

Quote of the Day

Leadership

// A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves. //

Lao Tzu

Uzbekistan Received US Request to Host Afghans Who Worked for US Military, Source Says



MOSCOW - Tashkent has received Washington's request to host Afghans who helped the United States, a source familiar with the matter told Sputnik on Friday. Earlier this month, Bloomberg reported, citing sources, that, as the US forces began their withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US presidential administration asked Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan to host about 9,000 Afghans who helped the US troops. Last week, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the Biden administration will fly Afghan interpreters to third countries in August where they can wait until their special immigrant visas are approved. They are facing threats from the Taliban\* movement for helping US and NATO forces throughout the last 20 years of the war in Afghanistan. (Sputnik)

Afghan Delegation Leaves Kabul for Talks with Taliban in Doha



KABUL - A delegation led by Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, on Friday afternoon left Kabul for Doha, the capital of Qatar, to hold talks with the Taliban as the militants' offensives dramatically increased across Afghanistan. The delegation includes Former Vice President Mohammad Karim Khalili; Head of the splinter faction of the Jamiat-e-Islami Party Ata Mohammad Noor; Islamic Republic Chief Negotiator Masoom Stanekzai; President Ghani's Adviser Salam Rahimi; State Minister for Peace Affairs Sadat Mansoor Naderi; Bator

Dostum and Fatima Gailani members of peace negotiating team. However, the agenda of the talks is not clear so far. Abdullah noted that the Afghan team has fully authoritative and that a ceasefire is a priority in the talks with the Taliban delegation. Former president Hamid Karzai, who accompanied the delegation until the Kabul airport, stated that he fully supports the Afghan team. Sources, meanwhile, told Ariana News that Karzai is expected to visit Islamabad to meet with Pakistani officials. The Taliban has not commented

about the talks so far. The development comes a day after US State Department spokesman Ned Price said that Washington continues to believe the only solution to Afghanistan's problem is a political settlement and in line with this the Afghan government is sending a senior delegation to Doha. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, Price stated: "We have been very clear about this, that we continue to believe the Islamic Republic - that is to say, the Afghan Government continues to believe that diplomacy ..."

Ghani Assured Turkey's Continued Support in Diverse Fields

KABUL - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has said his country is committed to continuing cooperation with Afghanistan in diverse fields, including the peace process. A statement from the Presidential Palace on Friday said President Ashraf Ghani met with Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, on the sidelines of a conference. The two sides discussed lasting and dignified peace and security in Afghanistan and further strengthening friendly



relations and cooperation between the two countries. The Turkish Foreign Minister on behalf of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan assured President Ghani that his country is committed to continuing cooperation with Afghanistan in various fields, including the peace process. ...

U.S., Afghanistan, Pakistan Uzbekistan Create Platform for Regional Cooperation

WASHINGTON - The United States, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan formed a new diplomatic platform to support peace and stability in Afghanistan and foster regional trade and business ties, the State Department said Friday as U.S. troops continue their planned withdrawal from the country. "The parties consider long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan critical to regional connectivity and agree that



peace and regional connectivity are mutually reinforcing," it said in a statement. The parties agreed to meet in coming months. (Reuters)

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Advertisement for Azizi Bank SME Loan. Text: 'SME LOAN Azizi Bank provides you readily Small and Medium Project Loan with easy processing. All Afghan traders who have three active projects are eligible for the loan with repayment of instalments in one upto two years.' Includes Azizi Bank logo and contact info: www.azizibank.af 1515

# SCO Foreign Ministers Issue Joint Statement on Afghanistan

Foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries issued a joint statement following a meeting in the format of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group on Wednesday.

The foreign ministers stand for the development of Afghanistan as an independent, neutral, united, peaceful, democratic and prosperous state, according to the statement.

They realize that peace and stability in that country is one of the main factors in ensuring security in the SCO region, the statement said, adding that the ministers are convinced of the need to continue helping the Afghan people in their efforts to restore the country and return to the road of peace and national accord.

The foreign ministers declared in the statement the following: "As friendly neighbors and important partners of Afghanistan, the SCO member states are in-

terested in its development as a peaceful, stable and prosperous country, and confirm their respect for the traditions and culture of all peoples living in Afghanistan.

In accordance with universally accepted principles and norms of international law, primarily the UN Charter, the SCO countries reaffirm their respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. They intend to facilitate the development of Afghanistan as a country free from terrorism, war and drugs.

"We condemn the violence and terror attacks that continue in Afghanistan, killing civilians and representatives of government bodies and call for their cessation as soon as possible. We note that the activities of international terrorist organizations remain one of the key factors of instability in that country. We express our deep concern over the escalation



of tensions in the northern provinces of Afghanistan as a result of a sharp increase in the concentration of various terrorist, separatist and extremist groups. We consider it important for the SCO member states to enhance their joint efforts in order to counteract terrorism, separatism

and extremism.

"We urge all parties involved in the conflict in Afghanistan to refrain from the use of force and actions that may lead to destabilization and unpredictable consequences near the Afghan borders with the SCO states." The SCO ...

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# Taliban Destroyed, Damaged Infrastructure in 116 Districts: IARCS

KABUL - Ahmad Nader Naderi, the chairman of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCS), on Thursday said that the IARCS findings show that in the districts recently seized by the Taliban essential government services have been halted, and a large number of civil servants have been harmed, or displaced from their areas to provincial capitals.

According to Naderi, the Taliban either torched or destroyed 260 government buildings and assets in 116 districts.

Naderi said that 13 million Afghans have been deprived of social services in the Taliban-controlled areas and 50,000 employees including women have been affected in Taliban territories.

"There are more than 13 million people living in areas and districts recently captured by the Taliban, who currently have no access to public services. In these areas, hundreds of development projects such as the reconstruction of water



supply networks, roads, retaining walls, the construction of schools, bridges, hospitals, stadiums, cold storage facilities, drilling wells, etc., have been shut down. For instance, in the Taliban-controlled districts of Takhar province alone, 112 ongoing development projects have now been completely stopped," said IARCS chief Nader Naderi.

The Taliban has denied the allegations.

Naderi said that the damage done by the Taliban on state institutions is estimated to be around \$500 million. He said that 4,000 ...

More on (Page-4) Num(10)

# Mohaqiq Urges Negotiated Settlement to Avert Potential Civil War

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani's special envoy for security and political affairs Mohammad Mohaqiq on Thursday said that the Taliban, by pursuing the takeover of districts, cannot determine their full control of Afghanistan.

Mohaqiq said that winning a victory over the Taliban by military means is not possible, stating that the peace negotiations must be sped up to resolve the conflict.

Mohaqiq warned that Afghanistan will plunge into civil war if the peace process does not reach a conclusion.

"The Taliban cannot ignore the public opinion in Afghanistan and in the world toward their military advancement," said Mohaqiq.

Meanwhile, Assadullah Saadati, the deputy head of High Council of National Reconciliation (HCNR), said that the Tali-



ban is having a serious problem with the present system—adding that the group is still not prepared to recognize the principles of a democratic system.

Wahid Omar, a top aide to President Ashraf Ghani, said that circles within the system should not be used for the destruction of the system.

Joining Omar, Ghani's aide Akram Khpolwak said that the Afghan peace process has entered into a decision-making phase—stating that all state ...

More on (Page-4) Num(11)

# Pakistan Military Rescues Five Telecom Workers Kidnapped Near Afghan Border

Pakistan's military rescued five telecommunications workers kidnapped by Islamist militants last month close to the Afghan border in a series of operations in which two soldiers were killed, the military said on Friday.

Northwest Pakistan's border regions have become relatively peaceful after years of violence but Pakistani Taliban militants have been more active recently amid concern that surging violence in Afghanistan will spill over the frontier.

No group claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of 16 men installing a mobile telephone tower in the Kurram ethnic Pashtun tribal district on June 26.

Ten of the workers were later released but one man was beheaded and the militants demanded a ransom for the last five.



"To rescue the remaining 5 abducted labourers, security forces launched series of intelligence based operations in highly inhospitable terrain under extreme weather conditions," the military said in a statement. The rescue was on Thursday. The military did not say which militants group it believed was behind the kidnapping but said civilians in the area fully supported "the security forces in fighting the menace of terrorism".

Communities along ...

More on (Page-4) Num(12)

# 1,122 New Cases of COVID-19, 49 Deaths Reported

KABUL - The Ministry of Public Health on Friday reported 1,122 new positive cases of COVID-19 out of 3,226 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

The ministry also reported 49 deaths and 717 recoveries from COVID-19 in the same period.

