



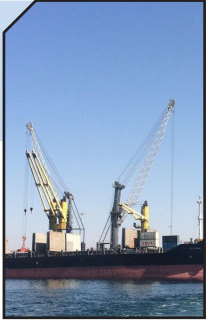
Page 2 | NATIONAL
What's going on between Russia, U.S. and Afghanistan?

A divided Taliban could unleash a new proxy war in Afghanistan

The COVID-19 pandemic is transforming international relations not just by straining relations among powerful states, but also ...

Page 3 | ECONOMY

Basic goods imported to Afghanistan via Chabahar



Kabul
33 / 17



Herat
37 / 24



Nangarhar
39 / 28



Balkh
40 / 27



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Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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10 afs



Wolesi Jirga approves Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled

The Independent Disabled and Martyrs Support Authority has been promoted to the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled in compliance with a presidential decree, the Wolesi Jirga told on Monday. Mohammad Halim Ali Yar, deputy head of the Judicial Commission of Wolesi Jirga, said the government issued a legislative decree promoting the Department of Martyrs and Disabled in the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs to an independent authority. Yar said two months later, the president issued another presidential decree, promoting the independent authority to the State Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled.

He said both decrees were discussed in the Judicial Commission and majority of the members wanted to reject them. However, later a joint meeting of both the houses was organized and it was decided that this authority should ... **P3**



Congress Unites to Demand Answers from Trump On Russian Bounties in Afghanistan

Members of Congress in both parties demanded answers on Monday about reported bounties paid by Russian operatives to Afghan insurgents for targeting American troops. The stories appeared to have taken even the most senior lawmakers off guard, and they said they wanted briefings soon from the Defense Department and the intelligence community.

"I think it is absolutely essential that we get the information and be able to judge its credibility," said Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee.

The story is unfolding along two parallel tracks in Washington, based on two key questions:

First, what actually has taken place — and have any American troops been killed as a result of Russian-sponsored targeted action? And second: Who knew what about the reporting on these allegations that has flowed up from ... **P3**

Afghans Paid \$1.6 Billion in Bribes in 2018: Report



A report by the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC), which focused on areas vulnerable to corruption, stated that Afghans paid \$1.65 billion in bribes in 2018, less than the \$2.88 billion in 2016 but higher than the government's annual revenue.

The report finds that people still believe that corruption is highly

endemic in the country and they no longer trust government officials. The report shows that the government's income from taxpayers was Afs86.5 billion (\$1.12 billion) in 2018 and Afs68.7 billion (\$889 million) in 2019-- in both cases less than the amount that Afghans paid as bribes in 2018.

According to the report, the country's national revenue in 2018 was around

Afs189.5 billion (\$2.45 billion) in 2018.

"According to the 2018 report of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, \$1.65 billion has been paid in bribes across Afghanistan, which does not specifically relate to customs," said Maiwand Rouhani, head of the secretariat of the MEC.

The MEC report lists eight key conditions that affect reforms.

It has assessed the two general directorates of the Ministry of Finance: the customs department and the revenue department. The report finds alleged interference by government officials, MPs and "warlords" in the activities of the two departments and says they have provided conditions for corruption in the two offices.

According to a Kabul-based watchdog, almost \$1 billion is wasted in the country's customs annually. "At least \$2 billion is taken as a bribe from the people and this encompasses big corruption in procurement and does not include land-grabbing," said Nasir Taimori, a researcher at Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

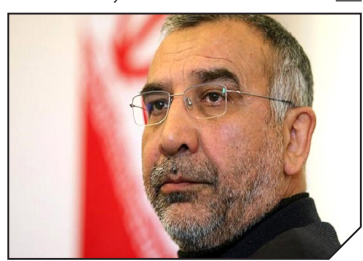
Members of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment said that a big amount of money is wasted annually due to "corruption" and "bribery" in customs.

"One person is appointed to a management post after paying \$500,000 or he is appointed by the mafia. It is obvious that he will work for himself and embezzles the national revenue," said Zalmai Azimi, deputy head of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment in Nangarhar.

