we see at social media networks, many citizens ask where the securities officials are. What they are doing in Afghanistan? Where is the United Nation? Where are humanitarian organizations? And where are the Muslim countries that do not hear the voice of kids who are screaming over the lifeless bodies of their mother? Is humanity dead? If these events, especially yesterday's event cannot shake them, what would shake them? Of course, Instead of giving tiring and ridiculous condolences, they must take action and show their will against terrorism which is their legal and moral responsibility?

Undoubtedly, the people heard so many words and promises, but in practice, they saw the reversed outcome. The peace talks and ridiculous condolences are meaningless anymore without showing decisive will in the protection of civilians in Afghanistan. The people are isolated in their homes because of violence and regular explosions in the road and streets of Kabul city and other large cities of the country. If the government does not take immediate action, it will have very unpleasant consequences for the government and the claimant of humanitarianism in the country. Given the high level of public dissatisfaction and given the rise of violence, the beds are becoming ready for the enemy of Afghanistan to mobilize people against the government and the international community. The recent extremist expressions of Mawlawi Ansari can be considered as starting point of such movements. We must note that there are many elements of ignorant and cheap forces to be exploited for sabotage of social and political insecurity in the country. The traders and investors already compelled to leave the country while the brain drain also inevitable. Availing the opportunity, the enemies of the security will also circulate rumors to inflict its last psychological blow on the lives of people to end the minimum legitimacy government, as well.

The security forces must be warned that the people's silence against these crises is not because of their satisfaction from the performance of security forces and international allies but because their voices are not heard. In fact, they are fully disappointed by all stakeholders of conflicts including the government, international allies, and also Taliban with their supporters. They are disappointed by the government because of its chronic inability against terrorism, corruption, poverty, and so on, despite spending huge amount of fiscal and non-fiscal resources of the country. They are disappointed from the international community because their presence and their agreement with Taliban have not changed the conditions of the country and they have not acted upon their mutual commitment with the people and government of Afghanistan. The people are disappointed by Taliban and Taliban-supporting countries because they target innocent civilians who have no role in the conflicts. And eventually, the people of Afghanistan and history will never forget those who indifferent against And eventually, the people of Afghanistan and history will never forget those who are indifferent against everyday violence in these hard days of the country.

The terrorists and their supporters must also note that neither it is possible to build a system on the ocean of blood and civilian massacre, nor they are able to impose any puppet system on Afghan people by force. It is nearly two decades that thousands of civilians and non-civilians have been killed in the country, but no one has reached their goal and demand by killing innocent people and destruction of public properties. If the Taliban is really committed in Islamic values, they must understand that killing innocent infants and people is the greatest crime in Islam. If the Taliban is really Afghan, they must not be misused by any intelligence networks against their land and people. If they do not believe in these values, at least they must understand that no group can reach their goals by killing innocent children, men, and women. No group can dominate the heart of people by attacking mosques, schools, civilian homes, cars, markets, and public properties.

According to experts, there are various reasons behind the failure of security forces and indifference of security officials such as lack of intelligence information, lack of rule of law, lack of technical equipment and facilities, lack of security cameras in the city, lack of scanners at the gates of Kabul and security checkpoints inside the city, lack of skills and ability security forces how to detect explosives and terrorists inside Kabul. Therefore, police and other task forces are unable to do their minimum responsibility which is ensuring the security of the country. So, it is high time and opportunity for the government to show its serious face against insecurity and its factors such as corruption, connection, and other weakness.

*Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com*

## Restoring Nature to Economics

By: Diane Coyle

"This land is your land," sang the American folk singer Woody Guthrie, listing the redwood forests, wheat fields, and golden valleys of the United States. Guthrie was making a moral claim that everyone should be able to share in the riches of the land. But his song also highlights the economic truth that the use of natural resources affects everyone. In particular, if we deplete or irreversibly degrade them, the economic consequences affect all of us and future generations.

Human economic activity makes extensive use of the ecosystem services nature provides.

Classical economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo, who wrote at a time when agriculture accounted for a much greater share of the economy than it does today, were well aware that human activity occurred within the natural world and relied on nature's bounty. They always included land in their analyses.

But modern economics has largely excluded nature from definitions and measurements of the economy.

Today, of course, the risks posed by climate change are attracting more attention, including from investors. But many other aspects of nature's role in economic activity have been overlooked until now.

For example, the money farmers earn from selling their crops counts toward GDP, but there is no accounting for the services of the bees that pollinate the crops, or for the quality of the soil – that is, until the bees die or the soil loses its fertility, causing yields to fall. Nor do conventional economic statistics incorporate the services provided by clean air, or the negative impact of pollution.

But the link between COVID-19 mortality and respiratory disease has made the latter cost clear, even seen through the very narrow lens of reduced human capital and future earnings.

A recent landmark independent review of the economics of biodiversity, commissioned by the UK Treasury and carried out by my Cambridge colleague Partha Dasgupta, makes a powerful case for restoring nature to economic analysis.

Dasgupta argues that we should regard a country's natural assets as no less a part of its productive capital than assets like broadband, bridges, or the skills base.

The job of economic policymakers should thus be to manage a country's entire portfolio of assets in order to deliver a positive return for society.

This means taking into account the depreciation of individual assets, including important species and ecosystems, and the complementarities between them.

Under such a framework, a government taking a long-term portfolio approach might decide not to build flood defenses from costly, energy-intensive, and unsightly concrete, and instead make a lower-cost in-

vestment in tree planting upstream and wetland preservation downstream.