The new cases were reported in Kabul (120), Herat (200), Kandahar (35), Balkh (13), Nangarhar (85), Takhar (26), Kunduz (27), Baghlan (77), Faryab (18), Maidan Wardak (30), Helmand (31), Parwan (10), Bamian (6), Badakhshan (41), Ghazni (23), Paktia (30), Kapisa (10), Daikundi (65), Laghman (125), Zabul (14), Ghor (19), Logar (13), Farah (15), Jawzjan (52), and Khost (35) provinces.

The deaths were reported Kabul (11), Herat (8), Balkh (2), Nangarhar (1), Kunduz (3), Takhar (3), Faryab (2), Maidan Wardak (1), Helmand (1), Paktia (1),



Ghazni (2), Nimroz (2), Daikundi (1), Kunar (1), Laghman (2), Zabul (1), Farah (1), Khost (5) and Paktika (1) provinces.

Data by the Public Health Ministry shows that the total number of cases is 140,226, total deaths stand at 6,098 and total recoveries are at 86,963.

The total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the world stands at 188,929,998 and total deaths are 4,066,633 figures by Johns Hopkins University show. (TOLO NEWS)

## Outlook Horoscope

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

Jul 17, 2021 - There is a conflicting push/pull aspect to today that may leave you feeling unsure about how to proceed. On the one hand, you may feel like you want to plan things out and get your emotions stabilized so you can function at full capacity. On the other hand, something may be pulling you into the clouds. This is your heart talking. Listen. Find a compromise between these two energies.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - Get your chores done early, Taurus, so you have time to play tonight. Plan a romantic getaway with a loved one. Let your imagination carry you to a whole new realm of pleasure. This is a great day to explore your artistic nature and begin to manifest some of the ideas that have been rattling around in your head for a while.

### Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Jul 17, 2021 - This is an excellent day to tell people exactly how you feel, Gemini. Your emotions are more stable than usual, so open up and speak from the heart. Listen. What you learn will be valuable for the future, so pay attention. Keep an eye on what is real, but let your heart explore all the possibilities. Follow your emotions and trust your instincts. You stand to gain a great deal.

### Cancer (June 21-July 20)

Jul 17, 2021 - Today may be tough, Cancer. Does it seem like nothing fits into place? Are you trying to be someone you're not? If things don't seem to be working out, don't press the issue. You're better off waiting for a time when you feel more confident about who you are and where you're going. Meanwhile, have some tea and relax. Releasing stress can clear some energy for doing other things.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - Enjoy yourself, Leo. You have a lot to be grateful for, so give thanks. Take pride in all you've accomplished so far and share your joy with others. Let go of the reins and sit back comfortably for a while. You've worked hard for a reason - to enjoy life. If you don't do it now, then when? Take time out and be with loved ones tonight.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - This may be one of those days when you don't know which way to turn. For some reason, you just can't make a decision, so you keep going around and around. Stop and rest. Get out and walk for a while until your head stops spinning. Wait until your mind clears before you make your next major move.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - Romance is coming your way as long as you stay levelheaded about the situation. Take care of the daily tasks and then let your heart soar. You have a strong connection to your emotions. Trust your instincts and let your heart take control. Be realistic about your relationships with others, but push the boundaries once they've been established.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - Your emotions may be reserved, Scorpio. Take a break from the spunk and fire and simply lay low. This is a good time to sit back and receive. Don't make any sudden moves. Just let the energy of the day take you where it will. The closer you can get to your inner nature and feminine energy, the closer you will become to a romantic partner or family member.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - Family issues play an important role in your day, Sagittarius. Speak from the heart and tell your kin how much they mean to you. In general, you might feel reserved with your energy. Don't feel like you have to make any great strides right now. It's more a time in which you can enjoy what you've worked for. Kick back and reap the rewards of all your hard work.

### Capricorn (Dec.21-Jan19)

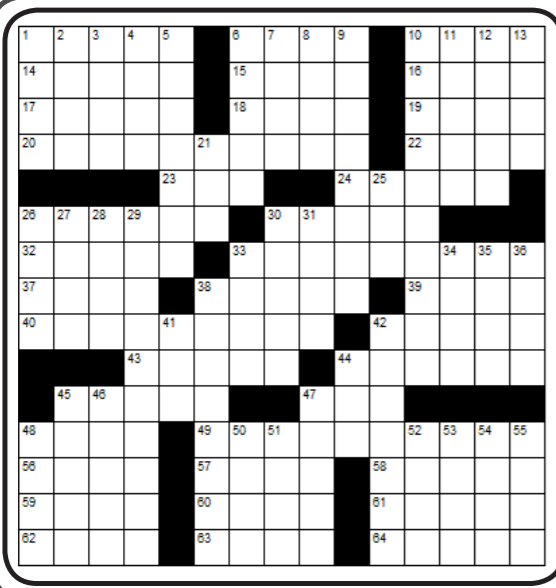
Jul 17, 2021 - You may be undecided about a loved one today, Capricorn. Something may urge you to act yet you want to lay low. There's an important next step that you must take now. Carefully think the situation through before you make a move. In fact, this day would best be spent gathering data on the issue. It seems you should wait a bit before actually doing anything about it.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - Today is a great day to move forward, Aquarius. Your emotions are stable, leaving your heart free to take off to the clouds. Daydream. Now might be a good time to make plans with a romantic partner. Solidify your relationship and confirm your commitment to one another. If you're single, this is a good time to set a plan in motion that will put you one step closer to your greatest fantasy.

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

Jul 17, 2021 - There's a conservative feeling to the day that asks you to get serious and take care of business. This may not be such a bad idea. This grounded atmosphere can help you move into a deeper relationship with someone special. Let your creativity shine, and try to do more listening than talking. Make your dreams a reality.



### Across

- Trades, 6. Group of cattle, 10. Flat-bottomed boat, 14. Delicacy, 15. Not under, 16. The thin fibrous bark, 17. A long-legged S. American bird, 18. Adriatic resort, 19. Dry
- Companion, 22. Not a single one, 23. Travel through the air, 24. Move furtively, 26. Unit of dry measure (4 pecks), 30. Showers, 32. Frequently, 33. Sweetheart, 37. Wander, 38. A type of tree, 39. Midmonth date, 40. An appraiser, 42. Tidy, 43. Beauty parlor, 44. Enlarge, 45. Daffy, 47. Drunkard, 48. Desire, 49. Prolonged, 56. Spindle, 57. Rice beer, 58. Search for water, 59. Layer, 60. Monster, 61. Jagged, 62. French for "Head", 63. Secure against leakage, 64. Optical maser

### Down

- Remain, 2. Therefore, 3. An escape of water, 4. Disabled, 5. Rigidify, 6. 50s singer Buddy
7. Anagram of "Live", 8. Start over, 9. Sleeper, 10. Impasse, 11. Christmas song, 12. Express a thought, 13. Walk in water, 21. L, 25. Hotel, 26. Drill, 27. Flying saucers, 28. Immediately, 29. Half of a sphere, 30. A radioactive gaseous element, 31. Winglike, 33. Quash, 34. Notion, 35. Tidy, 36. Feudal worker, 38. Temperate bog orchids 41. Chart, 42. Stronghold, 44. To make a fool of (archaic), 45. Confederate States, 46. A small island, 47. Metal, 48. Light bulb unit, 50. Anger, 51. Gumbo, 52. Daughter of Zeus and Demeter, 53. 2 2 2 54. To be, in old Rome, 55. A whitetail

### Yesterday's Solution



after aircraft around begin cluster cruel dining escape event flight hurry lively march media merchandise mute peace raise regret rely replay scout season since speak spoil steal syrup today umbrella understand



## Regional Consensus Likely to Break Deadlock in Negotiations

Although the United State and the Taliban leadership signed peace agreement on February 29, 2020 in Qatar, Doha's capital, the Taliban group has so far refused to declare a permanent ceasefire or reduce violence. The intra-Afghan dialogue reached stalemate and the US and its NATO allies are withdrawing their troops, but the group escalated its insurgency, establishing itself as a legitimate stakeholder in Afghanistan.

The Afghan administration has constantly reiterated the significant role of regional players, mainly that of Pakistan, in the peace process and urged Islamabad to use its leverage on the Taliban leadership. On their turn, Pakistani officials have made promise on multiple occasions to support the peace talks but without managing to fulfill it. As of now, Islamabad says that its leverage on the Taliban has diminished, but Kabul doubts the goodwill of Islamabad since Taliban's leadership councils are based in Quetta and Peshawar, Pakistan, and the Taliban's patients and the wounded are treated in Pakistan's hospitals, according to Afghan officials.

