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Tajikistan's fears, hopes  
on intra-Afghan peace

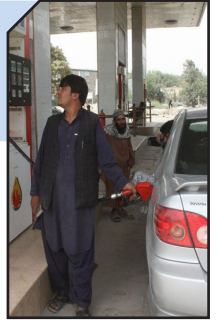
### In Afghanistan, the Dead Cast a Long Shadow

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# Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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10 afs



## Iran to attend Afghanistan peace talks on Monday: Gran Hewad

Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan has announced that the country is scheduled to hold three important meetings on Inter-Afghan talks which will be attended by regional countries including Iran.

According to reports, the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan has announced that Afghanistan is scheduled to host three important regional, trans-regional and tripartite meetings on the peace and Inter-Afghani talks.

Gran Hewad, the spokesman for Afghanistan Foreign Ministry, said today (Saturday) that the first meeting is going to be held on next Monday via video conference between regional countries and strategic partners of Afghanistan, adding that Iranian Foreign Minister, ...

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## Jamiat-e-Islami Leaders Feud, Intra- Party Tensions Rise

Atta Mohammad Noor, the chief executive of the Jamiat-e-Islami party, on Saturday accused Salahuddin Rabbani, the chairman of the party, and Ahmad Zia Massoud, a party member, of trying to monopolize the chairmanship of the party.

This comes two days after a number of members of the Jamiat-e-Islami Leadership Council, in a move led by Atta Mohammad Noor, voted in a majority to replace the current leader Salahuddin Rabbani with Enayatullah Shadab, who will now lead the council. "They (Rabbani) said that I will not attend a meeting with Mr. Qanooni (Mohammad Younus Qanooni a member of Jamiat's leadership council), they said they will not attend a meeting if there is Dr. Abdullah (Abdullah Abdullah the chairman of high peace council of national reconciliation). Then what meeting are you are going to attend?" ...

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# Khalilzad Discusses Development Plans with Qataris, Taliban



Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, along with seeking an immediate start of the intra-Afghan negotiations, held meetings over the past week focused on economic plans for a peaceful Afghanistan with Qatari development groups.

In this trip, he was accompanied by Adam Boehler, the CEO of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation.

In a series of tweets after midnight on Saturday, Khalilzad said he held

meetings in Doha with officials from the Qatar Investment Authority and Qatar Fund for Development, and discussed "the possibility of co-investing in Afghan projects to consolidate peace and unlock regional prosperity."

He said that, provided there is peace, the "potential to amplify investment impact in Afghanistan with like-minded partners is real."

Khalilzad also met with the Taliban's Mullah Baradar and his team in Doha. "We underscored the economic

development opportunities that will follow a sustainable peace," Khalilzad said, adding: "We agreed developing plans in support of peace can never start too early, assuming the two sides can overcome final hurdles on the path to intra-Afghan negotiations."

Khalilzad said that the Taliban "recognize all Afghans will have to make compromises in order to draw in the required investment in Afghanistan's future."

The Taliban issued a statement saying

the group's deputy political leader Mullah Baradar on Thursday met the U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and his delegation in Doha and talks were held about the peace process, a swift completion of the prisoners swap and the intra-Afghan talks.

Similar topics were discussed in the US envoy's virtual meeting in Tashkent with President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, head of the High Council for National Reconciliation.

"We discussed the importance of quick-hit programs as well as longer term infrastructure programs that will provide significant employment opportunities.

Power and health care are two critical areas that merit support. They help with economic development and improve peoples' quality of life," Khalilzad said about his last week's meeting with Afghan leaders.

"A sustainable peace can mean investment with less risk, lower cost and faster capital deployment," the U.S. envoy said. "Investment is possible only if Afghan leaders make the decisions conducive for economic development. We also emphasized the importance of regional economic development and prosperity."

This trip by Khalilzad started on June 28, during which he visited Islamabad, Doha and Tashkent.

## Pakistan, China support Afghan peace process

Pakistan and China have affirmed their determination to promote the cause of peace and development in war-torn Afghanistan.

They hoped the next meeting of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers Dialogue would take place at the earliest to facilitate reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi conferred on the overall regional situation during a phone conversation on Friday. ...

