

"The World is my country,
all mankind are my brethren,
and to do good is my religion."

Thomas Paine

Pakistan Views Taliban as Friendly Anti-India Element

Pakistan's security establishment, fearful of strategic encirclement by India, apparently continues to view the Afghan Taliban as a relatively friendly and reliably anti-India element in Afghanistan, a new report to the US Congress said.

The report published by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) said that Pakistan played an active, and by many accounts negative, role in Afghan affairs for decades.

"Pakistan's security services maintain ties to Afghan insurgent groups, most notably the Haqqani Network," the report said.

"Despite official Pakistani leadership's statements to the contrary, Islamabad may view a weak and destabilized Afghanistan as preferable to a strong, unified Afghan state (particularly one led by an ethnic Pashtun-dominated government in Kabul; Pakistan has a large and restive Pashtun minority)," according to the report.

The report also said that given the outsized role that US support plays in bolstering the Afghan government, many experts warn that a full-scale US withdrawal and/or aid cutoff could lead to its collapse and perhaps even to the reestablishment of formal Taliban rule over some or all of the country.

It said that the Taliban are in a stronger military position now than at any point since 2001. (ITV NEWS)



Afghanistan Borrows More Than 17b Afs This Fiscal Year



KABUL - The Afghan government has borrowed 17.4 billion afghanis from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the ongoing fiscal year.

According to Pajhwok Afghan News report, Afghanistan has received \$1.8 billion in loans from World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, Saudi Fund, Asian Development Bank (ADB), IMF, Bulgaria, Italy, Kuwait Fund and OPEC Fund over the past 17 years.

During the period, the country repaid only \$300 million.

According to Finance Ministry sources, Afghanistan currently owes the International Community \$1.5 billion.

Budget deficit led to fresh borrowing:

Mohammad Rafi Taab, a spokesman for the Ministry of Finance (MoF), acknowledged

to Pajhwok that the Afghan government had taken loan this year due to a budget deficit.

He added: "The MoF had projected a budget deficit of 17.4 billion afghanis in 1400 solar year, and the ministry has borrowed it from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)."

Without elaborating, he said the money had been borrowed from international foundations to meet the government expenses. He did not provide details about the interest on the loan, but said Afghanistan was obliged to repay the loan by June 2026.

The Afghan government has borrowed a total of 1.5 billion dollars from the international countries and foundations and it was easy to repay these loans, because most of them had no interest, he explained. (Pajhwok)

MPs Warn of Serious Development Budget Embezzlement

KABUL - Members of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) warned on Monday that millions of dollars earmarked for development projects in Afghanistan could be embezzled and sent out of the country by officials after the ministry of finance ordered that all development projects be put on hold.

The minister said however that it has called for projects to be prioritized as its dealing with a budget deficit.

"The Finance Ministry has told all other ministries that no projects can be implemented without the approval of the (finance) ministry," said MP Makhdom Abdullah Mohammadi. He also said the signature of the Acting Finance Minister carries no weight.

Parliament approved the budget for the new fiscal year, 1400, in February following tension between government and the Wolesi Jirga over the document.

The estimated budget for the current year is over 473 billion AFN (nearly \$6 billion), including 311 billion AFN (\$4 billion) for the regular budget and 162 billion AFN (\$2 billion) for the development budget.

Some MPs said money is already being embezzled.

"A clear looting [of government revenue] is underway; the budget is being looted before the eyes of millions of people," MP Ghulam Husain Naseri said.

Another MP, Allah Gul Mujahed, meanwhile, stated: "We passed the year 1400 budget but projects for the year 1399 (2020) have been postponed to the year 1400 and the Acting Minister of Finance has told the Ministry of Public Works to stop working on..."



Commercial Farming Limited by Lack of Land, Water



KABUL - Afghan farmers on Sunday stated that insufficient water and lack of agricultural land is hindering many investors from establishing commercial farms in the country.

In recent years, the Afghan govern-

ment has promoted a new style of farming to attract more investment in the agriculture sector in the country.

However, the new commercial farming style is not widely used in the country and has not attracted significant investment in the agriculture sector until now.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) said it has established many commercial farms on nearly 10 thousand hectares of land in many parts of the country, utilizing the ministry's national farming and gardening program.

"These programs were..."

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62 New Cases of COVID-19, 4 Deaths Reported



KABUL - The Ministry of Public Health on Monday reported 62 new positive cases of COVID-19 out of 2,035 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

The ministry also reported 4 deaths and 17 recoveries from

COVID-19 in the same period.

The new cases were reported in Kabul (14), Herat (22), Kandahar (4), Nangarhar (9), Helmand (4), Kunduz (2), Kunar (2) and Laghman (5) provinces.

The ministry reported that the cumulative total of known COVID-19 cases is 56,779, the total number of reported deaths is 2,512, and the total number of recoveries is 51,902.

So far, 356,513 samples have been tested in government centers and there are 2,365 known active COVID-19 cases in the country, data by the ministry indicates. Data by ...

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Taliban Suffer Heavy Casualties as Gov't Retakes District in Kandahar

KANDAHAR - Ministry of Defense reported of heavy Taliban casualties in Arghandab and Zherai districts of Kandahar province.

MoD in a released statement on Monday said ANDSF backed by the air force, targeted the Taliban in the Arghandab and Zherai districts of Kandahar province.

According to the newsletter, as a result of this operation; 37 Taliban were killed and 28 others were wounded.

According to the statement at least 37 Taliban were killed and 28 others were wounded in the skirmish.

In addition, Afghan National



Army seized 90 motorbikes belonging to Taliban militants in the area.

According to MoD large number of Taliban weapons and ammunition were also wrecked during the operations.

The statement also added that

the village of Tabin was cleared of the Taliban influence in Arghandab district, and ANA also reconstructed three sections of a demolished bridge by the Taliban.

The defense operations in the region resulted in the discovery and neutralization of 76 landmines planted by the Taliban.

This comes as local officials in Kandahar said that the Arghandab district has been retaken from the Taliban.

The group had wider influence and control of the region in the previous months, and mines were planted along roads connected to the ...

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Kabul Women's Football League: Sharifi Sport VS. Adalat

KABUL - Team Sharifi Sport will face Adalat in the fifth match of Kabul Women's Football League on Tuesday.

The match will kick-off at 1:30 pm local time at Afghanistan's Football Federation (AFF) Stadium in Kabul.

The league competition started last week, and included Istiqlal, Afghan Club, Jawanan-e-Kabul, Ashyana, Sharifi Sport, Adalat and Setarahay-e-Benin teams from Kabul.

The league play will last for three months, according to AFF officials.

"These competitions first kicked-off in Kabul and will take place in the provinces to provide an opportunity for the formation of a professional women's league in the country," said Arezo Rahimi, head of the Women's Committee of AFF. Following the Kabul ...

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CURRENT ACCOUNT**



Azizi Bank is pleased to introduce you Women's Current Account which is a dedicated product for the esteemed and honorable female community of Afghanistan. It is a current account product in AFN and USD with discounted fees in Master Debit Cards along with other exciting features like no SMS alert fees, no Monthly Maintenance Charges. We have kept minimum balance requirement very less: only 500 AFN and USD 50 to make the banking easy and cheap for ladies.

