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Legalizing Afghan refugees' stay in Iran discussed

A high-level meeting of Afghan government officials on Tuesday discussed the legal status of Afghan refugees in neighboring Iran and ways to legalize their presence there.

A statement from the Presidential Palace received by Pajhwok Afghan News said first vice president Amrullah Saleh presided over the meeting at the Presidential Palace yesterday.

The meeting was attended by acting Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Refugee Minister Seyed Hussian Alami Balkhi, National Bureau of Statistics and Information head and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC) representative in Afghanistan.

The meeting discussed Afghan refugees living in Iran, their legal status and ways to regulate their ... **P2**



Pakistan strongly desires a peaceful Afghanistan: Asad Qaisar

Private Hospitals Unable to Conduct COVID-19 Tests: Officials



Findings by a monitoring team of the Public Health Ministry indicate that private hospitals in Kabul do not have the capacity to conduct COVID-19 tests and do not match standards set by the World Health Organization.

The hospitals were allowed earlier this week to conduct COVID-19

Azerbaijani

peacekeepers leave

for Afghanistan

tests and many of them showed readiness for this. But the team says the hospitals will not be allowed to conduct COVID-19 tests unless they meet the required measures.

"The PCR test is not conducted in Blossom Hospital based on our findings. They are taking samples and are sending them to the (government's) laboratories and they are tested there for free," said Ashiq Khan Saadati, head of diagnostic center of the Ministry of Public Health.

But the Blossom Hospital in Kabul has started collecting samples from suspected COVID-19 patients, according to patients. Sources said they are charging over Afs2,000 (\$25) for each sample while these samples are tested in government testing centers.

"They are not thinking about the people. The name of the Public Health Ministry should be changed to the Ministry of Trade," said Saidagul, a Kabul resident.

"People are poor. There are no jobs with COVID-19," said Khan Zamir, a Kabul resident.

Acting Minister of Public Health, Mohammad Jawad Osmani, said that private hospitals will soon begin providing services to COVID-19 patients.

"We are transferring samplecollection centers from schools to (private) hospitals," he said.

"We have imported preventive and diagnostic kits for the coronavirus, and we have cooperated with the Public Health Ministry and the WHO," said Mansoor Mullahkhil, head of Blossom Hospital.

This comes as the coronavirus testing has stopped in Herat and Balkh due to a lack of equipment. Also, in Kabul, health workers said that 22 mobile centers of samplecollection are faced with a lack of kits. ... **P3**

Afghanistan conflict still the world's deadliest for children, UN says

National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser Tuesday said the stable relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan is imperative for the progress and development of both the countries. He expressed these views in a meeting with Ambassador of Afghanistan Shukr Allah Atif who called on him here, said a news release.

The speaker said enhanced bilateral parliamentary, trade and economic cooperation is the need of the hour. He said peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan has always been the prime objective of Pakistan's foreign policy. He said peaceful and prosperous neighborhood was in the interest of Pakistan.

He said Pakistan and Afghanistan are brotherly neighboring countries intertwined in religious, cultural and historical bonds.

He also termed Afghanistan, a gateway to central Asia and can link South with Central Asia. ... **P3**

A group of Azerbaijani peacekeepers has been sent to Afghanistan on a rotating basis to operate as part of NATO's "Resolute Support" mission, the Defense Ministry said on June 16. It should be noted that the peacekeeping mission of the Azerbaijani Army in Afghanistan began on November 20, 2002. Earlier, on April 7, Azerbaijan Army officers who participated in the peacekeeping mission under the command of the UN Mission (UNMISS) in South Sudan returned to the country. ... **P3**



The war in Afghanistan was the world's deadliest conflict for children last year, the fifth consecutive year the country has held that status, a United Nations report said.

Some 874 children were killed by the war throughout 2019. They were among the 3,410 young Afghans who suffered from "grave violations," which included maiming, abduction, sexual abuse and attacks at schools and hospitals, the report released Monday said.