Recently, Pakistan's Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has confirmed that the wounded and dead bodies of the Taliban militants are carried to Pakistan and the wounded receive medical treatment there. He added that the families of the Afghan Taliban live in Pakistan.

Ahmad also urged the Taliban to restrain the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In the past, Islamabad adopted a "good" and "bad" Taliban policy and approved the Afghan Taliban but believed the TTP was working against the Pakistan's interests. However, Islamabad's recent indications suggest that both the Afghan Taliban and TTP share the same ideology. Such a categorization was not acceptable to Kabul, which insists that the Taliban, based on the Doha agreement, have to break their ties with all regional and global terrorist networks - including the TTP, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, East Turkestan Islamic Movement, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State-Khorasan. In reaction to Ahmad's remarks, Afghan Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar said that the TTP was neither founded in Afghanistan nor operating on its soil.

The Taliban group, on the one hand, says that it is prepared to resume the talks and could not win through military deal, on the other hand, it is widely engaged in mounting insurgency. The Taliban's contradictory remarks indicate that the group is playing a foul game at the negotiating table without having genuine intention. But its recent signal for resumption of peace talks is likely to be the result of public hatred and mobilization against the group.

Unlike the 1990s, the Taliban do not intend to be treated as international pariah or form a government in isolation without global recognition. Regional and global stakeholders, including Pakistan, have made it clear that they will not support formation of "Islamic Emirate" as the 1990s and will not recognize any government in Afghanistan that is not acceptable to the people. Public participation in political decision making and future political structure carries increasing weight for the region and beyond. Conscious of the challenges in achieving an outright military victory, the Taliban have signaled to return to the negotiating table and revealed they have been working on a written peace proposal to be shared with the Kabul administration in the coming months.

The US' decision to withdraw all its troops from the country has forced many regional actors to review their assumptions, priorities and strategies regarding Afghanistan. Some like Iran and Russia, apprehensive to prevent the export of Taliban influence beyond the borders of Afghanistan, are seeking to buy off the Taliban leadership with promises of assistance and strengthen ties with it. To preserve its two decades old investment in a democratic constitutional framework in Afghanistan, India, which has entered a backchannel communication with the Taliban leadership, needs to bandwagon other regional players in dealing with the Taliban as the "government-in-waiting" or bid farewell to its mission in Afghanistan.

Recently, Iran has hosted Taliban delegations aimed at breaking the peace stalemate and persuading the Taliban to return to the table. India is also seeking more active and constructive engagement in the Afghan peace process. Kabul, which has long called for regional and global consensus on the process, will welcome the role of the region and neighboring states in brokering a political settlement.

Understanding the Afghan-Pak soured relations, the International Crisis Group said in a recent briefing, "Islamabad should reach out to Kabul to reduce mistrust. Using the access and leverage provided by the Taliban leadership's sanctuaries on its territory, Pakistan should press the insurgents to reduce violence and negotiate a compromise on power-sharing arrangements with other Afghan stakeholders."

Formation of regional consensus on Afghan peace process is most likely to break the deadlock. Therefore, regional stakeholders have to withdraw their support from the Taliban group and use their leverage on it. Kabul expects the region and its international allies to engage constructively in the intra-Afghan dialogue.

## The Economic Implications of the Taliban Advances in Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

As everyone is aware after the rapid advance of the Taliban, the siege and area under the control of the government are hurriedly declining. In addition to taking the control of hundreds of districts, it is said that the Taliban have taken the control of several important ports and customs, including the port of Islam Qala and Torghundi in the west, Sher Khan Bundar in the north, and Dand-e Patan custom in the east of the country. According to local media news, the Taliban have also seized control of four friendship bridges between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in Ishkashim, Sheghnan, Mahmi, Nasi, and Khawan districts. After the domination of the Taliban on these ports and bridges, the prices have sharply increased in the free market of the country as the imports and exports ports of Afghanistan were carried out through these ports, customs, and bridges. If the domination of Taliban continues on the customs, bridges, and highways, the major cities will seriously be faced with more serious economic challenges.

In order to have a deeper review the importance of these ports, we need to discuss each one separately. As pointed out, the first and second important ports which have been captured by the Taliban are Islam Qala and Torghundi ports in the west of the country and they are considered as the main artery of import and export in the country. These ports supply food, oil, gas, and raw materials to western provinces and other parts of the country from Iran and Turkmenistan. The capture and possession of these ports means the siege of western provinces including Herat. If the Taliban continue the control of these ports, it is likely that food and other necessities will further rise in the coming days, making life more difficult and unbearable for residents of Herat and other parts of Afghanistan. It is said that only Iran's exports to Afghanistan are about "four billion dollars" a year, and Afghanistan's exports to Iran are between 40 and 50 million dollars. This amount of exports and imports is possible in the presence of a regular customs system and technical team on both sides of the border. It is not technically the job of the Taliban to maintain this system and manage it properly. Sher Khan Bandar in the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is the third most important and lucrative port in the country fallen into the domination of the Taliban in recent weeks. This port supplies Kunduz and several other provinces in the north of the country. Also, most of the raw materials of the center are supplied through this port, but now it is said that, in addition to this port, 910 km of the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border is under the control of the Taliban. There was also trade in parts of the border that Tajikistan closed due to deteriorating security. In general, in the presence of the Taliban, imports and exports will be stopped, and this will harm the trade and

economy of the people and the government.

The fourth important economic resource fallen into the control of Taliban is Dand-e Patan custom in the southeast part of the country. According to the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce, the Taliban earn millions of Afghani a day by taking control of Dand Patan custom in Pakia province. In addition, the fall of this custom affected at least 30% of the import and export process and so it sharply affected prices in the free market of the country. For example, a few days ago, the price of one kg of chicken was less than 200Af, but now it is more than 300Af. The price of one kg gas was around 50 but now it is around 70 Af. The price of 16 kg cooking oil was around 1600Af but now it becomes more than 2100Af. The price of 30 eggs was 190 Af but now it is more than 300 Af in the Kabul market.

In addition to the fall of districts, ports, and customs, the fall of Afghan currency against the USD has also economically pressurized people declining their power of purchase. In recent days, the Afghan currency has suddenly fallen from 77/8 to around 82. According to experts, the growing war, violence, and falls of districts, ports, and customs have created distrust of Afghan currency in the country. The people do not trust to use or save Afghani when they see the worsening situation in the country. There are many individuals and businesses who do not use Afghani in daily transactions because of its steady decline. Hence, everyone is concerned about the fast depreciating value of the Afghani against the dollar in Afghanistan. The local experts believe further decline the Afghani may more extremely harm people's lives and small businesses as they are the ones who use Afghan currency and pay the rising price for goods on the local markets. Therefore, the government, especially the central bank must change the situation for the benefit of ordinary people.

In general, the fall Afghani currency, the fall of ports and customs have several economic implications in the country. On one hand, it economically weakens and pressurizes the government and people of Afghanistan lowering their power of purchase. On the other hand, it lightens the burden of the Taliban supporters creating millions of money for Taliban to expand their infiltration and influence across the country. Therefore, the so-called strategic retreat from these strategic places and ports will paralyze both people and government from standing against the aggressive advances of the Taliban. In fact, the survival of the central government depends on these ports and customs being open and under government control. Ignoring the important of these economic ports will put the people in a bad situation.

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## Our Responsibility to Climate Migrants

By: Bill McKibben

Last November, as the most active Atlantic hurricane season ever recorded ground to a close, the last two big storms - Eta and Iota - ripped into Central America. A Washington Post reporter covering their aftermath interviewed a Honduran woman named Blanca Costa, who was sheltering beneath a highway overpass. She supported her three daughters by working as a trash collector, and had three horses to pull her garbage cart. Except now the horses had drowned. "I'll just have to go on foot now," said Costa, 40, one of about 100 people finding refuge under the bridge. "But it will be more difficult."

The storms caused massive damage in Central America. According to early estimates, the economic toll in Honduras was equivalent to 40% of the country's GDP. So, it should not surprise anyone that plenty of people from the region are now on the move. When climate-driven disasters strike, the vast majority of people don't need or want to move far. If drought drives a farm out of business, workers usually look for new jobs as near to home as possible. When extreme weather destroys homes, people seek a temporary escape, not permanent relocation. But as adverse climate events become more extreme - and they will - people will need to move farther for longer.