Taliban Battered Across Afghanistan, 110 Killed

KABUL - The Ministry of Defense says that in the past 24 hours clashes between Afghan security force members and the Taliban militants resulted in heavy government opposition casualties. MoD in a released statement on Monday said that at least 110 Taliban militants were killed and 81 others were wounded in clashes and counter-attacks by Afghan national defense and security forces. The released bulletin added a large number of weapons and ammunition belonging to the Taliban were also destroyed. According to the Ministry of Defense, the Afghan national army

discovered and defused 135 mines planted by the Taliban in different parts of the country. The skirmishes between the Taliban and government forces took place in Ghazni, Nangarhar, Zabul, Herat, Baghlan, Badakhshan, and Kandahar provinces. The intensity of the clashes and Taliban attacks have escalated across the country. This comes as an UN-led summit in Turkey aimed at finalizing peace efforts is reportedly scheduled before the May 1st deadline. (Khaama Press)



Anxiety, Depression Leads 'Young Man' to End His Life

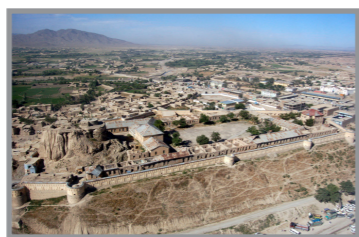
MAZAR-E-SHARIF - A 25-year-old young individual in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif committed suicide by throwing himself from the fifth floor of a building. Adel Shah Adel, a spokesman for the Balkh police HQ told the media that the incident happened at around 8:30 am on Sunday morning in PD1 of Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province. The young man named Zubair ended his life due to depression and mental conditions, local police said. Following forensic investigations, the man's body have been returned to his family.



No allegations of murder were made by Zubair's family, that leads the case to be closed. Afghanistan is among the saddest countries in the world, according to a UN report. (Khaama Press)

Gardez Municipality Employee Arrested over Bribe Charges

GARDEZ - An employee of municipality has been arrested over bribery charges in south-eastern Paktia province, an official said on Monday. Noor Mohammad Abid, the governor's spokesman, said that Eng. Sifatullah employee of engineering department of Gardez municipality was arrested by a joint team of Attorney General Office (AGO). However, Abid did not specify the amount of money the suspected arrested for. Syed Hassan Paktiawal, a member of the Wolesi Jirga from Pa-



ktia, said he filed a complaint to AGO against Eng. Sifatullah after receiving complaint from one of his clients. He said the detainee had demanded \$15,000 in bribe for converting a residential market into a commercial. Paktiawal ...

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6.9m Afs Distributed to 25 Families of War Victims

AIBAK - Police chief for northern Samangan province Col. Abdullah Gard distributed 275,000 afghanis each to 25 families of disabled and fallen and injured police personnel on Monday. Munir Rahimi, Samangan police chief, said the money had come from the budget of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and today it was distributed to the families of fallen policemen. He said the municipality had already distributed one plot of land to each of the families in an area related to the master plan of Aibak City, and these families



must pay 75,000 afghanis to the municipality in exchange for the land. Rahimi said these families could pay the 75,000 afghanis to the municipality and build houses with the rest of the money which is 200,000 afs each family. He added the families ...

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Our Pastures Turned into Battlegrounds: Uruzgani Nomads

TIRINKOT - Nomads in central Uruzgan province say their pastures have been turned into battlegrounds in the province and they are obliged to sell their livestock. They say as a result of intensified clashes between Afghan forces and the Taliban in Uruzgan, many nomads abandoned their roving life and adopted permanent residence and have stopped rearing livestock. Baridad, one of the nomads in Uruzgan, told Pajhwok Afghan News that pastures they previously used for grazing their livestock in Tirinkot, capital of the province, and districts had been turned into battlegrounds. "Both sides (Taliban and Afghan forces) have drained water on each other in many areas that also caused the dryness of pastures, nothing is left for our animals to feed so we are obliged to sell them," he said. Another nomad man, Mohammad Ibrahim, said that the conflict and drought had damaged pastures and they were no longer able to keep livestock. He said that the government had assisted them only once in the last 20 years by providing them with oil and cakes. A number of other nomads also held similar views and said



that they also faced with many problems in the health and education areas. They asked the government to assist them in resolving the problems they are struggling with. Acting Uruzgan governor Niamatullah Bakhtyar said that drought and planting bombs by the Taliban on highways were the main problems of nomads. The local administration has been trying to help nomads in resolving their problems, he added. Bakhtyar directed the provincial agriculture department to assist nomads by providing fodder to their livestock and other necessary conditions. Nomads in other provinces of the country have also been complaining about similar problems and demanding solution to them. (Pajhwok)

Mortar Shells Land on Khirqa Shrine Campus, No Casualties Reported

KANDAHAR - Two mortar shells have struck the campus of Khirqa Shrine in southern Kandahar province resulting in no casualties, officials said Monday. Local people said that the incident took place today morning. The shrine guard, Masood Akhundzada told Pajhwok Afghan News that one mortar shell landed in the campus of the shrine and another on a nearby tree. He said that no one was hurt in



the incident. It is unclear who fired the mortar shells but police security officials said they have launched an investigation into the incident. (Pajhwok)

IED Explosion Kills One Security Force Member: Kabul Police

KABUL - At least five security force members were killed and wounded in an explosion in the Qarabagh district of Kabul province, Police reported. Ferdaws Faramarz, a spokesman for Kabul Police HQ said the incident happened at around 7:00 am on Monday morning in the Sabz-sang area of Qarabagh district. The blast has reportedly targeted a security vehicle patrolling the area, Faramarz said. According to Faramarz, one security force member was killed and fourth



others were wounded in the incident. He also indicated that police in the area also discovered and defused planted mines, preventing other blasts from happening. (Khaama Press)

Outlook Horoscope

Aries (Mar. 22-Apr.20)

Apr 6, 2021 - Don't feel like you have to rationalize everything, Aries. Accept the fact that there are some things in life that occur without a specific logical explanation. More than likely these are the most interesting events and experiences that add the most spice to your routine existence. Embrace the unknown and encourage more spontaneity and playfulness in your world.

Taurus (Apr.21-May 20)

Apr 6, 2021 - In order to reach your destination, you may have to take an unusual route today, Taurus. Zigzag your way to the finish line. Don't automatically assume that this is a bad thing. You may find that this is the preferred path. You're likely to experience many side adventures and make some wonderful discoveries. Try to remember how you got there so you can find these spots again.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Apr 6, 2021 - Get out of the doldrums and enjoy life, Gemini. The situation is such that if you remain stagnant for a little while, you will soon sink into a spiral of depression and downward thinking. If you stay afloat and focused on your dreams, you will remain active in your pursuit of all your life's goals. You will have the power of the Universe behind you, supporting you all the way.

Cancer (June 21-July 20)

Apr 6, 2021 - This morning is your time to shine, Cancer. You should be in a good mood, with a positive outlook that helps you attack the day's tasks with vitality. Elements of the unexpected may pop up and remind you that things don't always go according to plan. This should be fine, however. You will find that your easygoing approach to life will come in handy when the scheduled route doesn't work.

Leo (July 21-Aug. 21)

Apr 6, 2021 - You may get a bit frustrated in the morning because of a lack of commitment on the part of others, Leo. You may find it hard to pin down an answer when everything seems to be up in the air. The good news is that things should run much more smoothly by this evening and well into tonight. Note a major boost in emotional self-confidence now. After dark is definitely your time to shine.

Virgo (Aug. 22-Sep 22)

Apr 6, 2021 - The energy you put out today will most definitely fuel the fire, Virgo, so make sure you have an extinguisher within reach. There's a spark of excitement in the air indicating that something new and different is coming around the bend. You may feel anxiety building up. Be patient and you will find that good things naturally come your way.

Libra (Sep 23-Oct. 22)

Apr 6, 2021 - You may feel indecisive today, Libra, especially in the morning. Other people's actions may confuse you. Don't worry. Concentrate on your projects and goals. Other people can take care of themselves. Don't feel like you need to make sure everyone is attended to before you start your day. In fact, you may be the one who needs to be cared for by others. Ask for a shoulder to lean on if you need it.

Scorpio (Oct.23-Nov.22)

Apr 6, 2021 - Emotionally, you should be feeling quite good today, Scorpio. This is important since you may get thrown off balance by a strange, unexpected force. The more stable you are on the inside, the less disruption this foreign energy will cause. Keep in mind that unexpected things usually happen for a reason. There might be a key opportunity waiting for you now.