The Taliban were blamed for causing over 1,238 child deaths and injuries, the largest number attributed to any single group. Pro-government forces were blamed for just under a third of the child deaths and injuries documented, including 248 that



were attributed to international forces.

"I am extremely concerned about the increased number of children killed and maimed by all parties," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said about Afghanistan in the annual Children in Armed Conflict report. "I remain concerned about casualties caused by government and international forces, and I urge them to review, strengthen and implement current tactical protocols to prevent [them]." The report noted measures taken by international forces to protect Afghan civilians from combat and the decreased number of child casualties from airstrikes. Steps taken by the Afghan

government to prevent child recruitment were also lauded in the report. ... **P3**

NATIONAL

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Legalizing...

presence in the country. The statement said Hanif Atmar will visit Iran in near future to discuss distribution of electronic ID cards and passports to Afghan refugees based in Iran.

A week back, Kabul urged Tehran to sign a memorandum of understanding between the two countries on traffic of workers in order to prevent illegal travel and unfortunate incidents. The call comes after Iranian officials acknowledged their forces opened firing at a vehicle with Afghans onboard, leaving three people dead and some injured.

Dexamethasone...

were treated with a low-dose of the steroid once per day for 10 days and results were compared with 4,321 patients receiving only the usual care. Researchers found that dexamethasone reduced death by one-third in ventilated patients — those with severe respiratory complications due to the novel coronavirus — and by one fifth in other patients receiving oxygen only.

There was no benefit among those patients who did not require respiratory support and the trial did not involve any patients outside a hospital setting.

Peter Hornby, a professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases at the University of Oxford and one of the Chief Investigators for the trial, said that dexamethasone "is the first drug to be shown to improve survival in COVID-19," and that it should therefore "become standard care" in patients requiring oxygen treatment.

By Dr. Shanthie Mariet D Souza

Afghanistan's War On COVID-19: Politics Of The Pandemic

Two-front War

Afghanistan is presently fighting a two-front waragainst the scourge of terrorism and the Covid-19 pandemic. In the face of rising violence and limited testing capabilities, the number of infections has risen sharply to 8065 with 179 deaths (as on 19 May 2020).[1] The International Organization for Migration, in the first week of May, projected that the country could be on its way to have one of the highest Covid-19 infections in the world. The projection was made after results of a randomized sample of 500 people in Kabul, which so far has been the worst affected[2], showed an alarming infection rate of 50 percent. Cases of infections have been reported from all the 34 provinces of the country. As this crisis stretches the capacity of the health sector in the country, lethal insurgent attacks have not provided the citizens any respite. Both the Taliban as well as the Islamic State have been relentless in their attacks on civilian facilities. Targets, in the recent past, have included a maternity hospital in Kabul and funeral gathering in Jalalabad, as well as security forces. This has posed a serious challenge for the Afghan government and US-Taliban peace deal.

Battle for 'Hearts and Minds'

The pandemic is being actively used by the insurgents to win the 'hearts and minds' of the populace.

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told media, "The spread of Covid-19 is an important issue for us. We have taken all measures to fight against it as strong as possible, and we also have a structured plan." He said Taliban fighters are traveling to remote villages via motorcycles to distribute leaflets, soap bars, and hand sanitizer. Another Taliban commander also spoke of not allowing the virus to gain control of 'our country'. The group's 'General Commission for Public Health' has listed precautions that people should take, including regular prayers, eating "halal" as well as medical advice. In some villages, media has reported, people have even been provided with a list of vegetables that contain high amounts of vitamin C to boost immunity. In the provinces where the Taliban have shadow governments, new directors of Public Health have been appointed by the group. The group has even accessed testing kits from undisclosed sources, which is apparently in short supply in the government. **Taliban's Outreach**

A part of the reason for the Taliban's activism could be due to the fact that its own cadres have been infected by the virus. In the absence of proactive measures, the infections could simply grow and impact the group's fighting capacities. According to a media report in April, the Médecins Sans Frontières reported 125 positive cases of infection in Taliban's different ranks in six provinces (Paktiya, Badghis, Ghazni, Helmand, Wardak and Baghlan) within a time span of 72 hours. Out of 472 suspected samples, 31 positive cases were registered in Paktiya, 40 in Badghis, 17 in Ghazni, 13 in Helmand, 9 in Wardak and 15 in Baghlan provinces. Following this revelation, the Taliban stopped the MSF from testing more samples in the regions under their control, the report said.