Likewise, farmers are well aware of the loss of biodiversity and the depletion of bee populations, but perhaps less aware of the negative consequences such as poorer soil quality and less productive crops, which result in greater dependence on chemical fertilizers and more dead bees, in an accelerating downward spiral.

The encroachment of human activity on wilder natural areas is also contributing to the spread of zoonotic diseases like Ebola and COVID-19, at huge cost to societies, economies, and governments.

There is some hope that economic analysis and policy will rediscover nature before the damage to the services we get from it – and thus to everybody's standard of living – becomes irreparable. Now that investors have understood the risks that climate change poses to their returns, they will find it easier to see the importance of biodiversity or clean oceans and air as well.

Significantly, it was the UK's hardheaded treasury, and not the coddly Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, that commissioned the Dasgupta Review.

But compiling the statistics needed to capture nature's services to the economy will be crucial.

This is a work in progress. The United Nations has defined standards for the measurement of natural capital.

And the ongoing process of revising the definitions used to measure GDP and other economic statistics is an opportunity to bring ecosystem services inside the so-called "production boundary" that separates what is counted as the economy from everything else.

The pandemic is driving home many lessons, including the old but important one that money is a poor measure of value. "Essential workers" from hospital porters to delivery drivers are often among the lowest paid.

Anyone currently supervising school lessons at home or doing extra cooking during lockdowns will have a fresh appreciation of the value of unpaid work in the home.

And the value people place on access to a public park has jumped since March 2020. Similarly, because much of the value we get from nature currently is not measured, much less paid for, economists ignore it.

That is no longer sustainable (an often-used word with profound implications, because what is not sustainable can never be sustained). Humanity's relationship with nature will inevitably change in the coming years, and economic policymakers must influence how it changes. Ignorance is no defense.

*Diane Coyle, Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, is the author, most recently, of Markets, State, and People: Economics for Public Policy.*



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Email: [outlookafghanistan@gmail.com](mailto:outlookafghanistan@gmail.com)

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

[www.outlookafghanistan.net](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net)



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### (1) Wolesi Jirga Approves...

and the rest will be spent on-middle budget.

He added the budget for the National Food Package program, which had been rejected by the lower house, was removed from the budget draft, and 8.4 billion afghanis allocated for the presidential operation unit.

But he said the budget now included only 4.4 billion afghanis to complete the half-completed projects allocated to the unit.

The WolesiJirg has not yet approved the formation of a presidential operational unit.

Safi said the authority of the Wolesi Jirga was in line with the law, and the Ministry of Finance was set to design a plan this year for salaries and privileges of government officials.

According to the Wolesi Jirga Budget Finance Commission, the government last year spent about six billion afghanis on 24,000 government employees alone besides receiving NTA salaries.

According to the commission, the fund for capacity building was removed from the budget draft because it had become a source of corruption.

Without elaborating, he said the budget for precautionary codes especially 91 and 92 had been reduced.

SayedAzimKobarzani, Wolesi Jirga Budget Finance Commission secretary, said the total budget for 1400 was 473 billion afghanis, of which 311 billion set aside as regular budget and more than 161 billion afghanis as development budget.

According to Kobarzani, 216 billion of the total budget would be financed from domestic revenues and 218 billion from foreign aid.

The 37 billion afs budget deficit would be filled with 20 billion afs from micro-finance funds and 17 billion afs from non-repayable loans from the International Monetary Fund.

He added the commission approved the third draft after holding joint meetings with other commissions and government officials.

Finally, Mir RahmanRahmani, Wolesi Jirga Speaker, presented the draft budget for voting and out of 147 members present in the house, 143 approved the budget and four others rejected it.

After the budget approved, Rahmani said: "Today is a historic day for the Wolesi Jirga and the people's representatives, because after two months of resistance, they managed to include the important parts and the demands of the people in the budget draft."

According to him, many adjustments have been made in the budget document based on the view of the Wolesi Jirga, including reducing expenditures and preventing budget waste.

He added that in the past two months, members of the lower house have taken a firm stand to increase staff salaries, balance budgets for provinces, and save costs.

Rahmani said the delay in approving the budget was not a political issue or a hostage situation, but an attempt by the house to ensure justice and equal rights of the people.

He added the Wolesi Jirga within its authority would always support the system and that the difference of opinion was the beauty of democracy.

The Wolesi Jirga approved the 1400 solar year budget after two months and five days into the new fiscal year.

The Wolesi Jirga delayed its 45-day winter break by more than a month until the budget was approved.

The lawmakers will go on winter break for eleven days starting tomorrow. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Jamiat Will...

the peace process proceeds are important issues about which the Jamiat-e-Islami party of Afghanistan, the people of Afghanistan and the grieving Kabulis will not remain indifferent," Qanooni said.

Reacting to recent remarks by Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Qanooni accused Hekmatyar of promoting disunity and said he should distance himself from what he was in the past.

"Mr. Engineer (Hekmatyar), the history has changed, you are in the past," he said.

Qanooni said that Kabul residents and the 3 Hoot uprising had a key role in defeating the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

"More than 6,000 people--and according to some eyewitnesses of that time, more than 10,000--were martyred at that time," said Mohammad Matin Moanis, a university lecturer.

The 3 Hoot uprising happened two months after the Soviet intervention and continued for three days before it was suppressed by Soviet troops.

(TOLO NEWS)

### (3) Taliban Say No...

criticism that the group is not living up to its commitments of reducing violence and cutting ties with terrorist groups.

The intra-Afghan talks have also been stalled. Mujahid said that the reason for the pause in the talks is consultations within the group.

He said that the Taliban is committed to continue the talks. (1TV NEWS)

### (4) Probe Team...

"After the measurement of all the losses, the report would be shared with the president and his deputies and then the president would decide from where the damage would be compensated," Jailani added.