It is of course entirely unfair that Hondurans have done so little to cause the climate crisis that is now taking such a costly toll there. Someone who collects trash with a horse-drawn cart does not generate a lot of carbon dioxide emissions, in contrast to someone in the United States driving a 310-horsepower Ford Bronco SUV.

By any moral calculation, therefore, the US should be figuring out what its responsibilities are to Central American climate migrants. And, whether they cross international borders or not, it should be US policy to make their journeys as safe and humane as possible.

So, if the top priority is to limit temperature increases so that climate disasters force fewer people from their homes, the second priority is to manage the trauma of involuntary migration. Whether governments like it or not, millions of people globally are already resorting to migration to cope with the climate crisis. The US in particular must respond with more than walls, cages, or the stern warning issued by President Joe Biden's administration to Central Americans: "do not come."

But climate migrants aren't heading to the US because they want to. They have no choice, and their journey is at least as traumatic

as the storms that caused it. Families are torn apart, and people travel in difficult and dangerous conditions. Some die, others are killed, and many more are robbed, extorted, or assaulted. The main cause of the danger, death, and suffering migrants face is often international borders. When desperate people are denied the right to cross a frontier safely and legally, they have no option but to do so under cover of darkness, across deserts and oceans, and over fences and walls.

Moreover, border militarization is now big business. Private security firms patrol borders for profit, having secured government contracts totaling billions of dollars to hunt, capture, and imprison migrants and refugees.

This militarization is an increasingly high-tech enterprise. Drones now patrol borders, while facial recognition tools and powerful artificial-intelligence systems identify and track people trying to cross them. Many tech companies that have cultivated feel-good corporate images are in fact deeply involved in surveilling people trying to escape some of the most difficult and dangerous conditions on the planet.

The firms currently profiting from turning borders into death traps will not simply walk away from this lucrative business, while governments hooked on their own "tough on migration" policies won't back down without a fight. But those seeking justice for migrants and refugees have been fighting and winning immigration battles on the streets. In addition, activists and labor unions are pushing companies to ditch their border-surveillance and detention contracts - and investors are noticing, with Microsoft's ties with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement the latest to be put under the spotlight.

The climate movement must now act in solidarity with migrant and refugee activists and be part of their efforts to ensure safe, legal migration. We should be thinking about how to support people making dangerous journeys, how to provide meaningful work for them, and how to provide education, housing, and health care as they seek new places to settle. And we should be thinking about how to build communities that encompass both new arrivals and existing residents.

These questions have already roiled the politics of many countries. But they won't go away - quite the contrary. For the sake of climate migrants everywhere, we must address them. Our CO2 emissions pay no attention to national borders, and nor should our compassion.

Bill McKibben, a scholar in environmental sciences at Middlebury College and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, is a co-founder of 350.org.



**(1) Afghan Delegation...**

is the only durable and just way to reach a political settlement here.

"I won't speak for the Taliban, but they continue to engage in that diplomacy in Doha. The Islamic Republic, the Afghan Government is sending a senior delegation to Doha. The special envoy (Zalmay Khalilzad) and his team are engaged, supporting these intra-Afghan discussions in Doha," Price said.

"We continue to believe – and the international community continues to believe, including if you look at recent statements from some of our closest allies, but also from countries with whom we share little else – that this diplomatic path is the most effective, and certainly the best path to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan." (ATN)

**(2) Ghani Assured...**

President Ghani said Afghanistan and Turkey were two historical and strategic partners and thanked them for their continued cooperation with Afghanistan over the years. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Ghani, Imran...**

Friday. Addressing the conference in Tashkent, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan hit back at Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's claims about Pakistan's "negative role" in the Afghan peace process, adding that it was "unfair" to blame the country for the situation in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

**(4) Bakhtar Airlines...**

to do with us, because we are civilians and we do not need to fear," said Ehsanullah Zazai, a pilot.

Omar Noorzada, a pilot, graduated from the UAE aviation academy. He has eight hours of flying time in Europe, too.

"Fortunately today there is a lot of opportunity for the new generation who are associated with aviation.

Governments, countries and private companies are providing the best services in this field," said Omar Noorzada, a pilot. Bakhtar Airlines resumed operations last year after 28 years of suspension.

A new and young Afghan team reived the company. (TOLO NEWS)

**(5) Ghani Meets...**

countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, plus the United States.

"We will continue to support negotiations to achieve a political solution that brings Afghans the peace they deserve and to build a strong regional and international support base for Afghanistan's future," Sherwood-Randall said.

She noted that C5+1 members can do more jointly rather than alone or on a bilateral basis to address issues of common interest.

"We will continue to provide security assistance to the Afghan National Defense Forces, as well as development and humanitarian aid. We will continue to take aggressive action against terrorist groups that threaten the US and that undermine the security of our allies and partners, including your countries," Sherwood-Randall said. (ATN)

**(6) 'Peace Not ...**

Afghan people so they also play their role regarding their future.

"National leadership should depend on the nation, if this principle is also agreed by the Taliban it would lead to a stable peace," he said.

Khpalwak said that a real peace could not be established in the country until it lacked national and international guarantees. Any agreements between some coalitions or political parties would not help in absence of these guarantees, he added.

Meanwhile, Wahid Omar, another senior advisor to the president, said, "We will not reach a stable peace until we do not have a stable system."

He termed survival of the country in survival of the system and said that the Taliban will not win and not rule the country. But the war will spread from street to street, home to home and will cause mass destruction and migration, he said. (Pajhwok)

**(7) UN Official...**

of all children under five are experiencing acute malnutrition.

The 450 million dollars received so far fall far short of what is needed.

"Our plan is to provide assistance to at least 15.7 million people, and right now it will not be possible without these additional contributions," said Alakbarov, speaking via videoconference to journalists in New York.

The developments are occurring as the deadline for foreign troops to fully withdraw from the country approaches.

U.S. President Joe Biden said on July 8 that U.S. military mission in Afghanistan will conclude on Aug. 31, days ahead of his original Sept. 11 deadline.

Speaking of the security and safety of humanitarian workers, Alakbarov said that 25 of them have been killed since the start of year, and 63 injured, a 30-percent in-

crease over 2020.

Babar Baloch, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, told a news briefing in the Swiss city of Geneva on Tuesday that "Afghanistan is on the brink of another humanitarian crisis."

"We urge the international community to step up support to the government and people of Afghanistan and its neighbors at this critical moment," he added. (Xinhua)

**(8) Reuters Photographer...**

of fighters, apparently Taliban, receiving treatment in a hospital in the Pakistani border town of Chaman.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are fraught with suspicion. Afghanistan routinely accuses Pakistan of giving safe haven to the Afghan Taliban, whose leadership is headquartered in Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan provincial capital of Quetta. The Chaman border crossing opposite Spin Boldak is also in Baluchistan province.

Afghanistan and the United States have criticized Pakistan in the past for allowing Taliban fighters to cross into Pakistan to receive medical treatment. Nearly 2 million Afghan refugees also live in Pakistan, having fled decades of war in their homeland.

Pakistan has used its influence over the Taliban to press the insurgents into talks with the U.S. and the Afghan government.

In the latest round of accusations, Afghanistan's vice-president, Amrullah Saleh, tweeted that Pakistan's air force warned the Afghan army and air force against trying to dislodge Taliban from Spin Boldak, an accusation Pakistan dismissed.

In response, Pakistan issued a statement saying 40 Afghan soldiers slipped across the border to Pakistan during the Taliban takeover of the crossing earlier this week. The soldiers were returned to Afghanistan "with respect and dignity," said the statement, which added that Pakistan also offered Afghanistan's security force any logistical support it needed. (AP)

**(9) SCO Foreign...**

member states reaffirm their willingness to continue developing cooperation with Afghanistan on countering security threats in the region, in particular, all forms and manifestations of terrorism and drug trafficking, and to jointly oppose double standards in resolving these tasks.

Emphasizing the importance of long-term hospitality and effective aid for Afghan refugees, the SCO members consider it important for the international community to take active joint efforts to facilitate their proper, safe and sustainable return home.

"We believe that reaching an early settlement in Afghanistan is a major factor in maintaining and strengthening security and stability in the SCO space. In this context, we emphasize the need for the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to intensify their efforts to restore peace, promote national economic development and counter terrorism, extremism and drug-related crime. We confirm the position of the SCO members that the conflict in Afghanistan can only be settled by political dialogue and an inclusive peace process conducted and led by the Afghans themselves.