Taliban strategies are also geared towards gaining wider acceptability. The group has been spoken of its willingness to announce ceasefire in areas that have been affected by an outbreak of the virus. In September 2019, the group had lifted a ban on the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Red Cross on certain conditions. In a statement in March 2020, it promised safe passage to international healthcare organisations and humanitarian workers fighting the pandemic. The group even urged health agencies to provide medicine, send aid and the necessary equipment to areas under their control. However, with regard to house-to-house vaccination for other diseases like Polio, a blanket ban by the Taliban has not been relaxed.

Trust building

The Taliban has allowed NGOs approved by the government access to its territory where they are able to deliver the healthcare assistance the government cannot. The group is in fact asking the refugees returning from Iran to avail the testing facility provided by the government hospitals, quarantine themselves for 14 days, and have even provided ambulances to ferry the patients. On occasions, they have quarantined infected persons and have detained returnees from Iran who escaped from government-run quarantine facilities. The government departments, in turn, are appreciative of such gestures and have welcomed whatever assistance they can get from the insurgents in terms of raising awareness of the people regarding the virus.[3] This has led some to predict that the pandemic can help build trust between the two warring sides. The Human Rights Watch has opined that both the government and the insurgents should 'work together with the UN and humanitarian agencies to ensure that aid reaches the whole country, or a dire

situation will become catastrophic.'[4] Blurred Red lines

However, such gestures by the Taliban could merely be directed at gaining publicity, some sort of legitimacy and winning the 'hearts and minds' of the common Afghans vis-à-vis the government. This is clear from the fact that the Taliban have refused to accede to an appeal for a ceasefire by President Ghani, with its spokesperson Suhail Shaheen terming it neither 'rational nor convincing.' The group has promised to declare ceasefire only if areas it controls 'are hit by a coronavirus outbreak'.

The group is suspected to be behind the gruesome attack on civilians and subsequently on a military base in Gardez that killed five civilians and wounded 19 people including five Afghan National Army (ANA) personnel. This has forced the government to order the launch an offensive against the Taliban and suspend release of Taliban prisoners, a move that has been decried by the Russia's presidential envoy as detrimental to the ongoing peace process.

The 'Peace' Paradox

This indicates that, in the days to come, intense fighting will continue between the government forces and the insurgents even as the country grapples with how to deal with the pandemic. Former Chief Executive of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah had once remarked that the money Afghanistan spends in a day's war with the insurgents is enough to build a modern hospital.[5] The incessant fight bleeds the country's economy, leaving it with little option but to continue dependence on international assistance. Seeking a way out of this permanent state of war has not been easy. The recently concluded deal between the U.S. and the Taliban is stuck in a limbo due to a variety of reasons that includes distrust between the government and the insurgents; prisoner release; and the lack of progress in initiating an intra-Afghan dialogue. The Covid-19 pandemic could not have come at a worse time for Afghanistan. It will add to the pressure and limited capacity of the Afghan health sector and service delivery mechanism, thereby impinging on the credibility of the Afghan state. At the same time, the Taliban measures to elicit acceptability may boost its bargaining potential. The U.S., which is largely seen as bolting to the door, may further pressure the Afghan government to move ahead with the peace process with the insurgents, in the lines as envisaged in the U.S.-Taliban deal.