He said that local officials who were involved or neglected about the fire would be also tried based on the law. The assessment of all these tasks may require several days, he said.

Amina Ahmadi, head of the customs department of the Ministry of Finance, said that the team was appointed based on a presidential decree and all the evaluations done by previous teams would be shared with the current one. She said the process of cargo vehicles at the port was started on February 14 and there were no issues in this regard. Abdul Wahid Qatali, Herat governor, also said that the team was given full authority and it would thoroughly assess the Islam Qala incident.

Hundreds of fuel tankers and cargo vehicles were destroyed in a massive fire in Islam Qala port a few days ago. The reason of the fire is still not clear.

Government officials say 20 people were injured but some other sources say up to 40 people injured or killed by the incident. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Security Forces...

that as many as 1,000 sacks of Hashish were also destroyed during the raid.

The Taliban has not commented yet. (ATN)

### (6) Stanikzai: Afghans...

the peace process.

"Our first step is to stop the civilian casualties by providing firearms because our compatriots are losing their lives every day in an unjust war," said Baligh.

Another member of the negotiating team, Fawzia Kofi, noted that the role of religious scholars and women in Afghanistan had been prominent throughout history.

She said the role of moderate scholars and their true and accurate understanding of religion could end the war and ensure peace and stability. (Pajhwok)

### (7) Moneychangers...

changers to provide specific suggestions for overcoming and addressing the problem.

Mir Afghan Safi, chairman of the Moneychangers Union, said from February 22, the moneychangers have been striking and would continue and expend their protests across the country. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Mohib: Kandahar...

militants if the central government fails to control the rifts between the governor, the police chief and the army corps commander in the province.

"The central government should pay attention to the government. Kandahar will collapse if the situation continues," said Gul Ahmad Kamin, an MP from Kandahar.

Kandahar residents said that lack of coordination among higher-ranking officials in the province has affected coordination among security force members who are fighting the Taliban in the province.

"The National Directorate of Security, police and army don't have the required coordination," said Nawid Ahmad Saeedi, the head of tge youths' association in Kandahar. (TOLO NEWS)

### (9) Dostum Calls...

due to the lack of an available office and that the president has not responded to a request for a meeting with him. This comes as the negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban negotiators are stopped for the last 36 days, during which they were expected to hold meetings at working group levels to finalize the agenda of the talks. (TOLO NEWS)

### (10) Taliban Abduct 18...

between two groups of peoples, then they complained to the Taliban and the group arrested some of the (suspects)," he added.

However, Mujahid said that the problem would be solved and those detained freed in the near future. (Pajhwok)

wok)

### (11) The Nomads Enjoy...

irrigation and transport.

As a prime example, we can indicate the protection wall constructed for a Kuchie community in Shufal Koh KCDC in Farah province. The protection wall 400 meters long and 1 meter high worth AFN 1,200,000 funded by the MRRD/CCNPP including 10% community contribution (cash, labor or in-kind) is directly benefiting more than 100 Kuchie households in this community.

"The floods would cause immense damage to our herds, livestock and belongings every year. We have shared this problem with various entities for several times. However, none of them paid any attention to our difficulties. Fortunately, the protection wall, constructed for us through the MRRD/CCNPP under the Kuchies Development Program, has helped us get rid of flood risks. The devastating floods washed away our belongings and several animals last year. We were afraid that we would face such a blow again this year although we overcame the financial losses caused by last year floods with great difficulty. Without doubt, we would lose our living tents and livestock again this year if the MRRD/CCNPP did not construct us this protection wall." Said, Abdul Rahim the Shufal Koh KCDC Head.

"Thanks to the MRRD/CCNPP - we are living comfortably now. None of the households in our community has any fear that they would lose their belongings or herds due to floods followed by seasonal rains", added Abdul Rahim.

Not only does Abdul Rahim feel safe, but also more than 100 Kuchie households that have thousands of animals will be at no risk of being swept away by floods in Shufal Koh Kuchi community in future.

As of now, 769 KCDCs established, 521 project proposals developed, 240 projects received financing while 128 projects are ongoing that is expected to create 166,170 labor days for both skilled and unskilled laborers Under Kuchies Development Program. (PR)

### (12) Women's Taekwondo...

the event.

Anzort, another athlete who has been practicing taekwondo for four years and has achieved several national and international awards, wishes she can participate in Olympic competitions one day in the future and he calls on the country's sports administration to support her in turning her dream into reality.

"We ask the government and the sports administration to support us so that we can achieve championship titles for the country," she said. (TOLO NEWS)

### (13) Ex-Head of Prison...

the prison authority.

Officials said that foreign nationals are also among the prisoners, but they did not provide figures about prisoners who have been sentenced with the death penalty, especially Taliban inmates.

"29,248 individuals are imprisoned, of which 16,440 are men," Nuristani said. The authority has been turned into an independent institution, but the Bagram prison and other jails are still under the monitoring and leadership of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the National Directorate of Security. (TOLO NEWS)

### (14) Death Toll Rises...

victims' families called for justice and punishment for those behind the attacks. (TOLO NEWS)

### (15)US coronavirus...

"They are gone. Your loved one is gone, but you are still alive," Willis said. "It's like you still have to get up every morning. You have to take care of your kids and make a living. There is no way around it. You just have to move on."

Then came a nightmare scenario of caring for her father-in-law while dealing with grief, arranging funerals, paying bills, helping her children navigate online school and figuring out how to go back to work as an occupational therapist.