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## Taliban's Violence 'Unacceptable': NATO SCR

NATO's Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan, Stefano Pontecorvo, on Saturday updated NATO members in Brussels on the situation in Afghanistan and said that the Taliban needs to end the violence to help kick start the intra-Afghan talks.

"I have updated the North Atlantic Council on the situation in Afghanistan leading up to intra-Afghan negotiations. I was glad to see that once again NATO and alliance affirmed commitments to Afghanistan and to Afghanistan's national security and defense forces has been reiterated. We also discussed the situation on the ground---Taliban violence has to go down, it is simply unacceptable and it is creating an issue, a problem for getting to the peace talks," said the NATO envoy Stefano Pontecorvo. Meanwhile, the US embassy Chargé



d'Affaires Ross Wilson has said that there was an expectation that the level of violence in Afghanistan would have been reduced after the US-Taliban peace deal was signed on February 29 in Doha, but it didn't happen like that and violence didn't stop.

"We hope that...when this prisoners release is concluded--up to 5,000 Taliban by the Afghan government,

up to a 1,000 by the Taliban---intra-Afghan negotiations can be begin," said Ross Wilson.

Based on the government's statistics, over the past one month, the Taliban initiated 1538 attacks on 32 provinces of the country.

The Office of National Security Council (ONSC) has said that 153 civilians have been killed as a result of the attacks by the ...

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## INTERPOL Denies...

Browder co-founded Hermitage Capital in Russia and was forced out of the country in 2005. After his firm's lawyer Sergey Magnitsky died in Russian prison, Browder became a leading force for the Global Magnitsky Act, a law that allows imposing sanctions against persons involved in human rights violations and corruption.

Browder's involvement with the West's sanctions policies made him a target of the Russian government. On seven occasions, Russia has asked Interpol to issue red notices for Browder, most of which were rejected on the grounds that they were political. However, in 2018, Browder was briefly detained in Spain and later denied entry to the U.S. on the basis of a Russian INTERPOL warrant.

President Trump has what is known as head-of-state immunity, similar to diplomatic immunity, meaning he cannot be arrested or detained upon arrival on foreign territory.

## Russia remains...

brought up so as to distract attention from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty." The ministry noted that "the US placed the treaty on the verge of total collapse by renouncing its ratification."

"Washington appears to be preparing the world that the voluntary nuclear testing moratorium, which is still in effect in the US, will be abandoned and, as a consequence, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will be totally dismantled," the Foreign Ministry said.

Apart from that, the Russian Foreign Ministry emphasized that "on absolutely false 'messages' are based the allegations about Russia's alleged non-compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear Weapon Tests (known as the Threshold Test Ban Treaty) signed by the Soviet Union and the United States in 1974. Under the treaty, the sides should inform each other about the nuclear tests."

By FARZAD RAMEZANI BONESH

# Tajikistan's fears, hopes on intra-Afghan peace

During the Taliban's control over much of Afghanistan in the 1990s, Tajikistan did not recognize their authority, and fully supported the rule of Burhanuddin Rabbani.

After the fall of the Taliban, relations continued to be pursued with goodwill by Tajikistan. Political relations between Afghanistan and Tajikistan have been growing over the past 19 years.

Afghanistan has long been a traditional ally of Tajikistan. As well, the Jamiat-e Islami of Afghanistan and Abdullah Abdullah's political faction have enjoyed Tajikistan's support since the beginning of resistance against the Taliban.

Now that Tajikistan has made a significant contribution to regional and international scenes, participating in the Afghan peace process can be seen as another important role for the Central Asia republic.

Increasing Tajikistan's role in the intra-Afghan peace process could also increase Dushanbe's position among Afghan Tajiks and also the Afghan government.

Therefore, the continued presence of Persian-speaking and Tajik movements in the future composition of the Final Formula (Partnership Government) in Afghanistan is a very valuable card. In other words, stabilizing the position of the northerners and the Tajiks in the process of dialogue with the Taliban and any kind of agreement can be considered in favor of Tajikistan.