By Kelebogile Zvobgo and Stephen Chaudoin

Despite U.S. sanctions, the ICC will keep investigating alleged war crimes in Afghanistan

President Trump declared a national emergency last Thursday — but it wasn't about the covid-19 pandemic or police brutality or nationwide protests. Rather, the subject of the emergency declaration was the International Criminal Court, the body investigating the United States for suspected war crimes in Afghanistan. Trump announced that the ICC represents an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States." The executive order pushes back by authorizing economic and diplomatic sanctions on ICC personnel working on the Afghanistan probe and anyone who helps them. The Trump administration has consistently and directly opposed the ICC, in contrast to the more passive opposition or even ad hoc support from previous administrations. The goal, as amplified by other U.S. officials, is to undermine the court, not only by interfering with the

Afghanistan investigation but also investigations that don't directly affect the United States.

In March, the ICC's appeals chamber authorized Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda to investigate possible crimes committed in Afghanistan by U.S. and non-U.S. forces and intelligence, including the Afghan National Security Forces and the Taliban. The authorization came nearly a year after the pretrial chamber initially rejected Bensouda's request to open an investigation. Now, she and her team will investigate alleged "torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, and rape," among other issues. The U.S. isn't currently a member of the ICC. But Afghanistan, the country where the alleged abuses occurred, is a member. That puts the United States within the ICC's jurisdiction. What's in the executive order? The sanctions order applies to any foreign person who materially supports or is directly involved in

detain or prosecute any United States personnel." It includes freezing these individuals' U.S.-based financial assets and restricting their travel. The sanctions also apply to immediate

Survey: U.S.... the previous low was 45 percent

in 1994.

 Compared with surveys conducted after President John F Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and after the September 11 attacks, Americans are less likely to report some types of emotional and psychological stress reactions following the COVID-19 outbreak. Fewer report smoking more than usual, crying or feeling dazed now than after those two previous tragedies, though more report having lost their temper or wanting to get drunk. About twice as many Americans report being lonely today as in 2018, and not surprisingly given the lockdowns that tried to contain the spread of the coronavirus, there has also been a drop in satisfaction with social activities and relationships. Compared with 2018, Americans are also about twice as likely to say they sometimes or often have felt a lack of companionship (45 percent now versus 27 percent in 2018) and felt left out (37 percent now versus 18 percent in 2018) in

the past four weeks.

What is surprising, said Louise Hawkley, a senior research scientist with NORC at the University of Chicago, was that loneliness was not even more prevalent.

"It isn't as high as it could be," she said. "People have figured out a way to connect with others. It's not satisfactory, but people are managing to some extent." The new poll found that there have not been significant changes in Americans' assessment of their families' finances since 2018 and that Americans' satisfaction with their families' ability to get along financially was as high as it has been over nearly 50 years. The NORC survey of 2,279 adults was conducted between May 21-29 with funding from the National Science Foundation. It uses a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the US population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

ICC efforts to "investigate, arrest,

family members.

On first reading, the scope of the order is very wide, giving administration officials broad leeway in its application. The inclusion of family members is notable because a 2019 Trump executive order to sanction terrorists didn't include their family members. Another unusual aspect of this executive order is the implication that U.S. officials could target human rights advocates and nongovernmental organizations, since they regularly work with the ICC and affected communities on investigations.

Sanctions, sanctions and more sanctions

Trump administration officials have threatened ICC-related sanctions before. For instance, in 2018, national security adviser John Bolton advocated for ... **P3**

ECONOMY WEDNES

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Afghan traders decry 'curbs' on **imports by Pakistan**

Afghan traders claim restrictions on imports of fresh fruits and vegetables by Pakistan have caused them huge

According to the Afghan Traders' Union, exports from Afghanistan, mainly perishable agriculture products, have been barred from entering Pakistan amid the coronavirus outbreak since March. Goods from Pakistan, however, continue to be exported to Afghanistan. Haidari told Anadolu Agency that the restrictions have cost Afghan traders He said hundreds of trucks loaded with fresh fruits and vegetables destined stranded at the main Chaman and Torkham crossing points for months.

Islamabad for taking advantage of the pandemic for one-sided trade benefits

The fresh fruit, vegetable traders blame

Pakistan in May announced the opening of Pak-Afghan border at Torkham and Chaman round the clock for six days a week. It was closed on March 27 as a spread of COVID-19

Meanwhile, the Afghan Chamber statement on Sunday said talks are under way with Pakistan authorities to resolve the situation.