Her father-in-law, a Vietnam vet, also contracted the virus. He also suffered from respiratory issues and died on Feb. 8. The family isn't sure if COVID-19 contributed to his death. (AP)

### (16)Russia's COVID-19...

Russia's vaccination campaign has arrived in recent weeks.

More than 18,000 people have gotten their first dose of the Sputnik V vaccine in the region of 600,000 that was hit hard by COVID-19. At one point in December, Karelia recorded a daily av-

erage of 75.7 cases per 100,000 people, the highest rate in Russia as a whole, which had been averaging 18.8 recorded cases per 100,000.

"When you watch TV and see how people are suffering ... you don't want that. You want to live a little longer," said 74-year-old Galina Shilova, one of Ikhala's nearly 700 residents. Some of those getting the shots last week at the makeshift clinic had to make their way cautiously along snowy footpaths.

The goal is to vaccinate 290,000 people, or 60% of the region's adults, by summer, said Karelia Deputy Health Minister Galina Matveyeva.

Russia took pride in being the first country to approve a coronavirus vaccine, although it faced criticism for doing it before completing the advanced testing necessary to ensure Sputnik V's safety and effectiveness. It began vaccinations in December, another global first, but now lags behind a dozen nations that have been using vaccines developed in the West and China.

Russian authorities don't regularly release data on vaccination rates, but the number who have gotten at least the first shot appears to be somewhere between 2 million and 3.2 million. (AP)

### (17)Boeing: 777s with...

the FAA sets up an inspection regime. Japan ordered the planes out of service, according to the financial newspaper Nikkei, while saying that an engine in the same family suffered trouble in December.

Boeing said there were 69 777s with the Pratt & Whitney 4000-112 engines in service and another 59 in storage. United is the only U.S. airline with the engine in its fleet, according to the FAA, and it had 24 of the planes in service. Two Japanese airlines have another 32 that are being pulled while Asiana Airlines grounded nine, seven of which were in service, until Boeing establishes a plan to fix the problems. Korean Air said it was discussing whether to ground 16 aircraft, six of which are in service.

"We are working with these regulators as they take actions while these planes are on the ground and further inspections are conducted by Pratt & Whitney," Boeing said in a statement issued Sunday, referring to American and Japanese regulators.

The engine maker said it was sending a team to work with investigators.

The emergency landing this past weekend is the latest trouble for Boeing, which saw its 737 Max planes grounded for more than a year after two deadly crashes in 2019. The planes began returning to the skies late last year — a huge boost for the aircraft maker, which lost billions during the Max grounding because it has been unable to deliver new planes to customers. Video posted on Twitter from Saturday's emergency showed the engine fully engulfed in flames as the plane flew through the air. Freeze frames from different video taken by a passenger sitting slightly in front of the engine and also posted on Twitter appeared to show a broken fan blade in the engine. (AP)

### (18)Protests swell after...

the result that "the security force members had to fire back." Three protesters have been fatally shot.

Trucks cruised the streets of Yangon on Sunday night, blaring similar warnings.

The protest movement, which seeks to restore power to the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and have her and other leaders released from detention, has embraced nonviolence. (AP)

### (19)Bitcoin slips...

We did finally see some momentum gathering over the weekend, but weekend rallies haven't been sustainable lately," said Joseph Edwards of Enigma Securities, a cryptocurrency broker in London.

"We do tend to think that there's a good chance of a down week and small correction coming in off of this, although it does little to dull medium-term prospects."

Tesla boss Elon Musk, whose tweets on bitcoin have added fuel to the cryptocurrency's rally, said on Saturday the price of bitcoin and ethereum seemed high. (Reuters)

### (20)Cost of flood...

Emergency Management Agency representative Michael Grimm. First Street does not have comparable estimates for 2020 or 2019.

Roughly 4.3 million homes - concentrated in Florida, California, South Carolina and Texas - have a substantial risk of sustaining economic damage from flooding this year, the report shows. The majority are not required by the U.S. government to have flood insurance. Were all of them to buy fed-

eral insurance, National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) rates would need to increase 4.5 times to cover the risk, according to the report. The current average NFIP premium for these 4.3 million homes is \$981.

Using Miami-Dade county in Florida as a case study, earlier First Street research here showed that homes that had been flooded had a 3% price discount. Homes that were nearby other flooded properties and roads had an 11% discount.

This flood risk has been underpriced in mortgage- and real-estate-backed markets due to outdated federal government flood maps.

The number of properties with a substantial risk of flooding this year is approximately 70% higher than what is estimated by FEMA's maps, according to First Street here. FEMA maps are used to determine rates on government flood insurance and to underpin risk assessments done by mortgage lenders, big real estate firms and investors.

"By and large, we find that most commercial real estate firms don't presently have a good grasp of what this change could mean to the repricing of assets," said Eby. (Reuters)

### (21)Vaccinations start...

infected overseas who are detected during 14-day mandatory hotel quarantines. Australia has recorded 909 coronavirus deaths.

New Zealand began inoculations last week after receiving its first batch of the Pfizer vaccine.

The nation of 5 million has successfully stamped out the spread of the virus, and the first people to get the shots are border workers and their families. That's a different priority group than in most countries, and the idea is to stop the virus from spreading from any arriving travelers who are infected. After that, healthcare and essential workers, along with vulnerable older people, will be vaccinated.

However, the rollout of a program to vaccinate the broader population in New Zealand won't begin until the second half of the year, behind many other countries.

In Australia, some infectious disease and ethics experts at Australian National University have accused the government of hoarding vaccines and argued that the government should send surplus supplies to countries in desperate need. (AP)

### (22)Armenia seeks...

Monday. "The Armenian side has always been interested in this."