On the other hand, if the process of talks with the Taliban harms the Tajiks' position in Afghanistan and the traditional allies of Tajikistan in Afghanistan, Dushanbe will be one of the regional losers.

Security fears and hopes

Most of the 1,344-kilometer border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan runs through a mountainous region. Tajikistan is paying close attention to security on the border.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of narcotics, producing more than 90% of the world's heroin. Therefore, securing this border is important, as the growing amount of narcotics entering Tajikistan is a significant threat.

From Dushanbe's point of view, the Taliban's presence in power in any intra-Afghan peace process could result in the group's cooperation in controlling



the flow of drugs, and ignoring it would increase drug trafficking.

With the expected US withdrawal from Afghanistan, although the Taliban has pledged to prevent the use of Afghan territory to threaten the security of its neighbors, concerns about the group remain.

In recent years, the Taliban have appeared in the northern provinces of Afghanistan (mostly Badakhshan, Takhar, Faryab and Kunduz). Now, Dushanbe fears that any peace deal with the Taliban will lead to the group's growing influence in key parts of northern Afghanistan.

The Taliban have been trying to establish a base in northern Afghanistan with the help of foreign fighters since 2013. In fact, more than 10,000 foreign nationals appear to be among the Taliban, some of whom are from Tajikistan. The increasing presence of militants in northern Afghanistan has made peace and stability in the country more important for Dushanbe.

Increased activity of the Taliban and terrorist groups such as ISIS in the northern regions bordering Central Asia is also a threat to Tajikistan. Earlier, about 2,000 Tajik nationals in Syria and Iraq joined ISIS.

In 2015, Gol Murad Halimov, a former commander of the Tajik Interior Ministry's Special Forces, joined ISIS in Syria. Now, Tajikistan is worried that extremists will return to its territory from Afghanistan.

Dushanbe's fear is that the talks with the Taliban and even the consequences of achieving peace with the group will have negative consequences for Tajikistan.

Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is also bordered by northern Afghanistan, with occasional clashes. If extremist groups from Afghanistan reach Tajikistan's Badakhshan, they will also pose a major threat to Tajikistan.

Now the threat of cooperation between the Taliban and Tajik fighters and even the illegal Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan is an important issue. If the Taliban shelter foreign fighters and extremist groups despite their promise, it could be dangerous for Dushanbe.

In contrast, if peace with the Taliban puts more pressure on other groups such as ISIS in different parts of Afghanistan, it will also benefit Tajikistan's national security.

In addition, Tajikistan is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In this situation coordination of national anti-terrorism policies and providing plans to prevent the infiltration of militants from Afghanistan is now important for Dushanbe.

Meanwhile, given the program of intra-Afghan talks and the Taliban's presence in power and their impact on Tajikistan's security environment, there is a growing need for military and security interaction between Kabul and Dushanbe.

Also, the increase in intelligence cooperation and the intensification of cooperation in the field of counterterrorism have made Dushanbe more interested in a stronger presence in Afghanistan and being aware of the peace process. ... **P3**

By EMRAN FEROZ

## In Afghanistan, the Dead Cast a Long Shadow

On the second day of Eid al-Fitr, the Islamic festival commemorating the end of Ramadan, Hamdullah Mohib, Afghanistan's national security advisor and would-be president, visited an inconspicuous burial site in the southeastern province of Paktia and dug up quite a stir.

The grave belonged to Mohammed Najibullah, Afghanistan's last communist president, brutally murdered when the Taliban took over Kabul in 1996. Mohib is the first post-Taliban senior government official to ever pay his respects there. The controversial visit had several objectives for Mohib: to court Afghans, especially many nationalist Pashtuns, who recall Najibullah as a charismatic Afghan patriot who launched a national reconciliation process, and also as a reminder of the enduring brutality of the Taliban, who again today stand poised to share power, if not take it outright, as Kabul, Washington, and the Taliban grope their way toward the conclusion of an agonizing peace process.