Iran holds meeting with Taliban in Qatar

Senior leaders of the Taliban are currently stationed in Doha, Qatar, where Iran's special envoy for Afghanistan Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian holds a meeting with them on Sunday.

As reported the two sides have conferred on the interference of foreign forces in regional countries' affairs as well as those of Afghanistan's. Reducing violence, commencing Afghan-Afghan talks without the interference of foreign forces, in particular of the US, and Tehran-Kabul joint interests have also been among the discussed subjects in this meeting. On June 24, Taherian held a ... **P3**



Kremlin slams claims over Russia 'bounties' to Taliban to kill Americans as elaborate hoax

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has blasted reports that Russia allegedly offered Afghan militants bounties for killing US military personnel as lies and an elaborate hoax. According to him, the topic was not discussed between the two leaders.

"These claims are nothing but lies," the Kremlin spokesman said, commenting on the publication of The New York Times. "Once again, we can only express regret that once largest, reputable and high-quality world media outlets have been increasingly more often publishing elaborate hoaxes in the last few years, which definitely does not bode well with keeping up with their reputation and prestige," Peskov stressed.

"If intelligence services continue to be accountable before the president in the US, then I suggest you focus on the relevant statement of President



Trump who already evaluated these publications," he added. When asked if Putin and Trump had had a phone call to discuss these allegations, Peskov said, "No."

On Friday, The New York Times claimed that an unidentified unit of the Russian military intelligence encouraged Taliban militants to attack military personnel of the international coalition in Afghanistan. The newspaper alleged that these conclusions of American intelligence services were presented

for Trump's judgment a few months ago, while the White House National Security Council discussed the topic in late March.

In turn, Trump revealed that he had not been briefed about any such attacks in Afghanistan. On Sunday, he took to Twitter to announce that the US intelligence did not find this information credible, slamming The New York Times report as "possibly another fabricated Russia Hoax, maybe by the Fake News" meant to tarnish the Republicans' reputation.

6 months on,...

how to save lives now.

These include empowering communities to understand that they are not helpless and that there are things everyone should do to protect themselves and others.

“That includes physical distancing, hand hygiene, covering coughs, staying home if you feel sick, wearing masks when appropriate, and only sharing information from reliable sources,” said Tedros. Tedros said that unless countries address the problems the organization has already identified, he said a “lack of national unity and lack of global solidarity” in a “divided world” is “actually helping the virus to spread.”

Respect needed

Dr. Mike Ryan, the WHO’s executive director of emergencies, said that the organization wants to have “international discourse that’s based on mutual respect.”

He said: “We encourage all people at all levels and in all countries to use language that is appropriately respectful, and there’s nothing associated with any connotations that are that are negative.”

Ryan added: “Everyone has a job. We can do better than we’re doing right now. We have a lot of vulnerable people to protect and shield. “We have a lot of communities with poor health systems and poor living conditions that we need to support. And we need to focus on that,” he said, in an apparent reference to the growth of the virus in parts of Africa and Latin America.

By Jonathan Marcus

What’s going on between Russia, U.S. and Afghanistan?

For a start, we have a triple denial from all of the main parties involved. The Russian government has dismissed the story out of hand. So too have the Taliban.

And U.S. President Donald Trump has vehemently denied any knowledge of the matter - with White House sources telling the U.S. press that the subject never reached as high as the president or vice-president because there was no consensus in the intelligence community about the veracity of the reports.

However, serious U.S. news outlets are carrying a range of reports quoting a variety of sources, suggesting that an intelligence assessment that Russian agents were offering bounties to the Taliban for the killing of U.S. or coalition troops had been around since March; that significant amounts of cash had been seized in U.S. raids; and that some US personnel may indeed have been killed as a result. These sources also indicate that the intelligence assessment was indeed briefed at the highest levels, including mention at the president’s own daily intelligence briefing.

Mr Trump’s critics - not least the Democratic presidential contender Joe Biden - have seized upon these reports to highlight once again their view that Mr Trump is not up to defending U.S. interests.

But perhaps more interestingly, even some key Republicans are raising questions - Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming asking the inevitable question of who did know about the assessment and when did they know it?

Payback?

Why, though, might Russia promote such action? Potentially, it has multiple motives.