Harutyunyan did not say whether there were any concrete plans for a potential expansion.

Armenian opposition politicians have called for the creation of a second Russian base in Armenia's southern Syunik region, wedged between Azerbaijan and the Azeri exclave of Nakhchivan.

Harutyunyan said he saw no need for Russia to formally open a second military base, but said the two countries were considering deploying a military unit from the existing base to eastern Armenia, near the border with Azerbaijan.

Harutyunyan did not disclose the purpose of the potential redeployment nor its exact location.

Russia's Defence Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Armenia's opposition, which has called on Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to resign over the outcome of the conflict, planned to stage a fresh street protest on Monday. (Reuters)

### (23)Between Biden...

Donald Trump, quit the deal in 2018, asserting that it was one-sided in Iran's favour, and reimposed sanctions on Tehran - moves welcomed by Netanyahu.

Biden, who was Obama's vice president, wants to rejoin the accord, a prospect Netanyahu and the current Israeli military chief have closed ranks against, as long as Iran ends violations since 2018 and returns to full compliance.

Also on the agenda of Monday's meeting was the possible appointment of a special Israeli envoy on the Iranian issue.

Candidates include Mossad spymaster Joseph (Yossi) Cohen and National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat, both of whom took part in the meeting, officials said. As both answer directly to Netanyahu, Gantz had voiced worry the Defence Ministry might be excluded from future diplomacy, one official said.

Gantz and Ashkenazi were kept in the dark about secret Israeli outreach that led to last year's establishment of relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Netanyahu said he feared media leaks. Aides to Gantz and Ashkenazi accused him of trying to undermine the ministers' credibility. (Reuters)



## US coronavirus death toll approaches milestone of 500,000



The U.S. stood Sunday at the brink of a once-unthinkable tally: 500,000 people lost to the coronavirus. A year into the pandemic, the running

total of lives lost was about 498,000 — roughly the population of Kansas City, Missouri, and just shy of the size of Atlanta. The figure compiled by Johns

Hopkins University surpasses the number of people who died in 2019 of chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, Alzheimer's, flu and pneumonia combined.

"It's nothing like we have ever been through in the last 102 years, since the 1918 influenza pandemic," the nation's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

The U.S. virus death toll reached 400,000 on Jan. 19 in the waning hours in office for President Donald Trump, whose handling of the crisis was judged by public health experts to be a singular failure.

The nation could pass this next grim milestone on Monday. President Joe Biden will mark the U.S. crossing 500,000 lives lost from COVID-19 with a moment of silence and candle lighting ceremony at the White House.

Biden will deliver remarks at sunset to honor the dead, the White House

said. He's expected to be joined by first lady Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff.

The first known deaths from the virus in the U.S. happened in early February 2020, both of them in Santa Clara County, California. It took four months to reach the first 100,000 dead. The toll hit 200,000 deaths in September and 300,000 in December. Then it took just over a month to go from 300,000 to 400,000 and about two months to climb from 400,000 to the brink of 500,000.

Joyce Willis of Las Vegas is among the countless Americans who lost family members during the pandemic. Her husband, Anthony Willis, died Dec. 28, followed by her mother-in-law in early January.

There were anxious calls from the ICU when her husband was hospitalized. She was unable to see him before he died because she, too, had the virus and could not visit. ...*(More on P4)...*(15)

## Russia's COVID-19 vaccination drive slowly picking up speed

IKHALA- Maria Piparinen and other elderly residents of Ikhala were relieved when they heard that doctors were finally bringing a few doses of the coronavirus vaccine to their remote, snowy village in the Russian region of Karelia, near the bor-

der with Finland. Otherwise, the 75-year-old said she would have had to hire a car to take her 10 kilometers (6 miles) to the town of Lakhdenpokhya, because the bus no longer runs there. And besides, "I called the clinic in Lakhdenpokhya, but ... they

told me (all the slots in) February were booked already," Piparinen told The Associated Press. The village of wooden houses — carved out of a dense forest of fir trees about 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the Finnish border and 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of St. Petersburg — is one of several in the Karelia region where ...*(More on P4)...*(16)



## Gunmen kill four female aid workers in north-west Pakistan

PESHAWAR- Four women aid workers were gunned down on Monday (Feb 22) in a restive part of north-western Pakistan, police said, as a fresh wave of extremist violence rattles the Afghan borderlands. The aid workers were ambushed by two gunmen as they were driving through a village in North Waziristan district, according to local police chief Shafiqullah Gandapur, who said just one passenger survived the assault. "No one has claimed re-



sponsibility for the attack so far but it was surely an act of terrorism," he told AFP.

Mr Gandapur said the aid workers were affiliated with a programme run

by a local institute to develop household skills for women. The incident and death toll was confirmed by Mr Rasul Khan, another local police official. (Straitstimes)

## Boeing: 777s with engine that blew apart should be grounded

Boeing has recommended that airlines ground all of 777s with the type of engine that suffered a catastrophic failure over Denver this weekend, as U.S. regulators ordered United Airlines to step up inspections of those planes. Several airlines, including United, said they were temporarily removing the aircraft from service after one of the American carrier's planes made an emergency landing at Denver International Airport Saturday because its right engine blew apart just after takeoff. Pieces of the casing of the engine, a Pratt & Whitney PW4000, rained down on suburban neighbor-

hoods. None of the 231 passengers or 10 crew on board were hurt, and the plane landed safely, authorities said.

U.S. Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Steve Dickson said in a statement Sunday that based on an initial review of safety data, inspectors "concluded that the inspection interval should be stepped up for the hollow fan blades that are unique to this model of engine, used solely on Boeing 777 airplanes."