The concern was also highlighted by Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry earlier this month, urging for immediate resolution else it "would demolish the Afghan

Pakistan...

the countries.

The speaker emphasized the

need for intensifying contacts

between the legislatures of both

He suggested for enhancing these

contacts through parliamentary

friendship groups besides

establishing contacts between

trade and commerce committees

He also said he was

contemplating the establishment

of a parliamentary forum

comprising members of the

parliament from all the political

of both the parliaments.

economy significantly" and deepen mistrust between the two countries. Chairman Zubair Motiwala said targets delays and exorbitant demurrage and detention charges

Co-chairman Khan Jan Alokozai requested that apart from transit and exports of Pakistan, Afghanistan should also be allowed a passage for its exports to Pakistan.

Pakistan has for long only allowed Afghan exports to India through its not permit exports from India meant for Afghanistan to pass through its

the Afghan chamber of commerce, the actual trade potential with Pakistan is around \$10 billion but due to several internal and external factors, bilateral trade -- both documented and undocumented -- remains not more than \$2 billion annually.

on Monday that at least 761 new coronavirus cases were registered following 1,558 tests across the country nationwide virus tally to 25,527 the said period, taking the total death toll to 478.

Health officials have warned that the amid a surge in cases, urging people to wear face masks and maintain social distancing.

> government for its continued support to the peace process in Afghanistan.

> He expressed his deep sorrow over the tragic deaths of patients affected by corona in Pakistan

> He said Afghanistan attaches

He said Afghan people for Pakistani people. He agreed for enhancing ties between both the parliaments and also assured to convey invitation of National

and prayed for

the early recovery of all those who tested positive.

immense importance to its relations with Pakistan and desires to accelerate this cooperation in diverse sectors.

especially have warm feelings Assembly speaker to Wolesi Jirga speaker to visit Pakistan.

Despite U.S....

Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He reiterated his earlier invitation

sanctions against any entity that assisted the court. But there was no follow-through.

In March 2019, ahead of the court's pretrial chamber decision to authorize or to not authorize the Afghanistan probe, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo threatened visa restrictions and economic sanctions on any non-U.S. citizens who furthered the probe. The State Department revoked Bensouda's visa to visit the United States less than a month later. But the timing of this latest round of sanctions differs from the previous one.

targeting U.S. personnel. But that was three months ago. Why order sanctions now?

Chief Prosecutor Bensouda in December brought forward a request to open an investigation into possible crimes committed in Palestinian territories since 2014. The pretrial chamber is expected to rule on the request soon. Trump's executive order may be an attempt to deter the pretrial chamber from authorizing the request, but also stymie the investigation if the request goes through.

This isn't without precedent. Pompeo's threats last year

The statement — which echoes criticisms from ICC member states — elaborates, "An attack on the ICC also represents an attack against the interests of victims of atrocity crimes, for many of whom the Court represents the last hope for justice."

In the U.S. court of public opinion, Trump's strategy may not stoke antagonism toward the ICC. Our research indicates most Americans support the ICC and are concerned about U.S. world leadership and human rights. These concerns, combined with criticism of the sanctions from

970 980

Contact Numbers

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Add a Book

Azerbaijani peacekeepers...

The international military command highly appreciated the activities of the Azerbaijani servicemen who have participated in the UN Peacekeeping Mission since January 2019.

The ministry noted that the new group of servicemen of the Azerbaijan Army that was sent to South Sudan on the basis of rotation are already involved in the mission in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

Azerbaijan passed a decision on November 30, 2018, on the deployment of Azerbaijani servicemen in South Sudan as part of the UN peacekeeping mission.

Private Hospitals...

"Less patients are visiting here due to lack of kits," said Maryam, a health worker at a sample collection center at Shirino High School in Kabul.