Russia maintains close links with the Taliban for good reason. It sees the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan winding down. It is deeply concerned about the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in the region spreading in its direction. And it sees the Taliban as one potential bulwark against this.

Moscow is believed to have supported key Taliban leaders with arms and money. And while it also maintains links with the Afghan government and in broad terms supports the putative Afghan peace deal, it is effectively hedging its bets, fearful of future Afghan instability.



But Russia is also waging a “grey” or undeclared war against the West. This has many elements: cyber-attacks; disinformation campaigns; electoral interference; the funding of extremists in Western countries and so on.

At times, this has even resulted in direct action: for example the use of nerve agent in the bungled assassination attempt on a former Russian intelligence officer in the British cathedral town of Salisbury, and a full-scale assault by Russian military contractors on a U.S. position in Syria during which US air strikes are reported to have killed significant numbers of Russians.

Russia under President Vladimir Putin has smarted from every perceived indignity suffered since the fall of the Soviet Union. It was, of course, US support for Afghan irregular fighters that contributed to Moscow’s forced withdrawal from Afghanistan in the 1980s.

And there are suggestions that some in the Russian hierarchy might not be averse to paying the Americans back for both past and more recent setbacks.

Ambiguity

This episode also throws a stark light on the current state of US-Russia relations. U.S. policy towards Moscow is suffering from a kind of schizophrenia.

On the one hand, the US is wary of Russian nuclear modernisation and suspicious of its broader plans

in the Middle East and elsewhere; but on the other, this administration is strangely accepting of Russian denials, for example concerning its alleged intrusion into the U.S. election campaign.

Much of this ambiguity is down to the person of President Trump himself, whom many see as rather admiring of strong, dictatorial leaders.

And to this extent, the handling of this intelligence report casts another light on the whole foreign policy process within the Trump administration.

It will add weight to those critics from both the Democratic side of politics and more hardline Republicans, like the former National Security Adviser John Bolton, who argue in their different ways that there is no strategic direction, no joined up thinking, and no leadership from the top.

This is a delicate story at the best of times and it is not going to go away. If even partly true and if any deaths can be ascribed to the paying of bounties by the Russians, it would mark a new low point in US-Russia relations since the Cold War ended.

The fact that it comes in the midst of a re-election campaign where Mr Trump is having to deal with plunging popularity amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter demonstrations gives it an added edge.

For there is a factor here that Washington’s friends and enemies alike have to contend with: there ... **P3**

By Jared Schwartz and Yelena Biberman

A divided Taliban could unleash a new proxy war in Afghanistan

The COVID-19 pandemic is transforming international relations not just by straining relations among powerful states, but also by disrupting violent no state actors. Perhaps no major militant outfit has felt the impact as much as the Taliban. The group’s leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, is either seriously ill with the virus or possibly dead. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the head of the powerful Haqqani Network and deputy leader of the Taliban, is also very ill with COVID-19. This has allowed Mohammad Yaqoob, the other deputy leader, to take operational control of the organization.

The shift in the balance of power within the Taliban has the potential to upend Afghan security, India-Pakistan relations, and the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Haqqani is an ally of Pakistan and al-Qaeda, while Yaqoob favors the peace process with the United States and rapprochement with India. Yaqoob’s rise might therefore seem like good news for Washington. But, as Yaqoob and Haqqani factions compete with each other for power, a spike in violence against soft targets by the

Haqqani faction and its allies as well as a new proxy war between India and Pakistan are likely to ensue.