"We urge all interested states and international organizations to strengthen their cooperation, with the UN playing a central coordinating role, in order to stabilize and develop the country. In this context, we note the activities of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General and the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy.

"We welcome the diplomatic support for the peace process in Afghanistan by the international public, including the inter-Afghan peace talks in Doha, the extended Troika, the Moscow consultations format and the Tashkent venue. We note the outcome of the ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul process in Dushanbe on March 29-30, 2021.

Respecting the Afghan people's independent choice of their own path of development, we are convinced that the inter-Afghan negotiations must consider the interests of all ethnic groups living in the country.

"We attach much importance to our cooperation in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. We consider it necessary to consistently implement the roadmap for further action by the Contact Group, which was adopted in Bishkek on June 14, 2019, with a view to strengthening regional stability and developing relations between the SCO states and Afghanistan. "We reaffirm the willingness of our countries to continue deepening cooperation with Afghanistan in politics and security, as well as in the economic and humanitarian spheres, including by maximizing the potential of Afghanistan's participation as an observer state in the SCO's activities." (ATN)

**(10) Taliban Destroyed...**

public services employees have evacuated their native areas because of the threats of the Taliban.

"Attacks on civilian targets, including civilian infrastructure, is a clear breach of international humanitarian laws. These crimes must stop. A peaceful settlement of conflict and a shared future for our people is the only path to stop the destruction and suffering of our country and people," said Nadery.

"In districts under Taliban control in Pakia province, only those women working in gynecology are permitted to work, but they must wear a Hijab and be accompanied by a Mahram," said Nadery.

"As the Taliban took control of the districts, more than 50,000 civil servants are unable to perform their duties and live in an uncertain situation. Nearly 4,000 of which have either been harmed or displaced from their areas to provincial capitals due to the bad security situation and threats," said Nadery.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has said that there are reports that the Taliban imposed some restrictions on the people in areas under their control over the past few weeks.

According to the AIHRC, these restrictions included a ban on women leaving the house without a proper veil and male guardian, the closure of girls schools, a ban on the delivery of health services to women who do not have male guardians, a halt to TV programs, forcing teachers and students to not shave their beards, and putting on turbans.

"Thirteen million humans, 13 million oppressed people in Afghanistan have been affected due to the actions of the Taliban," said Nadery.

"One of the restrictions is a restriction on women, one of the restrictions is that the women cannot go out of their homes without a veil and guardian," said Zabihullah Farhang, a spokesman for the AIHRC.

"From the day the Taliban took over our area, the women cannot go outside of their homes or to work," said senator Fawzia Samkani.

However, the Taliban in a statement has rejected Naderi's statement.

The Taliban in their statement said that social services including the delivery of health services, agriculture and schooling continues in their areas. (TOLO NEWS)

**(11) Mohaqiq Urges ...**

institutions should be protected as a result of a potential peace agreement.

"Any temporary deal between some political parties and movement cannot bring sustainable peace," said Akram Khpalwak, an aide to Ghani.

In addition, Pakistan's former ambassador to the US Hussain Haqqani said that it would be best if Pakistan's government engaged in friendly relations with Afghanistan.

"While Pakistan claims to have control over 85 percent of land in Afghanistan, their leaders and families live in Doha or in various cities in Pakistan," said Haqqani. (TOLO NEWS)

**(12) Pakistan Military...**

the border have recently been holding rallies to call on the government to protect them from Pakistani Taliban militants who over the past year have formed an alliance with other outlawed groups.

The militants have launched a series of attacks on the Pakistani security forces, government officials and suspected collaborators, as well as kidnapping and exporting money, government officials say.

Three soldiers were killed when militants attacked a checkpoint near the border on July 5. The Pakistani Taliban, or Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), claimed responsibility.

Pakistan has said the Pakistani militants could take advantage of growing instability in Afghanistan and operate along the border more freely as the Afghan Taliban take ground from government forces.

Afghanistan has for years accused the Pakistani military of providing covert support for the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan denies that. (ATN)

**(13) Europe Floods...**

has to assume that under the circumstances some people didn't manage to escape," he said.

Authorities said late Thursday that about 1,300 people in Germany were listed as missing, but they cautioned that the high number could be due to duplicated reports and difficulties reaching people because of disrupted roads and phone service.

In a provisional tally, the death toll in Belgium rose to 12 and five people were missing, local authorities and media reported early Friday. Most of the drowning victims were found around Liege, where the rain hit hardest.

Flash floods this week followed days of heavy rainfall which turned streams and streets into raging torrents that swept away cars and caused houses to collapse across the region.

Thousands of people remained homeless in Germany after their houses were destroyed or deemed at-risk by authorities, including several villages around the Steinbach reservoir that experts say could collapse under the weight of the floods.

The governor of Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia state, Armin Laschet, called an emergency Cabinet meeting Friday. The 60-year-old's handling of the flood disaster is widely seen as a test for his ambitions to succeed German Chancellor Angela Merkel after the country's national election on Sept. 26. (AP)

**(14) Biden Raises...**

to opposition from bipartisan lawmakers.

"By the time I became president, it was 90% completed, and imposing sanctions did not seem to make any sense," Biden said on Thursday. He noted the two allies instead will look at practical measures to ensure European energy security will not be weakened by Russian actions.

The two leaders also covered topics such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Iran nuclear issue. Biden expressed condolences to Merkel for loss of life due to the flooding in Germany, which had left 58 people dead and dozens missing.

Merkel is the first European leader to visit the White House since Biden took office. The visit was widely seen as Biden's efforts to restore the relationship between Washington and Berlin, which had been damaged by his predecessor Donald Trump.

It is likely Merkel's last official trip to Washington as she will step down following the September election after 16 years in office. (Xinhua)

**(15) Washington...**

Popular Mobilization Committee militia. The killings outraged the Iraqi side, with the parliament subsequently voting to order a full withdrawal of foreign troops from their country, which the Trump administration ignored. Under Biden, the two sides are engaged in talks about an eventual withdrawal of combat troops and Pentagon's shift to "advisory role" in Iraq, but the US is apparently in no hurry to proceed. PM al-Kadhimi is scheduled to visit Washington later this month for further discussions on the issue.

Iranian-led forces hostile to the US presence are regularly targeted by US bombing operations, with the latest one conducted on both sides of the Iraqi-Syrian border in late June. Baghdad condemned the strikes as a "blatant and unacceptable violation" of its sovereignty and national security. (RT)

**(16) France to...**

in pledges (\$295m). But France, the former colonial power, has repeatedly expressed exasperation over the failure of Lebanon's leaders to end a political and economic crisis that dates back to well before the explosion.

The foreign ministry said Hariri's failure to form a government "confirms the political deadlock which Lebanese leaders have deliberately continued for months, even as Lebanon sinks into an unprecedented economic and social crisis".

It said there was now an "absolute urgency" to remove this "deliberate and unacceptable obstacle" and allow the formation of a government in Lebanon and the rapid appointment of a prime minister.

"It is clear that the international community is frustrated with the political class and any help they are gonna give is going to go directly to the people," said Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr, reporting from Beirut.

However, some believe the political vacuum is going to continue until next year's parliamentary election, scheduled to be held in May, Khodr said. (Aljazeera)

**(17) Biden to...**

could still opt for a larger US mission beyond guarding the embassy in Port-au-Prince.

"This is not a closed door. The evolution of the situation will determine the outcome," Pierre said, adding: "In the meantime, the government is doing everything we can to stabilize the country, return to a normal environment and organize elections while trying to come to a political agreement with most political parties."

Earlier on Thursday, the Pentagon acknowledged that "a small number" of Moise's assassins had received US training in the past. At the time, all were soldiers in Colombia's armed forces, which have long kept close military ties with Washington. While the Defense Department did not specify how many were trained, the Haitian government has claimed that 28 foreign mercenaries carried out the presidential hit, two of them Haitian-Americans and the rest Colombian nationals. Nearly two dozen suspects have been taken into custody, while several were killed in firefights with police, and at least five others remain on the run. Some of the Colombians involved were reportedly hired by a Florida-based security firm, CTU, and flown to the neigh-

boring Dominican Republic in the days before Moise was killed. (RT)

**(18) Libya Might...**

for elections "should have been clarified by now," he said that even after extensive sessions in Geneva last month, members of the decision-making Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) remained "frustrated."