The Ministry of Public Health on Tuesday reported 793 new positive cases of the coronavirus from 1,640 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

The ministry also reported 13 new deaths from COVID-19 and 381 recoveries. With this, the total cases are now 26,310, the total reported deaths are 491, and total recoveries are 5,508.

Afghanistan conflict...

However, a combined 64 boys — some as young as 10 - were still recorded as being recruited by the Taliban, Afghan National Police and pro-government militias last year. The boys were used for combat support and sexual purposes, the report said.

The Taliban and pro-government forces were both blamed for sexually abusing children, which the U.N. identifies as anyone below age 18. Two boys were said to be used as "bacha bazi," a term used to describe boys used for sex acts by older men, which has a long history in the country.

Afghanistan, along with Syria, Palestine and Somalia

parties belonging to all the four federating units for creating synergies of cooperation and medical purposes. better understanding between

to visit Pakistan along with a delegation.

immense trade potential exists on either side of the border, therefore, interaction of concerned ministries was imperative to reduce barriers in that regard.

to Afghan Speaker Wolesi Jirga

He suggested that interaction between trade and commerce committees of both parliaments could pave the way for enhancing bilateral trade.

He also suggested that Afghan students and citizens could take advantage of relaxed visa conditions for education and

Afghan Ambassador Shukr Ullah Atif thanked Pakistan

The speaker suggested that

were named the top places in the world where children had been deprived of education and health care because of attacks or closures of facilities for military use.



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In past skirmishes with the ICC, the Trump administration acted quickly, even preemptively. For instance, Bensouda's visa was revoked before the decision of the pretrial chamber, which denied her permission to open the investigation.

When the appeals chamber overturned the lower chamber's decision on March 5, clearing the path for the probe, Pompeo quickly fired back. He promised to take "all necessary measures" to prevent the investigation from targeting U.S. personnel. But that was three months ago. Why order sanctions now? When the appeals chamber overturned the lower chamber's decision on March 5, clearing the path for the probe, Pompeo quickly fired back. He promised to take "all necessary measures" to prevent the investigation from

apparently worked: The pretrial judges blocked the Afghanistan probe. Legal scholars and human rights advocates criticized the decision and speculated that the judges had capitulated to U.S. pressure. The ICC ultimately reversed the decision, but the delay roadblocked any investigation into Afghanistan for a time.

Trump may be running the same play here — taking a bold move in the hopes that it pressures the pretrial chamber to deny authorization of the Palestine investigation.

What's likely to happen next? The ICC shows few signs of backing down. Within the day, the court's public affairs unit responded, calling Trump's actions an "attempt to interfere," "an escalation," "unacceptable" and contrary to the rule of law.

U.S. allies who are ICC members, may mean Americans will continue to support the court despite Trump.

Trump's efforts may even backfire, triggering a type "Streisand Effect," of where attempts to hamper investigations invite additional, negative public scrutiny. Trump is already polling poorly ahead of the November elections. ICC sanctions may not help. Trump probably considers the sanctions a move with some possible benefits - a distraction from troubles at home, or a way to hinder the Palestinian or Afghan investigations — and minimal costs. The administration team has grown accustomed to condemnation from abroad over "America First" policy. But ordinary citizens may

disagree.

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Survey: U.S. residents unhappiest they have been in 50 years

A new survey out on Tuesday suggests people in the United States are more unhappy today than they have been in nearly 50 years.

The bold - yet unsurprising - conclusion comes from the COVID Response Tracking Study, conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago. It has found that just 14 percent of American adults say they are very happy, down from 31 percent who said the same in 2018. That year, 23 percent said they often or sometimes felt isolated in recent weeks. Now, 50 percent say that.

The survey, conducted in late May, draws on nearly half a century of research from the General Social Survey, which has collected data on American attitudes and behaviours at least every other year since 1972. No less than 29 percent of Americans have ever called themselves very happy in the survey. Most of the new survey's interviews were completed before George Floyd's death sparked nationwide protests and a global conversation about race and police brutality, adding to feelings of stress and loneliness Americans were already facing from the coronavirus outbreak - especially for Black Americans.