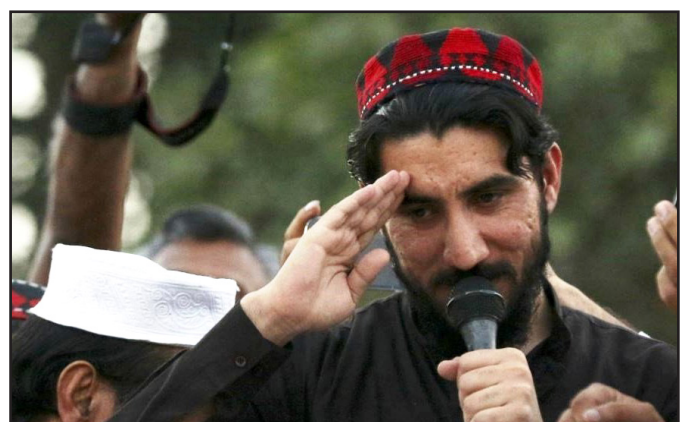
Upon assuming power in 2016, Akhundzada intentionally split operational control of the Taliban’s military forces between Haqqani and Yaqoob in order to prevent the two from creating potentially powerful breakaway factions. While Akhundzada and Haqqani have been out of commission, however, Yaqoob has taken on the latter’s role as chief of operations and the Afghanistan affairs portfolio. He has also set up a new financial commission to manage the world’s second-richest militant group. Among his supporters are Qayyum Zakir, who is influential in the narcotics-producing Afghan province of Helmand, and Ibrahim Sadar, a powerful voice in the Helmand shura, or council. From the time of his initial bid for leadership, Yaqoob has also enjoyed the backing of the Taliban’s interior minister and Kandahar’s shadow governor. In recent weeks, despite being widely seen within the Taliban as an arrogant and entitled son of the organization’s founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, Yaqoob has

gained the loyalty and operational resources of the most vigorous Taliban factions in the south, where Haqqani has been unpopular.

In May, a Taliban spokesman made a shocking statement describing India’s revocation of Kashmir’s autonomy and subsequent military crackdown as an Indian “internal affair.” Just a month earlier, anti-India militants had been found training for Kashmir operations at a Taliban training camp in Afghanistan. Indian intelligence officials believe that Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), an extremist group based in Pakistan that seeks to annex Kashmir, is operating three training camps in Nangarhar, Afghanistan, in return for JeM training Haqqani Network operatives in Pakistan. The Taliban’s contradictory policy toward India suggests a major internal rift between the Haqqani and Yaqoob factions.

Both India and Pakistan are likely to exploit this rift in order to advance their own security interests in the region, especially as the United States draws down its troops and Afghanistan potentially descends into chaos. ... **P3**

PTM to get Pashtuns their rights, justice, vows Pashteen



The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) has promised continued efforts for getting Pashtuns their rights and ensuring justice for those killed in fake police encounters.

Accompanied by lawmaker Ali Wazir, PTM chairman Manzoor Pashteen visited the Bara tehsil of Khyber district on Sunday to express sympathies with the family of Irfanullah.

Irfanullah was allegedly killed in a fake encounter with the Counter-Terrorism Department’s personnel in Peshawar on June 22.

Pashteen, who later addressed a protest sit-in organised by the Khyber Siyasi Ittehad, promised PTM would launch a countrywide protest against the extrajudicial killing of Irfanullah.

He told the protestors: “We don’t promote terrorism, we don’t block roads and we don’t demolish houses of innocent people.”

His organization would always promote peace and justice on Pashtuns’ soil, Pashteen pledged, assailing the forces that deprived the Pashtun population of their rights and justice.

Basic goods imported to Afghanistan via Chabahar

India's fifth consignment of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan has arrived in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti Port, said the director-general of Sistan and Baluchestan Ports and Maritime Department.

Behrouz Aghaei said on Monday that the fifth vessel, carrying 300 containers of wheat, weighing 7,500 tons, has docked at the southeastern Iranian port and is ready to unload the Afghanistan-bound cargo.

He noted that the previous four ships arrived at the strategic port of Chabahar early spring, despite the coronavirus pandemic, to help transport the humanitarian cargo to Afghanistan.

Aghaei noted that some 14 vessels carrying Indian cargo to Afghanistan have so far arrived in Chabahar in the past two years.

"Each vessel, carrying 10,000 to 15,000 tons of goods, arrived in Chabahar Port, cargoes of which have been transported to neighboring Afghanistan via trucks."

Chabahar Port has a good and suitable situation for transporting, transiting and transshipping [maritime transport] of goods to the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, he said, adding, "with the coordination made in this regard, all 75,000 tons of wheat, donated by India to Afghanistan, will be transited to this country via Milak Border in Zabol." Transit of goods inside and outside the country will play a very important role in the economic prosperity of this southern province, Aghaei emphasized. This unique advantage and capability of Chabahar Port in the field of transit has made this port as one of the prosperous



and lucrative ports in the country which could play a very important role in regional bond, he stressed.