But many Afghans, especially those who fought on the side of the mujahideen rebels in the 1980s, found

Mohib's actions provocative, even offensive. Mahmoud Saikal, a former Afghan envoy to the United Nations, criticized Mohib for visiting the grave of "a murderer of the people." Others recoiled at Najibullah's bloody record as head of the Soviet-backed secret police. "It's a shame that he visited the grave of this murderer. Najibullah killed and tortured thousands of innocent people," said Modaser Islami, a Kabul-based activist focusing on Islamic issues.

Najibullah, without a doubt one of modern Afghanistan's most controversial figures, is at the center of a battle for Afghanistan's historical memory.

The young Najibullah, then a medical student in Kabul, joined the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, a faction of which launched the bloody coup in April 1978 against the nascent Republic of Afghanistan's first president, Mohammed Daoud Khan. Daoud Khan was killed alongside his children, grandchildren, and wife in a manner grimly similar to how the Afghan communists' ideological forebears, the Bolsheviks, disposed of

the Russian royal family six decades earlier.

The coup propelled Afghanistan into a spiral of war and conflict from which it still suffers. According to many of Najibullah's contemporaries, historians, and analysts, including the Soviet Union's own ex-archivist Vasili Mitrokhin, "Comrade Najib" was a brutal man wholly dedicated to supporting his party's ideological goals. That ranged from the mundane—dropping the "-ullah" (God) suffix of his name in a deeply conservative, Islamic country—to taking personal relish in torturing and killing prisoners while head of the secret police at the height of the Soviet-Afghan War.

Abdul Latif, a former mujahid and victim of the secret police, recently detailed in a book how Najibullah's subordinates tortured him with electrocutions, red hot skewers, and mock executions. According to the United Nations, Najibullah's secret police also used sexual violence against both men and women, raping victims with bottles or bullets or, as Latif described, by sexually assaulting female prisoners in front of men. ... **P3**

## Jamiat-e-Islami...

Noor told TOLONews on Saturday.

Noor said that Rabbani apparently disagrees about convening the party's congress. "It seems that Mr. Rabbani is against convening the congress, he wants to keep his grip on the chairmanship, whatever you call it, this is not a simple issue, he served nine years as chairman and two months as acting chief," added Noor.

Noor said that currently Jamiat-e-Islami party is passing through a difficult time.

"If Jamiat is not involved in this game (national issues), of course, in that case, Jamiat will move towards isolation and we could see a very bad situation for Jamiat, this is what we do not want to see," said Noor.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Zia Massoud, a member of the Jamiat party, accused Atta Mohammad Noor of making deals with the government and misusing the reputation of the party.

"Atta Mohammad Noor himself is responsible for the shortcomings and inactions. He also misused

the name of Jamiat party and entered into political deals with Mr. Ashraf Ghani several times and the leadership council of Jamiat was not aware of it. Regarding the party congress, once all preparations had been completed to arrange the party congress, Atta Mohammad Noor himself said that we can't do that because of security threats," said Ahmad Zia Massoud, a member of Jamiat-e-Islami.

Tensions have risen among members of the Jamiat-e-Islami party, led by Atta Mohammad Noor, after Enayatullah Shadab' replaced Salahuddin Rabbani.

Salahuddin Rabbani headed the Jamiat-e-Islami party after the assassination of the late Burhanuddin Rabbani, the former head of the High Peace Council.

Tensions between Salahuddin Rabbani and a number of members of the party escalated after an agreement was signed between President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation.

# Gold prices up, petroleum down in Kabul

The price of gold increased while that of petroleum products declined in Kabul this week, Pajhwok Afghan News learnt on Saturday.

According to an Online Food Company, the whole sale price of a 50-kilogram bag of Pakistani sugar dipped from 2,500 afi to 2,300 afi, 24-kilogram of Pakistani rice from 2,400 afi to 2,300 afi and 16-litres Sedique Cooking Oil from 1,800 to 1,750.

The decline in food prices was linked to the decrees in markets of countries from where they are imported, the company said.

The whole sale price of one kilogram green Indonesian tea was 320 afi and the same quantity of black tea was 350afis without any change as compared to the prices of last week.