Among other findings from the new poll:

• The public is less optimistic today about the standard of living improving for the next generation than it has been in the past 25 years. Only 42 percent of Americans believe that when their children reach their age, their standard of living will be better. A solid 57 percent said the same in 2018. Since the question was asked in 1994, ... **P2**



A look at the world

Trump signs executive order on police reform

Following weeks of national protests since the death of George Floyd, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on policing Tuesday that he said would encourage better police practices and establish a database to keep track of officers with a history of excessive use-of-force complaints.

In Rose Garden remarks, Trump stressed the need for higher standards and commiserated with mourning families, even as he hailed the vast majority of officers as selfless public servants and held his law-and-order line, while criticizing Democrats.

"Reducing crime and raising standards are not opposite goals," he said before signing the order flanked by police.

Trump and the GOP have been rushing to



respond to the mass demonstrations against police brutality and racial prejudice that have raged for weeks across the country in response to the deaths of Floyd and other black Americans. It's a sudden shift for the Republican Party — and one Democrats are watching warily — that shows how quickly the protests have changed the political conversation and pressured Washington to act.

Dexamethasone is first drug to reduce COVID-19 death rate



A low-cost synthetic steroid has been found to reduce COVID-19 deaths by up to a third in what is being described as a "groundbreaking development" in the fight against the virus.

The British government announced on Tuesday that dexamethasone is to be used on COVID-19 patients "from this afternoon." Dexamethasone was one of several drugs tested by the UK's Recovery trial between March and June.

More than 2,100 COVID-19 patients were treated with a low-dose of the steroid once per day for 10 days and results were compared with 4,321 patients receiving only the usual care.

Researchers found that dexamethasone reduced death by one-third in ventilated patients — those with severe respiratory complications due to the novel coronavirus — and by one fifth in other patients receiving oxygen only.

There was no benefit among those patients who did not require respiratory support and the trial did not involve any patients outside a hospital setting.

Turkey, Russia perform 17th joint patrol in N. Syria

Turkish and Russian troops carried out their 17th joint patrol along the key M4 highway in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, Turkey's National Defense Ministry said Tuesday.

"To maintain the Turco-Russian ceasefire agreement in Syria, the 17th Combined Land Patrol was conducted in Idlib province Tuesday," the ministry said on Twitter.

"Due to a detonation of an unidentified



explosive, a patrol vehicle was lightly



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But Trump, who has faced criticism for failing to acknowledge systemic racial bias, has continued to emphasize his support for law enforcement, even after meeting in private Tuesday with families of victims. At the signing event, he railed against those who committed violence during the largely peaceful protests and made no mention of racism.

Trump's executive order would establish a database that tracks police officers with excessive use of force complaints in their records. And it would give police departments a financial incentive to adopt best practices and encourage co-responder programs, in which social workers join police when they respond to nonviolent calls involving mental health, addiction and homeless issues. Peter Hornby, a professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases at the University of Oxford and one of the Chief Investigators for the trial, said that dexamethasone "is the first drug to be shown to improve survival in COVID-19," and that it should therefore "become standard care" in patients requiring oxygen treatment.

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More than 2,100 COVID-19 patients ... P2

damaged and taken to a safe location," it added, noting that no personnel had been harmed in the incident.

The M4 highway, also known as the Aleppo-Al Hasakah road, is about 30 kilometers (19 miles) from Turkey's southern border.

This March, Ankara and Moscow agreed on a protocol urging parties to "cease all military actions along the line of contact in the Idlib de-escalation area."

The protocol said joint Turkish-Russian patrols would begin on March 15 along the M4 highway from the settlement of Trumba -- 2 km (1.2 mi) west of Saraqib -- to the settlement of Ain al-Havr.

Idlib has long been under siege by Assad regime forces and its allies, and previous cease-fires for the region were plagued by violations.

Turkey has worked to protect the local civilian population as well as rid the wider region of terrorist elements.