Despite the existence of two ports of Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari, suitable ways have been provided for mooring, loading and unloading cargoes of oceangoing ships as well as the prosperity of transit and exports in the southeast part of the country, he

added.

He pointed out that Chabahar Port is considered as a golden opportunity for Afghanistan in the field of exporting and transiting goods, adding, "development of trade, economic and trade relations between nations is one of the main objectives behind construction of Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar."

Iran holds...

phone conversation with Pakistan's Special envoy for Afghanistan, where they conferred on the latest developments in Afghanistan including the peace talks in the country.

It should be noted that Mohammad Haneef Atmar, the current acting Minister of Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs arrived in Tehran last week heading a high-ranking delegation for an official two-day visit.

Atmar held meetings with a number of Iranian officials and the two sides discussed bilateral relations and regional and global issues and called for expansion of relations between the two countries.

What's going on...

is at least the possibility now that President Trump could lose his re-election bid. Even beyond the dramatic medical, social and economic impact of the pandemic, there is a lot going on now.

The Russians and the Chinese are seeking to assert themselves as regional powers, though Beijing's ambitions may go further. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is considering the possible annexation of territory in the West Bank.

The UK's government is seeking to realise what it sees as the benefits of Brexit and to rebrand its foreign policy under the banner of "Global Britain".

For the next few months, all of these actors are going to have to factor into their plans the likely response of two US administrations: the one that is there now, and another which may take over in January.

And a Biden administration will be much more likely to call out Russia if the Afghan bounties story is ultimately revealed to be true.

Wolesi Jirga...

be promoted to a ministry not a state ministry because state ministers and heads of the independent organs were not answerable to the lower house.

Ali Yar said all of members agreed on this decision and asked the speaker to mention the matter in the house for voting. Speaker Mir Rahman Rahmani said on the basis of lawmakers' decisions, the Minister of Martyrs and Disabled should be referred to the house for a trust vote.

A divided Taliban...

The Haqqani Network is widely viewed as a proxy of Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI. Under the command of Yaqoob, the mainstream Taliban's accommodating attitude toward India is a direct threat to Pakistan's ability to project strategic depth through the Taliban against India. The two factions' divergent attitudes mean that Pakistan will likely view Haqqani's influence within the Taliban as critical to its interests.

Haqqani gained and maintained his position within the Taliban largely because of his skill at planning and executing attacks. His power, and by extension Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, are contingent on the Taliban's continued interest in carrying out complex military operations. With the mainstream Taliban signaling a turn towards more conciliatory tactics such as ceasefires, and Haqqani's fall from influence within the Taliban, the Haqqani Network's power is increasingly tenuous. As the Yaqoob faction turns towards diplomacy with India, the Haqqani Network's need for stature-boosting military operations and Pakistan's desire to control the direction of the insurgency align. With some five thousand loyal fighters, along with a sophisticated and independent financing structure, the Haqqani Network remains a formidable threat in its own right. Even cut off from the broader Taliban organization, it remains capable of significant damage.

In addition to the Haqqani Network's incentives for continued violence, the revelation of joint Haqqani-JeM training camps suggests that

Pakistan may use its proxies to project influence outside of the proxies' usual geographic realms. There are approximately five hundred fighters active in Afghanistan's Kunar and Nangarhar provinces that are loyal to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), an anti-India and pro-Kashmiri militant organization. Both JeM and LeT became closer to the Haqqani Network and the Taliban after the February 26, 2019 Balakot strike by the Indian military, which resulted in Kashmiri militants seeking refuge further away from India. Both groups have shifted their bases into Afghanistan.