Dickson said that would likely mean some planes would be grounded — and Boeing said they should be until ...*(More on P4)...*(17)

## Germany urges Iran to comply with nuclear pact

GENEVA- German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called on Monday for salvaging the 2015 nuclear pact between Iran and world powers which he said was in Tehran's interest. Addressing the U.N.-sponsored Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, he noted the Biden's administration's stated readiness to rejoin the pact, adding: "It is in Iran's best interest to change course now, before the agreement is damaged beyond repair." Maas said that Germany expected "full compliance, full transparency and full cooperation" from Iran with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), whose chief Rafael Grossi returned on Sunday from a trip to Tehran. (Reuters)

## Bitcoin slips sharply from record highs

LONDON- Bitcoin fell sharply on Monday after surging to a record \$58,354 a day earlier, as a sell-off in global equities curbed risk appetite. The most popular cryptocurrency rallied over the weekend to record levels, almost doubling year-to-date. It hit a market capitalisation of \$1 trillion on Friday. Bitcoin's gains have been fueled by signs it is gaining acceptance among mainstream investors and companies, from Tesla Inc and Mastercard Inc to BNY Mellon. It fell as much as 6% on Monday, and was last trading down 4.4% at \$54,941. Rival cryptocurrency ether fell 7% to \$1,798 after also hitting a record high on Saturday. Traders said the move was largely technical, and not tied to any particular news catalyst. ...*(More on P4)...*(19)

## Cost of flood damage to U.S. homes will increase by 61% in 30 years

NEW YORK- Rising sea levels and extreme weather could cause \$20 billion of flood damage to at-risk U.S. homes this year, rising to \$32 billion by 2051, according to research from New York-based flood research non-profit First Street Foundation published on Monday.

"Increased awareness of flood risk and rising future insurance costs impact perceptions of value, which will impact real estate markets," said Matthew Eby, founder and executive director of First Street Foundation.

The cost of flood damage was approximately \$17 billion annually between 2010 and 2018, according to testimony here from Federal ...*(More on P4)...*(20)

## Protests swell after Myanmar junta raises specter of force



YANGON- Protesters gathered in Myanmar's biggest city on Monday despite the ruling junta's threat to use lethal force against people who join a general strike against the military's takeover three weeks ago. More than 1,000 protesters gathered

near the U.S. Embassy in Yangon despite barriers blocking the way, but left to avoid a confrontation after 20 military trucks with riot police arrived nearby. Protests continued in other parts of the city, including next to Sule Pagoda, a traditional gathering

point. Factories, workplaces and shops were shuttered across the country Monday in response to the call for a nationwide strike. The closings extended to the capital, Naypyitaw. The junta had warned against a general strike in a public announcement Sunday night on state television broadcaster MRTV. "It is found that the protesters have raised their incitement towards riot and anarchy mob on the day of 22 February. Protesters are now inciting the people, especially emotional teenagers and youths, to a confrontation path where they will suffer the loss of life," the onscreen text said in English, replicating the spoken announcement in Burmese. The junta's statement also blamed criminals for past protest violence, with ...*(More on P4)...*(18)

## Vaccinations start without rush in Australia, parts of Asia

CANBERRA- Australia started its COVID-19 inoculation program on Monday, days after its neighbor New Zealand, with both governments deciding their pandemic experiences did not require the fast tracking of vaccine rollouts that occurred in many parts of the world. Other countries in the Asia-Pacific region that have dealt relatively well with the pandemic either only recently started vaccinating or are about to, including Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore. Catherine Bennett, an epidemiologist at Australia's Deakin University, said countries that do not face a virus crisis benefit from taking their time and learning from countries that have taken emergency vaccination measures such as the United States. "We've now got data on pregnant women who are vaccinated. Natural accidents, like incorrect dosing, happen in a real



world rollout," Bennett said. "All of those things are really valuable insights." Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had his first dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Sunday in a show of confidence in the product. Australia is prioritizing building public confidence in COVID-19 vaccines ahead of speed of delivery. Health and border

control workers, as well as nursing home residents and workers, started getting the Pfizer vaccine on Monday at hubs across the country. Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt will get the AstraZeneca vaccine when it becomes available within weeks. The vast majority of cases in Australia are travelers. ...*(More on P4)...*(21)

## Italian ambassador killed in attack on UN peacekeepers in DR Congo

An Italian diplomat and a police officer were killed while traveling as part of a UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Monday.

The Italian Foreign Ministry confirmed that Ambassador Luca Attanasio and a member of the country's Carabinieri police were killed during an attack on a UN convoy in the city of Goma in eastern Congo, near the border with Rwanda.

According to Rai News, the head of the EU delegation in Congo's capital Kinshasa was also traveling with the convoy that was part of a UN peacekeeping mission.

A spokesperson for the Virunga National Park told Reuters the ambush on the convoy was carried out as part of a kidnapping attempt. Several armed groups are known to operate in the area where the attack occurred. (RT)

## Ugandan opposition leader Wine withdraws election result challenge

KAMPALA- Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine said on Monday he was withdrawing a court case challenging presidential election results that handed victory to incumbent Yoweri Museveni, alleging bias by Supreme Court justices hearing the case. "We have decided to withdraw from their court," Bobi Wine told a news conference in the capital Kampala.

Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, has rejected the results of the January election and said he believed victory was stolen from him. A popstar and lawmaker, Wine, 39, was asking the court to overturn the results on several grounds including widespread use of violence. Museveni, a former guerrilla leader

who has led the East African country since 1986, was declared winner of the Jan. 14 election with 59% of the vote, while Wine was given 35%.