Sagittarius (Nov.23-Dec.20)

Apr 6, 2021 - Free your mind and consider alternative options, Sagittarius. This is a time to throw away the old to make room for the new. There's a distinct advance in original and forward thinking today. You should make it a point to go to higher levels of thought now. The more idealistic in your approach to people and situations, the better off you will be.

Capricorn (Dec.21-Jan19)

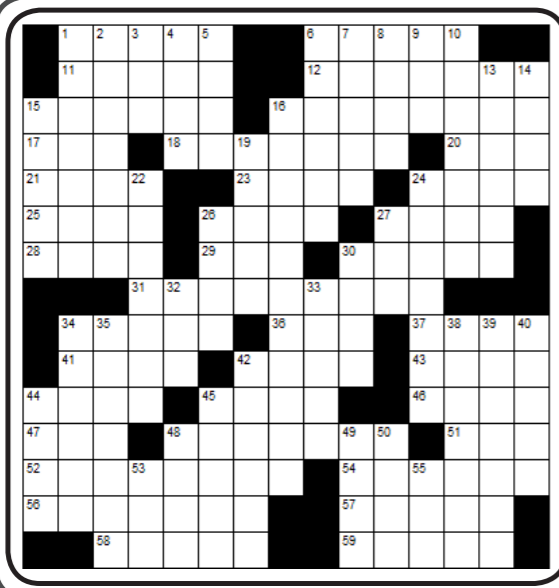
Apr 6, 2021 - You might find your energy comes in strong, erratic bursts today, Capricorn. Don't be surprised if you're high as a kite one moment and down in the dumps the next. Even if you're driving everyone crazy with your yo-yo behavior, don't let this stop you from keeping on in this fashion. You're probably able to keep very good track of the dozens of things going on around you.

Aquarius (Jan 20-Feb.18)

Apr 6, 2021 - You may feel a tendency to do things the same old way today simply because it's what feels most comfortable, Aquarius. Even though the familiar route may be tempting now, it's actually better if you seek a different way to go. Things may feel chaotic, especially in the morning and early afternoon. Still, don't automatically resist things that are new and different.

Pisces (Feb.19-Mar.20)

Apr 6, 2021 - An extra log has been thrown on your fire today, Pisces, so don't be surprised if you burn especially hot. Use your internal furnace to make some breakthroughs and bring matters to a higher level. Turn up the intensity on certain issues that require more life. You will bring a great deal of positive energy to just about everything you touch, so use it wisely.



Across

- Open, as a jacket, 6. Fragrant oil, 11. Nigerian monetary unit, 12. Philosophy of duality, 15. Objective, 16. Milieu, 17. Mistake, 18. Ancient timepiece, 20. Petrol, 21. Nanny, 23. Paddles, 24. L L L L, 25. Bristle, 26. Fully developed, 27. Tall woody plant, 28. Biblical garden, 29. Eastern Standard Time, 30. Weight loss plans, 31. Expectation of failure, 34. Thaws, 36. Little bit, 37. Frosts, 41. Type of sword, 42. Large luxurious car, 43. Anagram of "Note", 44. Gave money, 45. A rigid circular band, 46. Feudal worker, 47. It comes from a hen, 48. Dispute, 51. Not bottom, 52. Domestic, 54. Close, 56. Gallivant, 57. Artist's workstand, 58. Cheapskate, 59. Cetacean mammal

Down

- Without a weapon, 2. Provide commentary, 3. ___-zag, 4. Angers, 5. A Maori club, 6. Revere, 7. Bass horns, 8. A dog wags one, 9. Beer, 10. Curl, 13. Balances, 14. Untidiness, 15. Make fun of, 16. Alterations, 19. Clamor, 22. Managed, 24. A Christian recluse, 26. Umpires, 27. "___ the season to be jolly", 30. Prank, 32. French for "Summer", 33. Presses down, 34. Scanty, 35. A witty saying, 38. An earthenware flask, 39. Dignify, 40. Leaky, 42. Hang around, 44. Annoyance, 45. A German medieval guild, 48. Openings, 49. Again, 50. "Sure", 53. 7 in Roman numerals, 55. An Old Testament king

Yesterday's Solution

ALICE BLOOM SLUT
NAME RIDER TIME
ASPS ALIWA AIDE
LEACH TRADITION
UNSNAR FLOW
MEAT LOAF EYRIE
BIT SPOOK INN
OGLIE PRESAGE
HEARTY EVELINDS
TAROT SWAN
CANTONIA SMART
HERE ADAIR ETTUI
ORAL DERAY DOER
POPE RAIARE ARSE

aliens allegiance attraction
claim close evening
finest fought gamble glis-
ten hallucination hunger
insight knowledge land
lawyer lice manner
means media minute
most mutiny nail notice
pens public request

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

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



Formidable Political Challenges Continue

The ongoing challenges in Afghanistan bespeak of political syndrome. The mounting militancy, corruption and narcotic are highly toxic to social, political and economic issues and foment trouble across the country.

In 2015, Afghanistan was reported to be the world's third largest opium producer after Myanmar and Laos and produced some 90 per cent of world's illicit opiates. At the same time, an Afghan official said that Mafia and terrorist groups were annually receiving \$70 billion from narcotics in this country and Pakistani Taliban were the beneficiary of \$2 billion. However, Afghanistan still does not seem to have mitigated the challenges of the narcotic drug and failed in this respect. It is believed to be still in the first to third rank.

In the same year, the US-based non-profit association World Justice Project (WJP) released that Afghanistan was ranked the second-worst country in rule of law after Venezuela from 102 countries. But has it changed for better? If you ask an Afghan citizen, the answer will be a big "No". It is an incontrovertible fact that the Mafia and the Taliban militants gain great financial supports from poppy cultivation, production and smuggling of narcotics. They muddy the water through fomenting racial tensions, abduction, violence and bloodshed to divert the government's attention from anti-narcotic campaigns. In other words, the illicit drugs, which are cultivated in our own land and used against our own people, play a key role in the militants' political life.

The irony is that drugs save life – as the Taliban and Mafia are nourished to continue their political and economic existence. The result of the drug production for the Afghans' sworn enemy is a matter of great concern. It is really painful to think that a large number of people live under poverty line; however the militants use our land in their own interests besides playing a destructive role in the society.

On the other hand, since men's natural and inalienable rights and dignity are trampled upon to a large extent, it will not be a surprise to hear that Afghanistan is the second-worst country in rule of law. It is simply said that might makes right – the very fact is going in our society. Constitutionally, all citizens are equal in the eye of law. As a result, the Constitution of Afghanistan states in article 22 as, "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law." But practically, the influential individuals are hardly prosecuted despite perpetrating crimes and corruptions.

Afghan high-ranking officials are not satisfied with the performance of the government since justice is also not being implemented and legal and judicial systems are corrupt.

In the political and social wheeling and dealing, moral values are in the state of moribund and one is hardly found to listen to the call of their conscience. As a result, both the ideologue and mercenary militants are widely involved in shedding the blood of the innocent individuals on the grounds of exercising their ideology or being paid to do so. The members of Mafia suck the people's blood and ultimately the judicial and administrative systems are deep in the quagmire of corruptions. In such hustle and bustle, the ordinary people are the sacrificial lambs who suffer mentally and physically.

To counter terrorism and Mafia, it will be highly effective to debilitate them financially. Since narcotic is a strong financial source for the members of Taliban and Mafia, the role of counter-narcotic organs is paramount in this regard. Moreover, a strong determination is needed for eradication of narcotic drugs to paralyze the militants and the mercenary fighters. In another item, the failure in counter-terrorism is strongly linked to failure in counter-narcotic strategy. Campaigning against poppy cultivation for more than a decade, Afghanistan still remains on the world's top list of opiate producer - producing some 90 per cent of world's illicit opiates. So, the parallel move of militancy and narcotic reveals this direct link and it must have been realized by the officials long ago. I believe that narcotic is the backbone of the militants and as far as it is on rise, they will not be defeated. Meanwhile, the Taliban are also collecting a large amount of money on day-to-day basis from drivers in their checkpoints installed on highways. Taliban are seeking concessions at the negotiating table because they are collecting money from narcotic drug and drivers on highways. Hence, if their source of income is not dismantled, they will continue to resist and bargain for higher price at the table.