"Because of this failure of both constitutional reform bodies and the LPDF, the situation in Libya is getting more difficult, confrontational, and tense," said the UNSMIL chief. (Xinhua)

**(19) WHO Says ...**

concerns over reporting the accuracy of where the first known patient lived, writing in an email that "the current first known patient is most probably not the first case."

It is unclear how the errors were discovered, who made the errors, and whether there are other mistakes in the report. The WHO did not immediately respond to Fox News' request for comment.

Also on Thursday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus revealed that the international team that traveled to China earlier this year to investigate the origins of the virus did have trouble accessing raw data from the Chinese government.

The WHO chief told reporters that the U.N. health agency based in Geneva is "asking actually China to be transparent, open and cooperate, especially on the information, raw data that we asked for at the early days of the pandemic." (Fox News)

**(20) Pope ...**

In addition, Francis said bishops are no longer allowed to authorize the formation of any new pro-Latin Mass groups in their dioceses.

Francis said he was taking action to promote unity and heal divisions within the church that had grown since Benedict's 2007 document, *Summorum Pontificum*, relaxed the restrictions on celebrating the old Mass. He said he based his decision on a 2020 Vatican survey of all the world's bishops, whose "responses reveal a situation that preoccupies and saddens me, and persuades me of the need to intervene."

The pope's rollback immediately created an uproar among traditionalists already opposed to Francis' more progressive bent and still nostalgic for Benedict's doctrinaire papacy.

"This is an extremely disappointing document which entirely undoes the legal provisions," of Benedict's 2007 document, said Joseph Shaw, chairman of the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales.

While Latin celebrations can continue, "the presumption is consistently against them: bishops are being invited to close them down," Shaw said, adding that the requirement for Latin Masses to be held outside a parish was "unworkable" in practical terms. (AP)

**(21) Missing ...**

into a Kamchatka forest in 2012 in a crash that killed 10 people. Investigators said both pilots were drunk at the time of the crash.

Russian aviation safety standards have improved in recent years but accidents, especially involving ageing planes in far-flung regions, are not uncommon. (Aljazeera)

**(22) Abuse and ...**

from Washington, DC-based NGO Human Rights First (HRF) said ISIL members are still given free rein to radicalise inmates across the Egyptian prison system.

HRF's report – *Creating Time Bombs: How Abuse in Egypt's Prison System Fuels ISIL Recruitment* – released on Thursday draws on testimonies from prisoners released between 2019 and 2021, who said ISIL continues to recruit prisoners, a practice partly fuelled by torture and abuse that is widespread in Egyptian prisons.

Since Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took power following a 2013 military coup, thousands of people have been imprisoned for their political opposition, including doctors who criticised the government's handling of the COVID-19 crisis and TikTok influencers, while death sentences have risen three-fold.

Soltan's father, Salah Sultan, was among 36 people sentenced to death in a mass trial in April 2015. Salah, a prominent Muslim scholar, has been in prison for eight years for supporting the 2013 anti-government protests. El-Sisi has long claimed there are "no political prisoners in Egypt".

But rights groups estimated 60,000 political prisoners are being held in Egyptian jails, more than half of the country's estimated prison population of 114,000. (Aljazeera)

## Europe Floods: Death Toll over 110 as Rescues Continue

BERLIN - At least 110 people have died in devastating floods across parts of western Germany and Belgium, officials said Friday, as search and rescue operations continued for hundreds more still unaccounted for or in danger.

Authorities in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate said 60 people had died there, including 12 residents of an assisted living facility for people with disabilities in the town of Sinzig who were surprised by a sudden rush of water from the nearby river Ahr. In neighboring North Rhine-Westphalia state officials put the death toll at 43, but warned that the figure could increase.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said he was "stunned" by the devastation caused by the flooding and pledged support to the families of those killed and to cities and towns facing significant damage.

"In the hour of need, our country stands together," Steinmeier said in a statement Friday afternoon. "It's important that we show solidarity for those from whom the flood has taken everything."

Rescuers rushed Friday to help people trapped in their homes in the town of Ertstadt, southwest of Cologne. Regional authorities said several people had died after their houses collapsed when the ground beneath them sank suddenly. Aerial photos showed what appeared to be a massive sinkhole.

"We managed to get 50 people out of their houses last night," county administrator Frank Rock said. "We know of 15 people who still need to be rescued."

Speaking to German broadcaster n-tv, Rock said that authorities had no precise number yet for how many had died.

"One ... (More on P4)...(13)



## Biden Raises Concerns About Nord Stream 2 to Merkel

WASHINGTON- U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday raised his concerns to German Chancellor Angela Merkel over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, warning Russia not to weaponize the energy.

The 1,230-km gas pipeline, which is expected to be completed next month, would bring natural gas from Russia to Germany through the Baltic Sea.

"I reiterated my concerns about Nord Stream 2," Biden told reporters at a press conference after their meeting, adding that "Merkel and I are absolutely united in our conviction that Russia must not be allowed to use energy as a weapon to coerce or threaten its neighbors."

The United States has long claimed that the project was a geopolitical maneuver by Russia that will undermine Ukraine's role in transiting energy to Europe. Germany and Russia pointed out that the project is purely commercial. The United States and Germany have different assessments regarding the Nord Stream 2, Mer-



kel said at the conference, while stressing both agree that Ukraine will remain a transit country for natural gas.

"We will be actively acting should Russia not respect this right of Ukraine that it as a transit country," She added via translation. "The Nord Stream 2 is an additional project and certainly

not a project to replace any kind of transit through Ukraine." Citing the importance of relations with Germany and the difficulty to stop the nearly completed pipeline, the Biden administration in May waived sanctions against a company behind the pipeline project and its German CEO, which led ... (More on P4)...(14)

## Washington Denies its Top Envoy Discussed Withdrawal of Troops from Iraq with Prime Minister Kadhimi

The Iraqi PM's office says he and the top White House envoy for the Middle East discussed the withdrawal of combat troops from the country. A senior Biden administration official denies it ever happened.

A statement referring to a pullout of American troops from Iraq was released by the office of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi after he met with Brett McGurk, the White House special coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa.

"Discussions took place about mechanisms for [US] combat troops' withdrawal from Iraq, and moving forward to a new stage in strategic cooperation," the Tuesday statement about the Baghdad meeting said.

A senior official in the US administration told Newsweek that "this was not true," when asked for comment.

Iraq hosts some 3,500 foreign troops, including 2,500 American soldiers, who are ostensibly on the ground to help the Iraqi government prevent a possible resurgence of the terrorist group Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS).

Last year, the US carried out the assassination on Iraqi soil of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. In addition to killing Soleimani and his aides, the airstrike killed five Iraqi nationals from the welcoming party, including Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraq's state-backed ... (More on P4)...(15)

## WHO Says It Will Fix Multiple 'Unintended Errors' in Report with China on COVID-19 Origins

The World Health Organization has vowed to correct multiple "unintended errors" discovered in its joint report with China regarding the origins of COVID-19, according to a new report.

The purported mistakes are casting doubt on the accuracy of the report, and questions abound over how the errors were made and whether further inaccuracies were missed.

The Washington Post reported that the WHO said it would fix several errors discovered in the report published months ago, including "changing the virus sequence IDs associated with three of the 13 early patients listed

in a chart in the report and will clarify that the first family cluster was not linked to the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan."

A map in the report also appears to show the first known case of the coronavirus being found in an individual who lived on the opposite side of the Yangtze River from where the Wuhan government claimed the person resided when they fell ill on Dec. 8, 2019.

WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told the news outlet the "editing errors" did not affect "the data analysis process, nor the conclusions" of the report. Jasarevic also dismissed ... (More on P4)...(19)

## Pope Reverses Benedict, Reimposes Restrictions on Latin Mass

ROME - Pope Francis cracked down Friday on the spread of the old Latin Mass, reversing one of Pope Benedict XVI's signature decisions in a major challenge to traditionalist Catholics who immediately decried it as an attack on them and the ancient liturgy.

Francis reimposed restrictions on celebrating the Latin Mass that Benedict relaxed in 2007. The pontiff said he was taking action because Benedict's reform had become a source of division in the church and been used as a tool by Catholics opposed to the Second Vatican Council, the 1960s meetings that modernized the liturgy.

Francis issued a new law requiring individual bishops to approve celebrations of the old Mass, also called the Tridentine Mass, and requiring newly ordained priests to receive explicit permission to celebrate it from their bishops in consultation with the Vatican.