The courts are not independent, it is clear these people (judges) are working for Mr. Museveni," Wine told reporters.

Solomon Muyita, a judiciary spokesman, told Reuters they will only respond to Wine's accusations and decision to withdraw the case when he has formally quit the case through his lawyers.

Right now what he has done is, he has only made a political statement, as far as the records of the Supreme Court are (concerned) the case is still there," he said. (Reuters)

## Armenia seeks bigger Russian military presence on its territory

YEREVAN- Armenia would welcome the expansion of a Russian military base on its territory and the redeployment of some Russian forces closer to its border with Azerbaijan after a conflict with its neighbor last year, its defence minister said on Monday.

Ethnic Armenian troops in the Nagorno-Karabakh region ceded swathes of territory in and around the enclave to Azerbaijan in a six-week conflict in 2020 that claimed thousands of lives.

Russian peacekeeping troops are deployed in the enclave and, under

a formal defence pact with Armenia, Russia has a fully-fledged military base in the city of Gyumri near the Turkish border with an estimated 3,000 troops.

Russia said in November it was deploying almost 2,000 servicemen as part of the peacekeeping mission.

"The question of expanding and bolstering the Russian military base on the territory of Armenia has always been on the agenda," Armenian Defence Minister Vagharshak Harutyunyan told Russia's RIA news agency in an interview published on ...*(More on P4)...*(22)

## Between Biden call and ballot, Netanyahu seeks Iran consensus with rivals

JERUSALEM- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened cabinet rivals on Monday for their first discussion of Israeli strategy against the Iranian nuclear programme since U.S. President Joe Biden took office pledging to pursue diplomacy with Tehran.

Netanyahu's meeting with Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi followed his first phone call with the U.S. leader last week, and came a month before Israel holds another election triggered by coalition infighting.

Israeli officials said the conservative Netanyahu, bracing for discord with Biden's Democratic administration on Iran, wanted to present

a united front with the centrist Gantz and Ashkenazi.

"This is a matter that is supremely important, certainly more so than politicking," an Israeli official said. "We have to ensure everyone is on board and not tempted to speak out of turn in hope of getting more votes."

Under Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, it undertook to limit its disputed uranium enrichment programme in exchange for a lifting of international sanctions.

When he tussled with then-U.S. President Barack Obama over the deal, Netanyahu faced dissent from some of his own national security advisers. Obama's successor, ...*(More on P4)...*(23)



**Daily Outlook Weather Forecast**



<b>Kabul</b>	Mostly sunny 17°C 3°C	<b>Bamiyan</b>	Mostly sunny 6°C -3°C	<b>Herat</b>	Partly cloudy 19°C 3°C	<b>Mazar</b>	Partly cloudy 16°C 8°C	<b>Kandahar</b>	Mostly sunny 24°C 8°C	<b>Ghazni</b>	Sunny 14°C 0°C	<b>Jalalabad</b>	Sunny 23°C 13°C
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## Stanikzai: Afghans Must Decide Their Own Destiny

KABUL - Government-backed negotiating team head Masoom Stanikzai on Monday said the peace process was between Afghans who themselves should decide their destiny in accordance with the accepted logic and principles of society. A press release issued by the negotiating team of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan said Masoom Stanikzai and a number of members of the council attended the meeting of the Afghan Civil Society Complex online and talked about the Afghan peace process. The release said Assadullah Saadati, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for National Reconciliation, spoke about various dimensions of war and peace in Afghanistan. Saadati said the Afghan government's negotiating team represented various segments of society especially religious scholars whose role val-

able in the peace process. The former spymaster also talked about how some countries having influence on the Taliban should play their role directly and indirectly, especially Islamic countries, on advancing the peace process in Afghanistan. Referring to the influential role of religious scholars who are members of the negotiating team, Stanikzai expressed his gratitude for the united position and rational and strong reasoning of the negotiating team during the peace talks. The top peace negotiator also talked about the declaration of the International Council of Ulema of the Islamic World in connection with the misinterpretation of the current war in Afghanistan. He said the declaration widely reflected the views of Islamic scholars on Afghanistan and the current war. He said the Afghans were going



through currently the transition phase from war to peace and the success of the phase needed close harmony and empathy with the great scholars of Afghanistan. The negotiating team head emphasized strengthening of consensus in various domestic arenas as an influential factor in the peace process and said that the peace process was a process among Afghans and Afghans should decide their own destiny in accordance with accepted logic and principles in society. Malavi Enayatullah Baligh, a member of the negotiating team, said about the role and position of war victims and youth in...

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## Moneychangers' Concerns to be Addressed Soon: Ghani



KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani was shared some proposals by Da Afghanistan Bank officials and members of the Moneychangers Association in Kabul about addressing their concerns. On Feb 6, moneychangers across the country closed their shops and went on strike in protest against recent actions of the central bank. And since the moneychangers have been asking the central bank to extend individual licenses and distribute voluntary corporate permits. A statement from the Presidential Palace said President Ghani met with the chairman and members of the National Money Changers Council of Afghanistan on Sunday evening and listened to their problems and demands. He said moneychangers raised their concerns about transferring money abroad, saying due to security problems, and lack of facilities such as electricity and internet access, they were unable to replace individual license with a company license. DAB head Ajmal Ahmadi told the meeting that money laundering and terrorist financing law should be implemented. He stressed money changers should get their company license and the bank was ready to provide many facilities in this regard. Ahmadi said if individual licenses were extended, the problem would continue and would not be addressed fundamentally. After listening to their problems and demands, President Ghani said that the Attorney General Office would solve the money transfer problem of moneychangers as soon as possible and they should reach a conclusion within a week. "We must have a common goal and solve our problems fundamentally through cooperation and understanding," the president said. He asked DAB officials and money...