Rising violence on the eve of the Turkey Peace Conference

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

On the eve of peace Conference in Turkey, once again the war and violence have intensified across the country. In recent days, both the government forces and the Taliban claimed that they inflicted heavy casualties on the other side. Based on latest media reports quoted from Ministry of Defense, more than 100 insurgent fighters were killed and a large number of them were injured within one day in an operation across several provinces. It is also added that Afghan army commanders have also evicted the Taliban from Arghandab district in the southern Kandahar province; months after the insurgents had overrun it.

On the other side, the Taliban have also increased movements and violence attacking different parts of the country such as Herat, Ghor, Ghazni, Helmand, and Kabul districts by killing, injuring and arresting dozens of security forces.

In response to the recent casualties, the Taliban warned of possible retaliation which raised fears of more bloodshed in days ahead. Within last two days successive attacks were carried out on the Kabul districts such as Qarabagh and Paghman with leaving dozens of killings and injuries.

Based on media news, the Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said a group of insurgents staged "tactical attacks" on the convoy following the car bombing and "killed/wounded up to 45" Afghan forces, though insurgents often release inflated casualty tolls for such attacks. If we compare the rising violence of this period, which is considered as a new phase of peace process, with the time when the US-Taliban peace talks were just started, and then the Qatar peace talks began, all these phases seem similar as all of them were started with rising of violence.

Although all this process had created much optimism among the people and politicians about the peace process, these hopes and optimism have always been destroyed. In fact, the acceleration of the peace process had always been accelerated with terrorist attacks and mourning of Afghan people. In accordance with the past experience, there is a link between peace agreement and escalation of violence in the country; in the past, it was said that Taliban increase violence to obtain more political advantages at the negotiating table while inversely promised to reduce violence in the country.

With these tactics and violence, they have not only proved their dishonesty about the peace process in the country but also disappointed people. If the Taliban truly wants to end the conflicts in the country, they should prove their good-will through ceasefire or meaningful violence reduction. Otherwise, the renewed violence does not bode well for a proposed peace conference to be held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Anyway, the main question is why the violence is inversely increased on the eve of the peace process. Besides the usual reason such as get-

ting more advantage in the peace table, there seem some major barriers. As a first barrier, it seems that we have never fundamentally discussed the root cause of war and violence in the country and so the enemy shows their disagreement about peace with the rising of violence in the country. Undoubtedly, those who support terrorism undertaking huge expenses might have some concerns which must be tackled and ended. They must receive a clear message of peace and brotherhood from the people of Afghanistan. They should realize the good intention of Afghan people about all neighboring countries and accordingly, put an end to their intervention in the country. If they stop supporting terrorism, the ordinary people of Afghanistan have no motivation to kill civilians, women, and children. They must have understood that a safe and secure Afghanistan will lead to economic development in all neighboring countries while an insecure Afghanistan will need to presence of foreign troops which is not good in the taste of neighboring countries.

Secondly, the inflexibility of Taliban is also linked to their overconfidence. Unfortunately, the Taliban have the least information about the modern generation of Afghanistan and not aware that the physical violence produces an inverse outcome. Instead of attacking the heart of cities and districts, the Taliban need to occupy the heart of people with messages of peace, brotherhood and advancement of the country. The Taliban should look at the new generation by looking at the number of schools, universities, academic activities, students and participation of men and women in social and economic arenas. The language of the new generation is the language of science, meritocracy and brotherhood, not violence. They will prefer no value other than peace, stability, Islamic brotherhood, and a democratic system in the country. Therefore, the Taliban and their supporters need to get more familiar with the social and cultural facts of current Afghanistan. Last but not least, poverty is the root cause of most problems in Afghanistan. Most of the insurgent fighters have joined the terrorist groups because of illiteracy, injustice, and poverty. Based on political theories, no political development are achievable without a level of economic growth. Unfortunately, we failed to reduce of poverty and unemployment in the country. We must accept that the economic condition of the country is really terrible. In 2016, Afghanistan ranked 169th out of 188 countries with 54.5% of the population below the poverty line but based on the latest report released by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the level of poverty has increased to 72% in late 2020. Unfortunately, the poor management of the free market and lack of a clear economic strategy have further pressurized the people. Therefore, fighting against poverty is not less important than fighting against terrorism.

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A Decarbonization Roadmap

By: Katherine Dixon

Our climate challenge is an energy challenge. But solving our energy challenge requires action that goes well beyond power generation.

Solar and wind have revolutionized our energy system. But with the power sector currently supplying only 20% of our energy, simply producing more green electricity cannot get us to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by mid-century.

Nor will converting renewable power into large-scale supplies of green hydrogen be a silver bullet.

Our ships, planes, and trains are not configured for it, and the economic incentives are not yet moving in the right direction.

Our energy challenge is also an energy demand problem.

Achieving our collective climate ambitions requires rapid and deep transitions in each of the sectors that contribute to global energy demand, including not only power, but also transport, manufacturing, steel, and chemicals.

Getting these transitions on track at the required pace implies the complete transformation of our energy infrastructure. To that end, three priorities in particular will be crucial.

First, we need to accelerate the pace of innovation. Recent analysis by the International Energy Agency shows that nearly half of the emission reductions needed to reach net zero by 2050 may have to come from technologies that aren't yet on the market.

Clean-energy technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars, light-emitting diodes, and lithium-ion batteries have made it possible for us to envision a net-zero world in the coming decades. But we need giant leaps in innovation in other clean technologies – some of which are still in the lab – to get us all the way there.

This is especially urgent in sectors like steel, cement, chemicals, shipping, and aviation, where emissions are the hardest to reduce and technological solutions are lagging.

The second priority is closer collaboration between government and industry.

The private sector is an unparalleled engine of change. It's where the lion's share of inventors, entrepreneurs, and investors are, and their contributions will be crucial if the world is to devise and deploy green technologies at the rate required.

At the same time, government action is essential to unleash the full power of business.

Left to their own devices, markets won't bring about the rapid transformation of our global energy system that we need.

In many sectors, businesses need strong government policy to enable

lower-carbon technologies to flourish.

They need government to support early innovation in new technologies, create niche markets that allow them to develop, and then implement effective policies that enable their diffusion – sector by sector.

Lastly, we need greatly enhanced international coordination. In a global system centered on national action, orchestrating the kind of systemic change required in many energy-consuming sectors is a major challenge.

National approaches can be highly effective in some areas, especially where governments can pursue decisive policies without hurting domestic producers in sectors like power.

But a rigid national approach works less well in internationally traded industries, and particularly in harder-to-abate sectors. Here, coordinated cross-border action is essential to drive the rapid adoption of new technologies.

Multilateral institutions have a critical role to play in all these areas.

The IEA facilitates collaboration on key energy transition technologies – an effort that involves more than 6,000 experts worldwide, representing nearly 300 public and private organizations located in 55 countries, including many from IEA association countries such as China, India, and Brazil.

But with an ever-growing consensus on the need to move toward net-zero emissions, we can and should do more.

Later this year, the IEA will set out the first comprehensive roadmap for the global energy sector, spanning power, transport, industry, and buildings – each of which we need to transform in order to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

By setting out exactly what is needed in each sector, and when, the plan will enable governments and firms to benchmark their progress, making it clear where greater focus is needed.

The next step is turning plans into action.

That is why the IEA recently formed a strategic partnership with Mission Possible, a global coalition of more than 400 companies seeking to accelerate the large-scale decarbonization of heavy industry and transport.