Under the new law, bishops must also determine if the current groups of faithful attached to the old Mass accept Vatican II, which allowed for Mass to be celebrated in the vernacular rather than Latin. These groups can no longer use regular parishes for their Masses; instead, bishops must find an alternate location for them. ... (More on P4)...(20)

## France to Host Lebanon Aid Event on Anniversary of Port Disaster

France's foreign ministry has said President Emmanuel Macron will host a new international conference on crisis-hit Lebanon next month, on the first anniversary of a devastating explosion at Beirut's port that killed some 200 people and wrecked much of the Lebanese capital. The announcement on Friday came a day after Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri gave up trying to form a government, striking a further blow to a long-running political impasse. Prime Minister Hassan Diab has been serving in a

caretaker capacity since resigning in the wake of the port explosion on August 4, 2020, with fractious sectarian politicians unable to agree on a new government ever since.

The French foreign ministry said in a statement the event will be organized with the help of the United Nations "to respond to the needs of the Lebanese whose situation is deteriorating every day". Macron had hosted a first aid conference in the wake of the port explosion, rallying some 250 million euros ... (More on P4)...(16)

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## Biden to Send Marines to Guard US Embassy in Haiti, But Says Broader Deployment 'Not on the Agenda at This Moment'

American Marines will be sent to the US Embassy in Haiti, President Joe Biden said, though he added that a larger deployment to stabilize the country in the wake of President Jovenel Moise's assassination is "not on the agenda."

"We're only sending American Marines to our embassy" to ensure "nothing is out of whack," Biden said during a Thursday press briefing. "But the idea of sending American forces to Haiti is not on the agenda at this moment."

The announcement comes after the White House previously appeared to rule out sending any troops, which had been requested by Haiti's interim government in the days following Moise's murder by gunmen last week. Haiti's Elections Minister Mathias Pierre responded to the president's comments, telling the Associated Press that the country is in a "fragile" state and that the soldiers could be used for security ahead of elections set for September. He also suggested that Biden ... (More on P4)...(17)

## Arab League Chief "Disappointed" over Lebanese PM-Designate Hariri's Resignation

CAIRO- Arab League (AL) Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit expressed on Thursday "great disappointment" over the decision by Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri to step down.

"The consequences of Hariri's stepping down may be dangerous for the future of the situation in Lebanon," the AL chief was quoted as saying in an AL statement.

Aboul-Gheit made the remarks from the U.S. city of New York where he is participating in a UN Security Council session on Libya, according to the statement. He held all Lebanese politicians responsible for "such a deteriorating condition" that the Lebanese people don't deserve, vowing that the AL would continue its support for Lebanon in this crucial stage of its history.

Hariri gave up the effort to form a new government on Thursday after a meeting with President



Michel Aoun, citing that "it's clear that nothing changes and it seems that we disagree with the president."

Hariri's failure to form a non-partisan cabinet in the crisis-torn country narrows the chances for

a cabinet formation any time soon to save the country from worsening financial conditions. Aboul-Gheit urged the international community to stand by Lebanon and support its people in this critical phase. (Xinhua)

## Libya Might Backslide to Chaos, UN Envoy Warns



UNITED NATIONS- United Nations (UN) Special Envoy for Libya Jan Kubis warned the Security Council on Thursday that efforts must be made to avoid having the situation in Libya backslide

to chaos. The interdependent tracks of implementing Libya's ceasefire agreement, political progress and economic reform are in danger of being reversed, the envoy told

the ministerial-level meeting on the situation in Libya. "Positive steps are now needed to avoid backsliding."

To avoid a return to conflict, violence and chaos, Kubis, who also heads the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), underscored the "overwhelming demand and expectations" of both Libya's citizens and the international community for timely elections to complete the country's democratic transition.

Despite wide-ranging meetings resulting in commitments to hold elections on Dec. 24, the envoy said that many of his interlocutors "are not ready to walk the talk."

Noting that the constitutional basis ... (More on P4)...(18)

## Missing Plane in Siberia Found, Survivors Seen: Russian Officials

A Russian passenger plane that disappeared from radars in Siberia has been found after it made a hard landing, the emergencies ministry said, adding that there were survivors among the 17 people thought to be on board. The ministry did not immediately specify how many survivors there were after the Antonov An-28 disappeared from radars while flying over the region of Tomsk.

"The site of the plane's hard landing was discovered. They see living people," it said in a statement.

The flight from the town of Kedrovoy to the regional capital of Tomsk was carrying between 13 and 17 passengers, the TASS and RIA news agencies cited local officials as saying.

The incident comes less than two weeks after an Antonov-26 crashed into a cliff in poor visibility conditions on the remote Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia's far east, killing all 28 people on board.

An Antonov-28, the same type of plane that went missing over Tomsk, slammed ... (More on P4)...(21)

## Abuse and Torture in Egyptian Prisons Fuel ISIL Recruitment: NGO

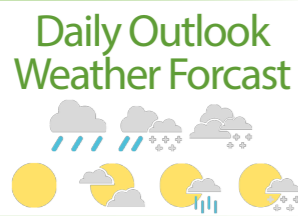
In the last six months of Mohamed Soltan's prison sentence, he was placed in isolation in Egypt's notorious Torah Prison, where he was beaten and tortured mentally and physically every day.

"I was completely cut off from the rest of the world, with no access to daylight or sense of time," he said. Only jailed members of the armed group ISIL (ISIS) had access to his cell - and they attempted to recruit him.

"They tried to talk me out of my hunger strike, because 'the world only respected hard power, might makes right', they told me. They tried to sell me on

taking matters into my own hands and joining their ranks to fight oppression," said Soltan, an Egyptian-American human rights defender who was imprisoned for 22 months from 2013-2015.

Soltan, who was charged with "spreading false news" for tweeting about the dispersal of demonstrations and spent much of his prison sentence on a hunger strike, said he saw first-hand how ISIL members recruited inmates by exploiting their pain and grievances towards the Egyptian government. Six years after his release, researchers ... (More on P4)...(22)



Kabul	Sunny	Bamiyan	Mostly sunny	Herat	Partly cloudy	Mazar	Sunny	Kandahar	Sunny	Ghazni	Mostly sunny	Jalalabad	Sunny
37°C	22°C	26°C	13°C	39°C	24°C	40°C	28°C	42°C	29°C	32°C	19°C	42°C	31°C



## Uzbekistan Renews Support to Afghan Govt, People

KABUL - Uzbekistan President ShavkatMirziyoyev has renewed his country's support to the people and government of Afghanistan and pledged to continue cooperation in different fields, a statement from the Presidential Palace in Kabul said on Thursday.

The Uzbek president made this commitment during a meeting with President Ashraf Ghani. The Afghan president on his first day of official trip to the neighbouring country met his Uzbek counterpart.

Both dignitaries discussed improved security on the border, economic cooperation, trade and transit, electricity supply, rail-



way line and regional consensus on Afghan peace process.

It was also agreed that during Friday conference on regional connectivity all nations should be pressed to provide sincere support to Afghan peace process. Uzbek president pledged

support to Afghan government and its people and assured durable cooperation in the future. President Ghani thanked Uzbekistan President Mirziyoyev for his good intentions, cooperation and warm hospitality. (Pajhwok)

## India Pledges 150,000 Tonnes Wheat to Afghanistan

KABUL - India will provide 150,000 tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan as part of its humanitarian assistance, a statement from Presidential Palace said on Thursday.

Indian Foreign Minister J Shankar made the pledge for wheat support during a meeting with President Ashraf Ghani in Tashkent on the sideline of Central, South Asia Connectivity Conference. Renewing New Delhi support to Afghanistan, Indian foreign minister pledged humanitarian assistance of 150,000 tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan. He said India will continue developing regional consensus for political system in Afghani-



stan. Ghani termed, India a cordial friend of Afghanistan and thanked them for its support to Afghanistan over the years.

Separately President Ghani met a US delegation headed by Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, US homeland security advisor, and discussed matters related the

support of Afghan security forces, development and humanitarian assistance and US pledges to accelerate peace process.

The US delegation assured president Ghani of implementing the pledges made with Afghan government one after another. (Pajhwok)

## Bakhtar Airlines Hires 3 New Afghan Pilots



KABUL - Bakhtar Airlines on Thursday said that the company has hired three newly graduated Afghan pilots.

The three pilots graduated from UAE, Jordan and Norway aviation academies.

The pilots have conducted 25 flights in the past seven months.

They will now be undertaking four flights daily in the country.