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## Mohib: Kandahar Security, Coordination Issues Being Addressed



KABUL - Amid growing concerns about the worsening security situation in the southern province of Kandahar, National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib said that efforts are underway to boost coordination among local officials in the province but added that the slow pace of the operation is aimed at preventing harm to civilians. Central districts of Kandahar have been faced with heavy clashes between government forces and the Taliban for the last three months, but concerns remain over a lack of coordination among relevant sectors, including the provincial governor's office, the police and the army leadership to control the situation. Arghandab, Zherai, Dand and Panjwai districts were once the most secure districts in the province, but they have faced heavy clashes in recent months. Figures by local officials reveal that at least 7,000 families have been displaced in recent fighting in the province. "Required changes have been brought to the security sector, both in the 205 Corps and in the NDS (office in Kandahar) and a new governor has been appointed. All are making efforts," Mohib said. But lawmakers from Kandahar said the city of Kandahar will soon fall to...

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## Dostum Calls for Political Settlement to Conflict



KABUL - Marshal Abdul Rashid Dostum emphasized the importance of a political settlement to the conflict in the country, saying that there is no military solution and that all sides should

engage in the peace efforts. Talking to TOLONews, Dostum said that issues such as governance must be addressed to achieve peace in the country. "If we were supposed to achieve something from war, we would have achieved it over the last 42 years. Once the power was taken by the Taliban, once by mujahideen... nothing was achieved," Dostum added. He said that efforts should be made to improve governance in the country. "The election of governors, district governors... There are two governors here (in Jawzjan).

One governor is from the government and another is from the Taliban," Dostum said. Dostum Reacted to Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's recent threats to launch a protest if his (Hekmatyar's) prisoners were not released, saying: they are just words. "Mr. Hekmatyar is good at making shallow remarks to make himself famous and to show to his supporters that he has this or that ability. We mentioned what party is he representing?" Dostum said. Dostum said that he has not returned to Kabul...

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## Taliban Abduct 18 People in Ghazni in A Month

GHAZNI - The Taliban abducted 18 people during the past one month in southern Ghazni province, local security officials and some provincial council members say, a claim denied by the insurgent group. A member of Ghazni provincial council, Hassan Reza Yousufi, told Pajhwok Afghan News on Monday that the Taliban kidnapped 18 residents of Malistan, Jaghoori and Qarabagh districts during the period. "These people were abducted a month ago from Zardaloo area of Qarabagh district, and their fate is still unknown" he said. Local people in a protest move surrounded the Taliban fighters'



residences in Gawmishk area and warned the Taliban that they would not go away until the kidnapped men were released, he said. Yousufi accused the Taliban of kid-

napping people for ransom and local elders' efforts to convince the militants to release the kidnapes were also futile. Ali Hussain, a resident of Jaghoori district, said two of his cousins were among those kidnapped by the Taliban. "My cousins were among many other people on their way to Iran when the Taliban took them hostage from a passenger car, we have no clue about their current situation and location," he said. A security official, who wished to go unnamed, confirmed abduction of 18 people by Taliban over the last one month in Tamki area of Qarabagh

district. He added, "A few days ago, a driver was abducted in the same area by unknown people, the fate of the driver is unknown. In response, the Taliban abducted other people. According to the source, tribal elders met with Taliban for the release of abducted people, but the Taliban told them they would not release the men until the kidnapped driver was found. Taliban acknowledged detention of some people. The group's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid told Pajhwok that the people were not captured for political motives. "There was a problem...

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## The Nomads Enjoy Basic Services Under The Citizens' Charter Program

Kuchi means "nomad" in both Pashto and Dari languages in Afghanistan. The nomadic (Kuchies) population has been one of the marginalized and vulnerable groups in the country and little attention has been paid to their development. This sense of displeasure and lack of attention to their development priorities in turn, created barriers to their access to quality services and their participation in development programs. Deprived of basic services, the Kuchi community manages to continue their nomadic lifestyle



with having very little access to living facilities. The Government of Afghanistan has, therefore, decided to promote the access of Kuchies to basic services, required for a sustainable no-

madic life and herding. The Kuchies Development Program under the Citizens' Charter National Priority Program of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD/CCNPP) is designed to establish 902 Kuchie Community Development Councils (KCDCs) for settled and semi-settled Kuchie communities across Afghanistan through transparent and democratic elections to provide them with basic services in a number of sectors e.g. water supply, power/renewable energy....

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## Women's Taekwondo Competition Held in Kabul

KABUL - Afghan women's one-day taekwondo open competitions in Kabul ended with the victory of the Abrishom Dorakhshan team on Sunday. 50 female taekwondo athletes in multiple weight-categories participated. Nargis Hussaini was selected as "the top athlete," while Nematullah Habibi was picked as "top coach." The top athletes of the competitions were praised by officials from the General Directorate of Physical Education & Sport and the Afghanistan Taekwondo Federation. According to the officials in the



federation, the event was organized to identify new talent for the country's national teams. "Taekwondo international competitions will be held later this year; we select top athletes from

these competitions to send them to the international competitions," said Wahidullah Bayat, the event organizer. The athletes described the event as a great opportunity, especially for women, but they criticized the country sports officials for providing fewer services for women's taekwondo in the country. "While no one counts on us and, the government does not encourage us, we exercise hard and continue our way forward," said Marzia Ha-meedi, an athlete in...

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