Our support for this initiative also reflects the IEA's new focus on bringing together the private sector and governments from the world's major economies – which must play the coordinating role that only they can.

By focusing on innovation, collaboration, and bold policies, initiatives like these can help the world to meet the climate challenge.

Katherine Dixon is Chief Counselor of Transitions and Partnerships at the International Energy Agency.



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Myanmar Protesters Defy Military as Regional Nations Prepare to Discuss Crisis



Demonstrators in Myanmar held protests demanding the restoration of Aung San Suu Kyi's government on Monday and called for more coordinated nationwide dissent against the military junta, as regional nations

prepared for talks on the crisis. Six people were killed at the weekend, according to activists, as police and soldiers forcefully broke up demonstrations that some protesters are calling a "spring revolution".

At least 564 people, including 47 children, have been killed by security forces during protests against the Feb. 1 coup, an activist group has said. The movement has included street marches, a civil disobedience

campaign of strikes and quirky acts of rebellion organised on social media. Activists called for a nationwide clap later on Monday in appreciation of those ethnic minority armed groups that have been supporting the democratic cause, and young demonstrators who have been at the vanguard of protests, trying to shield or rescue people wounded by security forces. "Let's clap for five minutes on April 5 5 p.m. (1030 GMT) to honour Ethnic Armed Organisations and Gen Z defence youths from Myanmar including Yangon who are fighting in the revolution... on behalf of us," Ei Thinzar Maung, a protest leader, posted on Facebook.

The Karen National Union, which signed a ceasefire in 2012, has suffered the first military air strikes on its forces in more than 20 years, resulting in thousands of refugees pouring into Thailand. Fighting has also raged between the army and ethnic Kachin insurgents in the north. (Reuters)

India's Daily Virus Cases Breach 100,000; Mutants, Behaviour Blamed

NEW DELHI-India reported a record rise in COVID-19 infections on Monday, becoming the second country after the United States to post more than 100,000 new cases in a day, as politicians stage massive election rallies raising fears of further spreading the virus.

Hospitals in the worst affected state, Maharashtra, are being overrun by patients. India's richest state, home to its commercial capital Mumbai and numerous industries, reported a record 57,074 new cases overnight.

The country's daily infections have risen about 12 fold since hitting a multi-month low in early February, when authorities eased most restrictions and people largely stopped wearing masks and following social distancing.

With 103,558 new infections, India has now reported 12.6 million cases, the highest after the United States and Brazil, data from the health ministry showed. Deaths jumped by 478, still one of the lowest fatality rates in the world, raising the total to 165,101. India has recorded the most number of infections in the past week anywhere in the world. More infectious variants of the virus may have played a role in the second surge, some epidemiologists say.

"The new variant, or variants of concern, probably explains a lot of it, rather than simplistic explanation of behaviour," said Rajib Dasgupta, head of the Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. (Reuters)

(1) MPs Warn...

development projects. They may want to transfer money [outside Afghanistan].

The Ministry of Finance, however, stated that the organization has faced a budget deficit.

"We have faced a deficit in the budget; therefore, an official letter has been issued [to the ministries] to create a financial discipline and prioritize national projects and effectively use the national budget," said Rafi Tabe head of Finance Ministry's media office. (ATN)

(2) Commercial Farming...

not executed wisely. If they had been, it would have raised the farmers' and garden owners' income and it could have standardized farming in the country," said Mumtaz Karokhail, a member of the Paktia provincial council.

Commercial farming is considered the means to improve the export of fresh and dry fruits in the country.

Each commercial farm lies on nearly 4 hectares of land.

The commercial farms yield 10 times more than the conventional farms, said officials in the Agriculture Ministry.

"More than a thousand gardens have been grown across the country, which includes gardens of pomegranate, pistachio, and other fruits," said Agriculture Ministry spokesman Akbar Rustami.

Experts say that international customers are interested in Afghanistan's fresh and dry fruits, therefore the Afghan private sector intends to invest billions of dollars in establishing commercial farms in the country.

"The government should put more effort into developing and growing more commercial farms, as it can change people's lives in villages," said Agriculture Ministry spokesman Akbar Rustami.

As more than 50% of the Afghanistan population work in agriculture, this sector plays a significant role in the development of the country's economy. (TOLO NEWS)

(3) Taliban Suffer...

district which delayed the return of the displaced people to their homes. Despite peace efforts war in Afghanistan has raged and violence intensified between the government troops and the extremist groups. (Khaama Press)

(4) 62 New Cases...

the ministry shows that so far, 86,359 people in the country have got the initial shot of the coronavirus vaccine.

The number of deaths from COVID-19 globally is more than 2,867,108 and the number of known global coronavirus cases is 131,965,633, according to Johns Hopkins University. (TOLO NEWS)

(5) Kabul Women's...

Women's Football League competition, the teams in the provinces will also compete in a tournament and top teams will play in the Afghanistan Women's Premier League. (TOLO NEWS)

(6) Bangladesh Offers...

leadership of Sheikh Hasina and termed Bangladesh's development a 'role model for all'.

The ambassador thanked the prime minister for extending cooperation to Afghan embassy in Bangladesh.

Regarding trade and business between the two countries, he said there was enough scope to enhance that, particularly in the private sector.

He urged the prime minister to reopen Bangladesh's embassy in Afghanistan. Principal secretary Ahmad Kaikas was present on the occasion. (Agencies)

(7) Zarif, Uzbek FM...

legal and international forums were other topics discussed by the foreign ministers of Iran and Uzbekistan.

Iranian foreign minister is also scheduled to meet with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev this afternoon.

Zarif is also scheduled to travel to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to meet with officials of these countries. Developing relations with Central Asia, a region of civilizational, historical and cultural commonalities, has always been one of Iran's top priorities.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh announced Zarif's visit to four Central Asian countries and tweeted that Foreign Minister Zarif is scheduled to visit four Central Asian countries from April 5 to 8 including Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and his visit will focus on bilateral and regional cooperation. (MNA)

(8) Afghan Violence...

statement said the Taliban "orders the (insurgent) commission for military affairs to take all necessary steps to defend itself and the local population if these operations (by Kabul) are not immediately suspended."

The statement confirmed that Afghan forces had conducted airstrikes in Arghandab in recent days, but it did not say whether the group had lost control of the district to Kabul.

Turkey conference

The renewed violence, analysts say, does not bode well for a proposed peace conference to be held in Istanbul, Turkey.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government has confirmed it will attend the peace conference, which will be held under the auspices of the United Nations.

An Afghan official told VOA on condition of anonymity Sunday that the conference will begin April 16 and will last 10 days.

Skepticism

Critics are skeptical about whether the proposed conference in Turkey would help jump-start the stalled Afghan peace process. It also is not clear whether the Taliban would be willing to negotiate with Washington an extension of the May 1 troop withdrawal deadline. The insurgents have repeatedly urged the U.S. to abide by the deadline.

"While Afghan political groupings in Kabul are expected to consult and seek consensus on a joint political roadmap that is practical ahead of the Istanbul conference, Ghani's proposal will not only dilute a unified Kabul stance and divide opinions but will also face opposition from the Taliban and provoke a return to full-scale fighting," said Omar Samad, a former Afghan diplomat.

Torek Farhadi, a former Afghan adviser and political commentator, hailed the conference in Turkey as another opportunity the international community has created for Afghans to find peace among themselves and reach an agreement.

"The agreement will have international U.N. level guarantees, but such guarantees are difficult to enforce once foreign forces leave," Farhadi said.

"If Afghans, including the Taliban, fail to agree with each other as has been the case in the past 30 years, an enduring agreement in Istanbul, which can withstand the test of time is a miracle," he said. "But one has to hope for it." (VOA)

(9) SIGAR: Narcotics...

officials said the group has been involved in the illicit business.

The watchdog says that Afghanistan is

the world's largest producer of opium and the source of more than 90 percent of the world's heroin.