With Pakistan disconnected from the mainstream Taliban, the ISI may also turn to other violent nonstate actors to project influence in Afghanistan. The increasing presence of Kashmiri militants in Afghanistan, alongside a sidelined Haqqani Network, provides an opportunity for precisely that. A recent Afghan intelligence report, done in collaboration with US intelligence, suggests that attacks in Kabul by the Taliban and the Haqqani Network, alongside JeM and LeT, could be imminent. While the Taliban are listed as co-sponsors of the attack, the report suggests the attacks will come alongside a Haqqani Network military offensive to capture several towns along the border with Pakistan, and follow the release of Anas Haqqani, Sirajuddin's brother. This offensive alongside Anas' release implies that the Haqqani Network is preparing military operations to bolster its standing within the Taliban.

The Haqqani Network's waning power, Pakistan's concerns about India's influence in Afghanistan,

and Kashmiri militants' presence in Afghanistan constitute an alignment of trends that could be detrimental to Afghan security. Pakistan has historically been more than willing to work with violent nonstate groups to influence the balance of power in Afghanistan. And the Haqqani Network will need new military objectives to reconstitute its influence.

These developments could complicate the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Given Pakistan's efforts to get the United States to leave, it is unlikely that Pakistan's proxies would directly attack coalition forces for fear of provoking the United States into a response or increased commitment. Rather, they would likely attack soft targets in order to provoke an Afghan military response, leading to a breakdown in intra-Afghan negotiations. In such circumstances, the United States would be left with the choice of continuing to back the Afghan government and freezing troop withdrawals, or letting Afghanistan once again descend into a civil war and potentially become a base for militant groups targeting the United States and its allies.

Recognizing that further attacks may not be at the behest of the mainstream Taliban will be crucial to preventing escalation in Afghanistan. Further violence in Afghanistan may instead be a result of the interminable conflict between India and Pakistan, and the Haqqani Network's incentives for continued warfare. In the coming months, attributing attacks accurately could prevent the United States and its partners from getting dragged back into the war.

Congress Unites...

the operational level in Afghanistan?

The White House tried to defend itself over the weekend on both counts, arguing that senior intelligence officials aren't convinced about the reliability of the reports and that they never reached President Trump or Vice President Pence personally.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who usually receives some of

the most sensitive intelligence briefings as a member of the so-called Gang of Eight leaders in Congress, said she too hadn't been informed and sent a letter Monday requesting a briefing for all members of the House soon. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., called for a briefing for all members of the Senate.

Pelosi cited reports in The New York Times and The Washington Post that suggested that Trump

has been aware of the bounty practice since earlier this year but he and his deputies haven't acted in response.

"The administration's disturbing silence and inaction endanger the lives of our troops and our coalition partners," she wrote. White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said on Monday that members of Congress have been invited to the White House to learn more about the bounty allegations.

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EU extends economic sanctions against Russia until January 31, 2021

The European Union has extended sectoral economic sanctions against Russia imposed due to the situation in Ukraine for six months, until January 31, 2021, the European Council said in a statement on Monday.

“The Council today decided to renew the sanctions targeting specific economic sectors of the Russian Federation for a further six months, until 31 January 2021,” the statement reads. EU leaders made the political decision to extend sanctions at the summit on June 17-18 in a videoconference format after a short discussion,

during which they concluded that full implementation of the Minsk agreements has not yet been achieved.

The European Union imposed economic sanctions against 15 Russian companies with broad state participation in the oil, banking and defense sectors at the end of July 2014 over the situation in Ukraine and Crimea’s reunification with Russia. Restrictions have been repeatedly expanded and prolonged. In response, Moscow banned the import of a number of food products from EU countries.



A look at the world

6 months on, WHO chief says COVID-19 is far from over

The World Health Organization chief warned Monday that the COVID-19 crisis is “far from over” and the worst is yet to come with 10 million cases now, and half a million deaths, saying that a divided world “is helping the virus to spread.”

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the organization’s thrice-weekly press webinar that countries must address the problems the organization has identified, or there will be worse ones to face.

“The virus still has a lot of room to move. We all want this to be over. We all want to get on with our lives. But the hard reality is,



this is not even close to being over,” he said. Tedros was speaking after six months of the world experiencing the novel coronavirus after it was first discovered in China.

“Six months ago, none of us could have imagined how our world – and our lives – would be thrown into turmoil by this new virus.