Mohammad Zaki, owner of a general store in Macro Ryan area, said the price of a 49 kilograms bag of Kazakh flour was 1,800afis and a 49-kg sack of Pakistani sugar 2,500afis. Similarly, a 24-kg bag of Pakistan rice sold for 2,500afis, a 16-litre ghee bottle for 1,850afis, one kilogram of Indonesian green tea for 340afis and the same amount of African black tea for 360afis.

Gold price jumps

The price of one gram of Arabian gold surged from 3,300 afi to 3,400 afi this week while one gram of Russian gold jumped from 2,650 to 3,000 afi.

The surge in gold price was also linked with increase its price in global markets.

Fuel price declines

According to Ahmadyar Group, the



price of one litre petrol dropped to 34 afi compared to its last week price of 35 afi and one litre diesel dropped to 37 afi from 38 afi.

Mohammad Zarif, a liquefied gas seller in Pul-i-Pach area, said the price of one kilogram of the commodity was 45afis -- same as last week's rate.

Afghani depreciates against dollar According to the money changers union in Sara-i-Shahzada market, one US dollar accounted for 77.23afis while 1,000 Pakistani rupees sold for 464afis. Last week, one US dollar was equal to 77.12afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees to 463afis.

### Pakistan, China...

Wang Yi commended Pakistan's sincere and relentless efforts to promote peace and stability in the region/ He also welcomed Pakistan's support China during challenging times.

The contact comes against the backdrop of a violent border face-off between Indian and Chinese armies in the Ladakh area of Kashmir last month

Qureshi underscored the security situation was deteriorating and that India's "belligerent posture" was imperiling peace in the region, the Foreign Office said.

### Taliban's Violence...

Taliban.

Nevertheless, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said that Kabul will host three important meetings on the Afghan peace process before the start of the intra-Afghan talks aimed at creating consensus at the regional and international levels.

The Taliban have clarified that they will not attend the peace talks with the Afghan sides before the completion of the prisoners swap.

As part of goodwill gesture, the Taliban also pledged to release 1,000 Afghan government hostages.

### Iran to attend...

Mohammad Javad Zarit will be attending the meeting as well.

According to the Afghanistan Ministry, the tripartite meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China will also be held with the main focus being on strengthening regional and trans-regional consensus on Afghanistan peace and Inter-Afghan talks.

It is worth mentioning that during a two-day visit by the Afghan Foreign Minister to Iran on July 2, the Iranian and Afghan sides agreed to prepare a comprehensive document on Iran and Afghanistan cooperation within three next months, and also Iran has announced that it is ready to host Inter-Afghan talk.

### In Afghanistan,...

That's the man that the Soviets installed in 1986 as president with the hopes of reinvigorating what seemed a doomed communist project in Kabul. But with the inevitable Soviet withdrawal already on the horizon, Najibullah's tone shifted. Sharp, savvy, and charismatic, a gifted orator in both Pashto and Dari, he started to shed his Soviet skin and portray himself as a nationalist. He talked of unity, and launched a program of national reconciliation with the mujahideen rebels he'd spent years battling and brutalizing.

At the same time, the army and his newly formed militias continued to attack Afghan villages, engendering distrust among the mujahideen who still remembered disappeared relatives and suffering in Najibullah's dungeons.

"Afghans who look back on the days of Najibullah as a time of peace have conveniently forgotten the thousands who were tortured and killed by secret police under his command. Was he willing to make peace at the end? Possibly. But if he was, we gain nothing by erasing the lives of those who suffered because of his part in the war," Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director for Human Rights Watch, told Foreign Policy.

Najibullah's complicated legacy explains the controversy over Mohib's graveside visit, which many observers understood as

a deliberate political message. A quarter-century after his death, Najibullah still has a strong base in the country's southeast, a Pashtun heartland; in Afghanistan, the dead cast a long shadow.

"Mohib wants to be politically successful, so he believes he needs Najibullah's Pashtun nationalist supporters, who have become very loud during the last years," said Sayed Jalal Shajjan, a Kabul-based anthropologist and writer. The visit was a reminder of Taliban brutality and a poke in the eye to Pakistan, a country whose intelligence services have long supported Taliban insurgents and a frequent target of Mohib's verbal barbs.