Since 2001, the United States has allocated more than \$8 billion to fight opium production and trafficking in Afghanistan, the report says.

Quoting US Department of Defense officials, the report says that a small portion of the overall US counter-narcotics funding has gone to counter threat finance (CTF) efforts directed at the Afghan terrorist narcotics trade. (TOLO NEWS)

(10) Loya Paktia Youths...

don't pay serious attention to education, the governor's offices and all institutions will be closed," he said. He asked UNICEF, which is responsible for working on children's education, to send a delegation to Khost to address the issue (Pajhwok)

(11) Gardez Municipality...

added his client provided video and other related documents.

Eng. Sifatullah was currently in the custody of a joint delegation of the AGO. Sayed Anbar Pacha, head of the appellant prosecutor office, confirmed the report that an employee of Gardez municipality had been arrested and under investigation.

However, residents of Paktia are complaining about the corruption in engineering and property departments of Gardez municipality. (Pajhwok)

(12) 6.9m Afs Distributed...

belonged to police officers who were either killed or wounded in Samangan province in the battlefield but they originated from different provinces. (Pajhwok)

(13) What to Expect...

now, especially since the talks would not be possible without a green light from the supreme leader.

"But if the negotiations don't yield results expected by the Iranian side, conservatives - who are highly motivated close to the elections - will be further emboldened, and then there's no telling what they might do to stop negotiations progressing," he said.

"So, the window of opportunity is very limited for all sides." (Aljazeera)

(14) Saudi Arabia's...

territory with drones.

However, Houthi rebels are well aware of their current position and leverage. As it stands, Saudi Arabia and its allies could potentially be forced to withdraw without the Houthis having to make any concessions.

Hence, their initial rejection of the proposal did not come as a surprise, particularly as it offered "nothing new". The latter is an accurate statement, according to Steven Hurst, department head of history, politics and philosophy at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

The peace plan they have put forward now is a revised version of one they advanced in 2020 rather than anything new," said Hurst.

Nonetheless, the Houthis' chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdulsalam, stated his willingness for further talks with Riyadh, Washington, and Muscat to facilitate a peace agreement. (Aljazeera)

(15) UK Eyes Mass...

debated around the world, raising questions about how much governments, employers, venues and other places have a right to know about a person's virus status. The idea is opposed by a wide swath of British lawmakers, from left-of-center opposition politicians to

members of Johnson's Conservative Party.

Conservative legislator Graham Brady said vaccine passports would be "intrusive, costly and unnecessary." The leader of the opposition Labour Party, Keir Starmer, called the idea "un-British."

The government plans a series of trial mass events in April and May, including soccer matches, comedy shows and marathon runs, to see whether large crowds can return to sports and entertainment venues. Those attending will be tested for the virus both before and after, but the government has said the events won't initially involve vaccine passports. (AP)

(16) Border Woes...

enough.

Others feel he's already gone too far. "My concern is that President Biden has allowed the world to feel it's OK to just come on in," said Matthew Behrs, a Trump supporter in Wisconsin.

The poll shows many Americans rank some of the major goals of the Democratic proposal as moderate priorities instead of high ones, suggesting Biden lacks a clear mandate for how best to proceed on the issue, potentially hurting his leverage with Congress.

And many want to see efforts to step up enforcement be part of the conversation: For 53%, increasing security at the border is a high priority. Some 47% of Americans also say the federal government should make strengthening policies to prevent immigrants from overstaying their visas a high priority. Fewer, roughly a third, say penalizing companies that hire immigrants living in the U.S. illegally and deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be high priorities.

The poll also finds Americans are more likely to favor than oppose providing a way for immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children to stay legally, 53% to 24%, with 22% saying they are neither in favor nor opposed.

Still, just 41% call extending legal protections to so-called Dreamers a high priority. A plan approved by the House but awaiting Senate action seeks to do just that.

Biden has now assigned Vice President Kamala Harris to work with Central American countries to try to address the root causes of illegal immigration. Henes, the retiree, suggested that Biden has given the problem to Harris as a way of buying himself some time - but that it hasn't helped.

"They're still in the huddle," Henes said.

"They're not ready to call a play." (AP)

(17) Israel: PM Netanyahu...

Bennett, a right-wing former ally with whom he has strained ties and Mansour Abbas, leader of a small party the United Arab List, who also has yet to commit to either the pro- or anti-Netanyahu blocs.

Netanyahu passed Israel's founding father David Ben Gurion in 2019 as the country's longest-serving prime minister, having held office continuously since 2009 and for several years in the 1990s. (Aljazeera)

(18) Trial in Floyd's...

nized Floyd was in trouble and tried to offer help. Instead, Officer Tou Thao ordered her to stay on the sidewalk. Hansen, who was mostly stoic while testifying, was overcome as she recalled her frustration.

"There was a man being killed," she said. "I would have been able to provide medical attention to the best of my abilities.

And this human was denied that right." (AP)

(19) Biden's Big...

on the Democratic president more than a decade ago. Then and now Republicans are intent on saddling Democrats with responsibility for all the taxes and spending to come, much as they did the 2009 rescue after the economic crisis, framing it as government overreach that piles on debt.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell set the defining tone for his party when he flatly declared last week he will fight Biden's agenda "every step of the way."

But it's not at all certain the GOP playbook that worked more than a decade ago will produce the same political gains this time around. Voters appear tired of the partisan stalemate in Washington, live amid the country's run-down spots and signal they are initially supportive of Biden's approach to governing, at least on the virus aid package.

Recent polling by The Associated Press-NORC Public Research Center found Americans have responded favorably to the president's approach, with 73% approving of his handling of the pandemic. That includes about half of Republicans.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has set in motion a potential process that would allow Biden's package to advance without the typical 60-vote threshold needed to overcome a filibuster by Republicans. Instead, it could be approved with a simple 51-vote majority. Pelosi has set a July 4 goal for House votes, but acknowledges that ambitious timeline may slip. "The sooner we can get the legislation done, the sooner we can allocate the resources," she said.

The goal, she said, was "to get the job done as soon as possible." (AP)

(20) Jordanian Prince...

of accusing him of planning to topple the king - which was speculated by some to be the reason for his arrest - and indicated that it intends to resolve the situation internally.

In a video statement released by Prince Hamzah on Sunday via satellite phone, he denied accusations against him and said he had been targeted by Jordanian security for mild criticisms of the country's policies. "Unfortunately, this country has gone from one that was at the forefront of the region in terms of education and healthcare, in terms of human dignity and freedoms, to one in which even to criticize a small aspect of a policy leads to arrest and abuse by the security services," he said. (RT)

(21) Turkey Arrests...

inland Sea of Marmara in between. Turkish authorities reacted to the letter with anger, saying it invoked the numerous military coups the country has experienced in modern history and is thus a threat to the civilian government. Concerns about the Montreux Convention were expressed in a similar open letter last year by retired Turkish diplomats. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said at the time that the canal project will not compromise the treaty. (RT)

(22) Woman's Body...

tragic incident in the carpark outside Stockland Burleigh Heads and continue to assist police with their investigation," the mall's spokeswoman said as cited by news.com.au.

The woman was in her 30s, according to local media reports, but authorities have yet to officially identify the victim and prepare an autopsy report. (RT)

What to Expect as Iran and World Powers Head for Nuclear Talks

Tehran- Representatives of the world powers that signed a 2015 nuclear deal are headed to Vienna on Tuesday to save the landmark accord, but the path forward appears long and arduous. News on Friday that remaining members of the accord – Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom – will hold in-person talks was greeted as a welcome development to avoid a total breakdown. In a late-night Clubhouse voice chat, Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi said last week the "deadlock is being broken" on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as a "childish" argument over who should act first comes to an end. Representatives from Iran and the United States, however, will not be in the same room together in Vienna, as Iran insists there will be no direct or indirect talks between the two coun-



tries before the US lifts the harsh sanctions former President Donald Trump imposed after unilaterally abandoning the deal in 2018.