“The pandemic has brought out the best and the worst of humanity,” said Tedros. Pandemic ‘speeding up’

For six months, the WHO and its partners have worked to support all countries in responding to the virus.

Tedros said that although many countries have made some progress globally, “the pandemic is speeding up.”

The world has seen “heartwarming acts of resilience, inventiveness, solidarity, and kindness,” he said, but it had also witnessed “concerning signs of stigma, misinformation, and the politicization of the pandemic.”

The WHO chief said that although a vaccine will be an essential long-term tool for controlling COVID-19, there are priorities that every country must focus on ... **P2**

Former French PM sentenced to prison over ‘fake jobs’ scandal



A French court has found former prime minister François Fillon guilty of paying his wife over €1 million in public funds for a “fake job”.

Fillon was sentenced to five years in prison - three of which can be served in the community. He will also have to pay a €375,000 fine and will be barred from running in elections for 10 years.

His wife Penelope received a three-year suspended sentence, a €375,000 fine and a two-year election ban.

Their lawyers said they’ll appeal the sentence. Prosecutors had pointed to the lack of actual evidence of her work, including the absence of declarations for any paid vacations or maternity leave. Her wages reached up to nine times France’s minimum salary.

The judicial case was prompted by an investigation of a French satirical weekly, the *Canard Enchaîné* published in January 2017. The paper alleged Fillon’s wife, Penelope, had been his parliamentary assistant for 15 years—except there was no evidence she did any work.

The case ruined Fillon’s 2017 presidential bid, at a time when he was widely tipped to result as the winner, paving the way for Emmanuel Macron’s election.

He did not even get through the first round of the election in April 2017.

Fillon, 66-year-old, has insisted his wife earned the money honestly, saying “there is not the slightest doubt” about the nature of her wife’s collaboration.

During the trial, he also defended hiring his daughter Marie and son Charles as assistants from 2005 to 2007. The salaries received are estimated at over €117,000.

He was indicted in March 2017 for “embezzlement of public funds”, “concealment and complicity in the abuse of corporate property” and “breach in reporting obligations to the HATVP (France’s high authority for the transparency of civil servants.)”

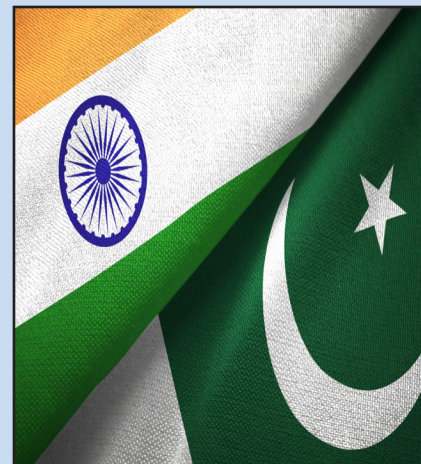
Fillon had previously served as prime minister in Nicolas Sarkozy’s centre-right government between 2007 and 2012.

India slams Pakistan for linking it to terror attack

India has slammed Pakistan for claiming links between New Delhi and Monday’s terrorist attack on the Karachi stock exchange.

“India rejects the absurd comments of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on the terrorist attack in Karachi,” said India’s Ministry of External Affairs in a statement Monday.

“Pakistan cannot shift the blame on India for its domestic problems. Unlike Pakistan, India has no hesitation in condemning terrorism anywhere in the world, including in Karachi,” said Anurag Srivastava, ministry spokesperson.



At least seven people were killed – including four attackers – when an attack by gunmen on the Pakistani stock exchange building in the southern port city of Karachi was foiled on Monday.

In a statement, outlawed Baloch militant group the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack, the latest in a series targeting security forces and government installations.

The BLA has long sought the secession of the southwestern Balochistan province, which they claim was forcibly incorporated into Pakistan when it was founded in 1947. Earlier today, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi alleged that the attack has links with sleeper cells activated by India.

“Pakistan is opening the Kartarpur Corridor [with India] while India does not seem to stomach peace in Pakistan,” said Qureshi in a statement.

He added, referring to recent border tensions with China: “India is being exposed before the world, like it was exposed on the issue of Ladakh with China.”



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