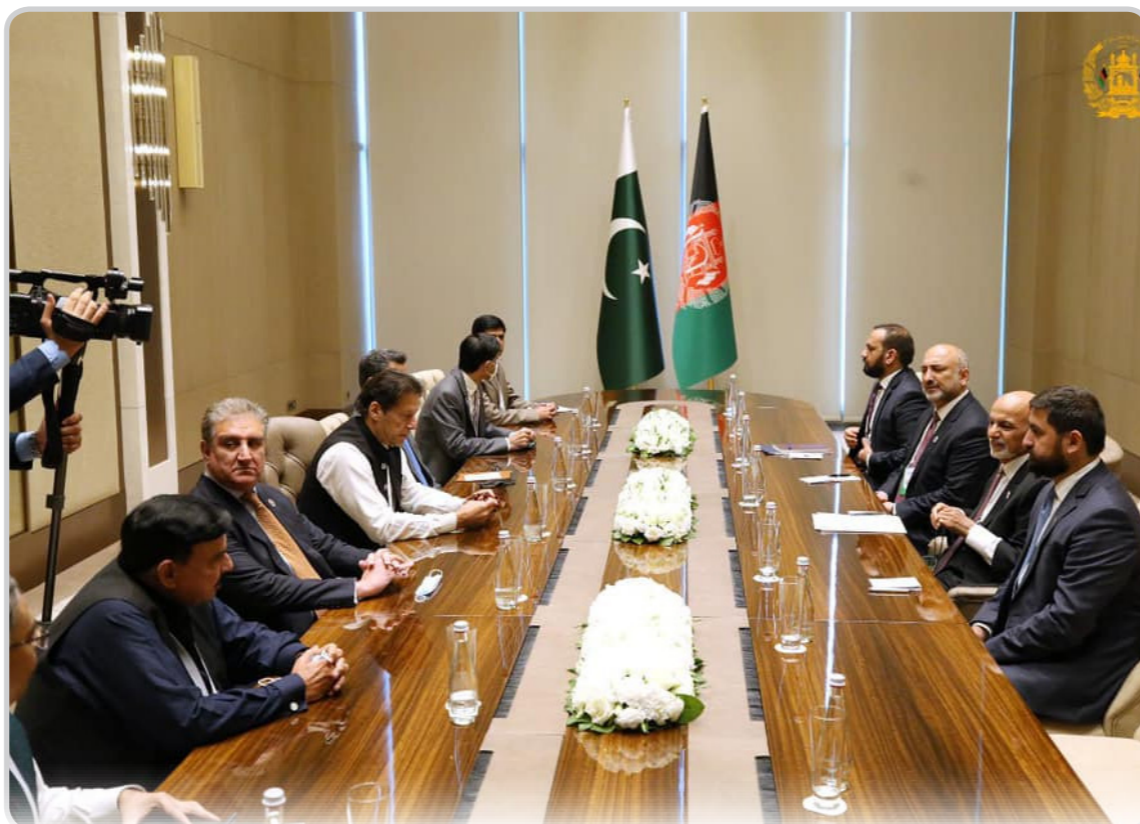
The pilots are named Reshad Habib, Omar Noorzada and Ehsanullah Zazai.

"Now I serve as an officer for Bakhtar airlines; we are now in our training phase and I accompany the captains who have lots of experience. Currently we are conducting flights domestically," said Reshad Habib, a pilot.

"The passengers and any other people should be confident that the Taliban has nothing ...

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## Ghani, Imran Meet in Tashkent



KABUL - President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan met on the sidelines of a conference in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, on Friday, the Presidential Palace said.

However, no details of the meeting were shared in the statement from the Presidential Palace. It said President Ghani attended the Central and South Asia, Re-

gional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities conference in Tashkent.

The president met Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan on the sidelines of the International Conference.

The meeting comes after Pakistan denied allegations by Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh that the Pakistan Air Force had issued an official warning to

Afghan security forces to repel any action by the latter to dislodge the Taliban from the border crossing of Spin Boldak.

Such allegations "undermine Pakistan's sincere efforts to play its part in an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led solution" for restoring peace in the war-torn country, said a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO) on ...

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## Ghani Meets with Biden Advisor on Sidelines of Uzbekistan Meeting



President Ashraf Ghani met with a US delegation led by Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, he Homeland Security Advisor for U.S. President Joe Biden in Tashkent in Uzbekistan on Thursday afternoon, the Presidential Palace (ARG) said in a statement.

According to ARG, the two sides discussed US support to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), development and humanitarian assistance, and the US's commitment to accelerating the Afghan peace process.

Sherwood-Randall stressed that the US will put all its efforts into speeding up the peace

process and deepen its regional diplomacy in the area, the statement said.

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad also accompanied Liz Sherwood-Randall, who are both currently in Uzbekistan for the C5+1 meeting.

The meeting started Thursday with the focus on the current situation in Afghanistan.

Addressing the meeting, Sherwood-Randall said the United States will continue to solicit strong support for the Afghan peace process both regionally and internationally.

The format includes five Central Asian ...

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## Reuters Photographer Killed as Afghan Forces Fight Taliban

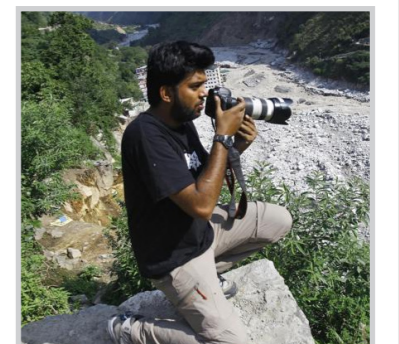
ISLAMABAD - Afghan government forces battled Friday to retake a border crossing with Pakistan from Taliban insurgents, and the Reuters news agency said one of its photographers was killed in the area.

The Taliban had overrun the Spin Boldak crossing earlier in the week. On Friday, witnesses on the Pakistan side of the border said they saw intense fighting and reported seeing bodies.

Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian later tweeted that the government had retaken control of Spin Boldak.

Reuters said Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Danish Siddiqui, who was embedded with the Afghan special forces, was killed as the commando unit sought to recapture Spin Boldak.

The agency said Siddiqui and a senior Afghan officer were killed in what they described as Taliban crossfire. "We are urgently seeking more information, working with authorities in the region," Reuters Presi-



dent Michael Friedenber and Editor-in-Chief Alessandra Galoni said in a statement.

Siddiqui was an Indian national. Afghanistan's ambassador to India, Farid Mamundzay, tweeted his condolences.

The Taliban have overrun dozens of districts in Afghanistan since the start of the final phase of the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops, after a 20-year military presence. The U.S. says its withdrawal is 95% complete.

The fighting at Spin Boldak was confirmed by Fawad Aman, Afghanistan's deputy defense ministry spokesman. The Associated Press also obtained footage ...

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## 'Peace Not Possible in Absence of International Guarantee'

KABUL - Three advisors to President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday told a gathering about peace in Kabul that no side could rule Afghanistan by force and peace could not be ensured in absence of national and international guarantees.

Mohammad Mohaqiq, advisor to the president on security and political affairs, talking to 'National Symposium for Stable Peace' here that they were optimistic about talks with the Taliban in Qatar and that both sides would reach an agreement.

A delegation from Kabul headed by chairman of High Council of National Reconciliation (HCNR) is

expected to travel to Qatar for talks with the Taliban in the next few days.

"No side can win by war. If an agreement is reached, this country a shared home of all of us and people would be no longer hurt. If they do not reach an agreement and continued war, then Afghanistan will go to the edge of a cliff that nor the Taliban and neither the government would be able to control," he said.

He asked the Taliban not to continue the war but instead work for peace in the country. "If peace fails, Afghanistan will plunge into a false domestic war and face with unprecedented level of casu-

alties," he said.

On the other hand, AkramKhalwaj, a senior advisor to the president on political affairs who is also deputy head of HCNR, said that important issues about peace were usually kept hidden from people. He said that any agreement reached in Qatar would be shared with the ...



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## UN Official Urges Donors to Step Up Support for Afghanistan



UNITED NATIONS - A UN official on Thursday urged donors to step up support for Afghanistan, where an ongoing drought and increased military operations amid foreign troop withdrawal are displacing scores of civilians, creating a growing humanitarian crisis.

Ramiz Alakbarov, UN resident and humanitarian coordinator for Afghanistan, said a 1.3-billion-U.S.-dollar appeal launched earlier this year is less than 40 percent funded.

Some 18 million Afghans, or half the population, require assistance. A third of the country is malnourished and half ...

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