A year later, Iran started scaling back its commitments under the deal in response as the US continued its "maximum pressure" campaign despite op-

position by the other signatories. 'Rapid sanction-lifting' Sina Azodi, a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council, said both Iran and the US have recently shown the political will to restore the accord. But while Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet on Friday that the JCPOA signatories would direct their focus to "rapidly finalise sanction-lifting" in Vienna, that may be easier said than done. "The issue here is that Iran's actions to violate the deal are reversible, whereas for the US, it will be more difficult because of Trump administration's scorched-earth policy to destroy JCPOA as much possible, and the complicated web of sanctions," Azodi told Al Jazeera. The Center for Strategic Studies' Hosseini said he finds it unlikely Parliament will want to stop negotiations ... (More on P4)... (13)

Saudi Arabia's Scramble for an Exit Strategy in Yemen



The Saudi Arabia-led alliance's military intervention in Yemen has not only failed in its objective to rout the Houthis rebels, but the kingdom finds itself in a position in which it might be forced to capitulate. Saudi Arabia has failed its primary objectives of defeating the Houthis and restabilising the internationally recognised government in

Yemen.

"The Houthis have proven to be a formidable fighting force. Saudi Arabia does not have a comparable ground game that can match their adversaries," Nader Hashemi, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver, told Al Jazeera. This reality is far from what Saudi Arabia had initially anticipated

when it entered into the war via Operation Decisive Storm in March 2015.

"Saudi Arabia thought it would win this war via a bombing campaign, and it would all be over in a few weeks. We have now entered the seventh year of this war with no clear end in sight," Hashemi said.

In fact, the Houthis have been on the advance ever since, and Saudi Arabia is in a position where it is implausible to become the war's victor. The Houthis control the capital Sanaa and large parts of Yemen's northwest.

The city of Marib, which is of pivotal strategic importance as it functions as the country's oil and gas production hub and possesses crucial infrastructure, is also constantly under attack.

Besides these territorial gains, the Houthis have also repeatedly shown they can attack infrastructure in Saudi ... (More on P4)... (14)

UK Eyes Mass Testing as it Takes Next Steps Out of Lockdown

LONDON- All adults and children in England will be able to have routine coronavirus tests twice a week as a way to stamp out new outbreaks, the British government said Monday as it prepared to announce the next steps in lifting the nation's months-long lockdown.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said regularly testing people who don't have COVID-19 symptoms would help "stop outbreaks in their tracks, so we can get back to seeing the people we love and doing the things we enjoy."

The government said

free lateral flow tests will be available free starting Friday by mail, from pharmacies and in workplaces. Lateral flow tests give results in minutes but are less accurate than the PCR swab tests used to officially confirm cases of COVID-19.

The government insists they are reliable. Health Minister Edward Argar said the tests produced a false positive rate – showing someone has the virus when they don't – in less than 1 in every 1,000 tests. The issue of vaccine passports has been hotly ... (More on P4)... (15)

Border Woes Dent Biden Approval on Immigration

WASHINGTON- More Americans disapprove than approve of how President Joe Biden is handling waves of unaccompanied migrant children arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border, and approval of his efforts on larger immigration policy falls short of other top issues – suggesting it could be a weak point for the new administration. A new poll by The Associated Press-NORC shows that solving the problem of young people at the border is among Americans' highest immigration priorities: 59% say

providing safe treatment of unaccompanied children when they are apprehended should be a high priority, and 65% say the same about reuniting families separated at the border.

While awaiting the larger legislative package, the Democratic-controlled House has passed smaller-scale reforms that face uncertain futures in a Senate split 50-50. Biden also has used executive actions to attempt to roll back many Trump administration immigration policies but has been criticized for failing to do enough fast priorities: 59% say ... (More on P4)... (16)

Trial in Floyd's Death Expected to Turn to Ex-Cop's Training

MINNEAPOLIS- The trial of a former Minneapolis police officer in George Floyd's death is expected to turn toward the officer's training on Monday after a first week that was dominated by emotional testimony from eyewitnesses and devastating video of Floyd's arrest.

Derek Chauvin, 45, is charged with murder and manslaughter in the May 25 death of Floyd. Chauvin, who is white, is accused of pinning his knee on the 46-year-old Black man's neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds as Floyd lay face-down in handcuffs outside

of a corner market. Prosecutors say Chauvin's knee killed Floyd. The defense argues that Chauvin did what he was trained to do and that Floyd's use of drugs and underlying health conditions caused his death. Jurors heard several days of testimony from those bystanders, several choking up as they recalled feeling powerless to help Floyd and guilt over his death. Genevieve Hansen, an off-duty firefighter who came on the scene as she was out for a walk, said she immediately recognized ... (More on P4)... (18)

Biden's Big Infrastructure Plan Hits McConnell, GOP Blockade

WASHINGTON- Republicans in Congress are making the politically brazen bet that it's more advantageous to oppose President Joe Biden's ambitious rebuild America agenda than to lend support for the costly \$2.3 trillion undertaking for roads, bridges and other infrastructure investments.

Much the way Republicans provided no votes for the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, they plan to sit on the sidelines for this next big lift by the White House, forcing Democrats to take full ownership of the massive package of spending and corporate tax hikes that Biden wants ap-

proved over the summer. The tension could mount this week as Biden shows no signs adjusting to satisfy Republican leaders, instead appealing directly to their constituents for support.

"I think the Republicans' voters are going to have a lot to say about whether we get a lot of this done," Biden told reporters at the White House.

That leaves Biden and congressional Republicans on a collision course, the outcome of which could define the parties and his presidency. The GOP strategy is reminiscent of the Obama-era blockade that helped sour voters ... (More on P4)... (19)

Jordanian Prince Accused of Sedition Says He Won't Stay Silenced

An audio statement attributed to Jordan's Prince Hamzah, who was put under house arrest for allegedly conspiring against the royal family, says he will not stay silent – despite orders from the country's security forces.

Prince Hamzah, a former crown prince and half-brother to King Abdullah II, was detained on Saturday and reportedly placed incommunicado, with mobile phone and internet access cut at his residence. A recording of what appears to be his voice was leaked on Monday, indicating that his isolation may

not be airtight. "I am going to escalate, and won't obey when they tell you you cannot go out or tweet or reach out to people and are only allowed to see the family," he said in the recording, which was reportedly circulated to friends and contacts of the disgraced prince.

The royal scion was accused of plotting with foreign forces to undermine the security and stability of Jordan. He is among some 16 people who were arrested during an operation on Saturday. The government has stopped short ... (More on P4)... (20)

Bulgarian PM's Party Ahead in Vote Count, Early Results Show

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov's centre-right GERB party is set to win the most votes from Sunday's election, data from the central electoral commission showed on Monday, but it may struggle to muster a majority.

With 25.6 percent of votes after two-thirds of ballots were counted, Borissov, 61, who has dominated Bulgarian politics for more than a decade, will have the largest party in the next parliament.

But anger over corruption weighed on the campaign period, and he could find it hard to build a coalition. The new anti-establishment party, There Is Such a People, of popular TV host and singer Slavi Trifonov, was running second with 18.3 percent of votes, followed by the opposition Socialists with 14.9 percent, data showed.

Full official results are expected on Thursday.



A recent United States report on human rights also highlighted serious problems with judicial independence and media freedom in the country. President Rumen Radev, who supported last year's anti-

government protests and has been a vehement critic of Borissov, said he had "voted against the destruction of the rule of law." "These elections are a step towards returning to normality," he added. (Aljazeera)

Israel: PM Netanyahu Accused of 'Illegitimate Use' Of Power

Israeli prosecutors accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of treating favours as "currency" on Monday at the opening of a corruption trial which, along with an inconclusive election, has clouded his prospects of remaining in office. Wearing a black mask and dark suit, Netanyahu was seated in the Jerusalem District Court following an order from judges to appear in court to face charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Netanyahu, who denies all wrongdoing in the three cases against him, conferred quietly with lawyers as his supporters and critics held raucous demonstrations outside. He left before the first witness was called to testify.

Israel's longest-serving prime minister misused "the great governmental power entrusted to him, among other things, to demand and derive improper benefits from owners of key media in Israel in



order to advance his personal affairs – including when he faced his desire to be re-elected", prosecutor Liat Ben Ari said during opening arguments. He "made illegitimate use of the great governmental power entrusted to him", Ben Ari added.

"The relationship between Netanyahu and the defendants became currency, something that could be traded," she said. "The currency could distort a public servant's judgement." Netanyahu's fate could come down to Naftali ... (More on P4)... (17)

Woman's Body Found Inside CHARITY BIN Near Queensland Mall in Alleged 'Misadventure'

A woman in her 30s has been found dead inside a charity bin outside a shopping center in Gold Coast, Queensland, with police and paramedics treating the bizarre incident as "non-suspicious."

The body was discovered by a local resident inside a clothes donation drop-off box at a parking lot outside Stockland Burleigh Heads Shopping Centre around 7am on Monday. Police and paramedics were immediately called to the scene, but the woman was already dead at

that point. Although the incident seemed suspicious, the initial probe found no apparent foul play, and according to police, the death is now being treated as a tragic "misadventure."

It is unclear, however, how and when she became stuck inside. Queensland Fire and Emergency Service personnel had to use power tools to cut the bin open to get the body out, according to a video shared by a local reporter. "We are aware of a ... (More on P4)... (22)

Daily Outlook Weather Forecast

Kabul Partly cloudy 15°C 4°C	Bamiyan Mostly sunny 8°C -2°C	Herat Sunny 24°C 8°C	Mazar Sunny 20°C 11°C	Kandahar Cloudy 27°C 9°C	Ghazni Partly cloudy 16°C 2°C	Jalalabad Scattered showers 23°C 13°C
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Bangladesh Offers Help to Afghanistan for Peace, Progress

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday offered help to Afghanistan in their efforts for development, stressing that peace is a must for progress. 'Peace is a must for development,' she said when outgoing Afghan ambassador Abdul Qayoom Malikzad met her at her official residence Ganobhaban. PM's press secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting. She said non-government organisations like BRAC were working for the socio-economic development of Afghanistan.

The prime minister said the government has involved people so that their support can help to establish peace. She mentioned that the government was working to establish poverty- and hunger-free Bangladesh which was the dream of the country's founding president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Talking about coronavirus, she said the whole world was reeling under various problems caused by this menace. 'We've been fighting this menace.' She termed relations between Bangladesh and Afghanistan

wonderful as both the countries have been working together in many international forums. She also conveyed greetings to the Afghanistan president. Afghanistan ambassador Abdul Qayoom Malikzad congratulated the prime minister on the occasion of Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. Showing deep respect to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, he said the historic March 7 speech of Sheikh Mujib had been translated into their local language. He said the relations between the two countries had been strengthened under the...



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Zarif, Uzbek FM Confer on Afghan Peace, US Sanctions on Iran



TEHRAN - Iranian and Uzbek foreign ministers met and held talks on the bilateral ties, cooperation between the two countries on the Afghan peace process, and US sanctions against Iran. On his first diplomatic tour in [Iranian calendar] year 1400 (started on March 21) to discuss bilateral and regional cooperation in Central Asia, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met with his Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov on Monday morning in Tashkent. Emphasizing the expansion of cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan, the two sides discussed various aspects of bilateral relations in various fields, as well as US unilateral sanctions against Iran and cooperation on peace in Afghanistan. Zarif and Kamilov also discussed the ways to expand cooperation between the two countries in the fields of transportation, transit and energy, culture and tourism. Emphasizing the regional position and international influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kamilov stressed the expansion cooperation of the two countries in various fields, including cooperation in international forums, parliamentary cooperation between the friendship groups of the parliaments of the two countries, cooperation in the field of transportation and transit and use of Iran's port capacities along the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Unilateral and oppressive US sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, cooperation between the two countries in the Afghan peace process and cooperation in ...

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Afghan Violence Surges Ahead of Turkey-Hosted Peace Conference



ISLAMABAD - Government forces in Afghanistan and the Taliban both claimed Sunday they had inflicted heavy casualties on the other in their latest attacks, as the two adversaries are expected to meet in Turkey later this month for U.S.-proposed Afghan peace talks. An Afghan Defense Ministry statement said national security forces in the last 24 hours killed nearly 160 insurgents and injured dozens of others in operations across several provinces. Afghan army commanders are also reported as saying they have evicted the Taliban from Arghandab district in the southern Kandahar province, months after the insurgents had overrun it. For its part, the Taliban took responsibility for a Sunday afternoon car bombing of an Afghan forces' convoy in Paghman district, about 30 kilometers from the capital, Kabul. Afghan officials said the blast killed at least three security personnel and injured more than a dozen others, fearing the death toll could increase because many among those wounded were in critical condition. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said a group of insurgents staged "tactical attacks" on the convoy following the car bombing and "killed/wounded up to 45" Afghan forces, though insurgents often release inflated casualty tolls for such attacks. The Taliban did not comment on their battlefield losses in the face of recent operations by Afghan forces, but the group warned of possible retaliation, raising fears of more bloodshed in days ahead. An insurgent ...

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SIGAR: Narcotics Remain a Primary Source of Taliban Income

KABUL - A US watchdog in a report released last month says that 40 to 60 percent of the Taliban's revenue comes from narcotics. The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in its report cites a meeting with Resolute Support officials in February 2018, saying that "a senior official from the Resolute Support Counter Threat Finance Cell estimated that between 40 to 60 percent of the Taliban's revenue comes from narcotics trafficking." SIGAR also quoted a UN report as saying that Afghan officials estimate Taliban income from

narcotics between June 2018 and June 2019 to be approximately \$400 million. According to SIGAR, the UN report also notes that the Taliban now controls all aspects of narcotics production, which likely indicates that their total revenues are even higher. SIGAR quotes a UN Security Council report from June 2019 as saying that the Taliban continue to adapt and expand their ability to maintain and generate financial revenues to support their operations. The primary sources of income for the Taliban remain narcotics, illicit mineral and other resource



extraction, taxation, extortion, the sale of commercial and government services and property, and donations from abroad, SIGAR says. The Taliban rejected their involvement in the drugs and narcotics trade, but Afghan...

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Loya Paktia Youths Warn of Closing Public Offices

KABUL - A joint gathering of Loya Paktia youth associations on Monday warned of closing government offices if the lack of teachers and textbooks in southeastern Khost province was not resolved. But the Ministry of Education says it will hire contract-based teachers to address their shortage. Deputy head of the youth jirga, Faisal Bawarzai, told a press conference in Kabul that Khost had been significantly progressing in education sphere compared to other provinces, but the progress was hampered recently and deliberately. He said: "Khost has now about 280,000 students, including nearly 77,000 girls, and this year

up to 32,000 new students have been enrolled." There were also schools in Khost where two or three teachers taught to 2,500 students. In previous years, up to five contractual teachers were employed in these schools, but this year they were paid no salary. Bawarzai also lambasted lawmakers from Khost for being engaged in their private affairs and paying no attention to the problems of people. Kamal Nasir Osuli, a member of the Wolosi Jirga, told Pajhwok that the lack of teachers was not a problem confined only to Khost but it existed throughout Afghanistan. "I spoke to the minister of education yesterday, and she said



if the president orders and the finance ministry gives a budget, we are ready to hire as many teachers as we need in Khost," he said. On behalf of Khost people, Kamal Sadat said the province would face a literacy crisis if the issue of lack of teachers was not addressed. "We are given no part in politics, there is a lack of reconstruction programs, but if the authorities ...

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