But Mohib apparently sought to hedge his bets with his Eid visits, paying homage as well to the grave of Ahmad Shah Massoud, a legendary commander of the mujahideen known as the "Lion of the Panjshir," who fought first the Soviets (and Najibullah) then the Taliban, before he was killed by assassins linked to al Qaeda two days before the 9/11 attacks. "Mohib did not do this without calculation," said Shajjan. "He is preparing himself to become the next president, the leader of a new generation of Afghans. And to be successful with that, he visited the graves of both Massoud and Najibullah, two very contrary figures."

Afghanistan's bloody past—and especially the role played by the Taliban after a period of civil

war—is again present as the country grapples with a solution to decades of conflict. When the Taliban, after years of fighting, finally entered Kabul in 1996, they broke into the compound where Najibullah had spent four years in hiding, brutally tortured and murdered him, then hung his mutilated corpse out on public display.

Today, with the prospect of the Taliban returning to Kabul and taking a part in the new government, many have déjà vu. Like Najibullah, current President Ashraf Ghani comes from the Pashtun Ahmadzai tribe, prominent in the southeast. And like Najibullah, Ghani, who finds himself in an isolated situation between Washington and the Taliban, hopes to arouse nationalist and patriotic feelings among his Pashtun supporters to protect himself from Taliban reprisals. Although it appears very unlikely at the moment, some Afghans even fear that Ghani will eventually share a similar violent fate after the Americans withdraw and the Taliban reconquer Kabul.

In a recent interview on the Afghan peace process, Ghani nodded back at the dissolution of the republic and the bloody fate of Najibullah—perhaps as a cautionary tale for Afghanistan's road ahead.

"Najibullah made the mistake of his life by announcing that he was going to resign," Ghani said. "Please don't ask us to replay a film that we know well."

### Tajikistan's...

Economic fears and hopes Trade between Afghanistan and Tajikistan has increased severalfold in the past two decades. In this regard, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the two countries, which could facilitate the development of cooperation in various fields, from economics and industry to culture.

Also, the Central Asia-South Asia power project (CASA-1000), an electricity-transmission line in the region, the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran railway, and other ambitious

projects will not seem possible without security and stability in Afghanistan.

In sum, from Tajikistan's point of view, the process of dialogue with the Taliban should, instead of being a major obstacle to expanding economic ties and bilateral cooperation projects, provide a platform for security and achieving peace and expanded economic ties with Afghanistan.

Therefore, the type of intra-Afghan peace process and the future position of the Taliban in the power and attitude of Taliban leaders toward Tajikistan are among the important fears and hopes in Tajikistan's foreign policy.

### Exchange Rates

77	\$	77.1
85.4	€	85.5
93.9	£	94
459	Rp.	460
20.1	دراهم	20.2
970	₹	980

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# Bill Gates blames social media platforms for COVID-19 spread in U.S.

Microsoft founder Bill Gates blamed social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter for the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 during the pandemic.

"Can the social media companies be more helpful on these issues? What creativity do we have? Sadly, the digital tools probably have been a net contributor to spreading what I consider crazy ideas," Gates said in an interview with American business magazine Fast Company. The "crazy ideas" include misinformation convincing people to not wear masks, and conspiracy theories about vaccines to combat the disease.

"A lot of it comes in the form of conspiracy, where someone's got some plot and my name even comes up as potentially at the center of some conspiracies, so it is a bit scary," Gates said, adding that people want to be driven towards the facts in the pandemic.

In 2015, Gates warned about global pandemics in a TED Talk. This now-realized prediction has raised the conspiracy theory that the billionaire is responsible for creating the novel coronavirus, and netizens have been questioning the purpose of his heavy investments in vaccine development.

"We are in a crazy situation so there's going to be crazy rumors," he said during an interview with CCTV in April, adding that best resources, including experts, vaccine developers and drugs are necessary to stop the current global pandemic.

"We need to make it [a vaccine] without just focusing on one country, we need to make it for the entire world, including for countries that don't have the resources to pay for vaccine research or vaccine factories," said Gates.

A Facebook spokesperson responded to Gate's criticism by highlighting the company's



initiatives to help cope with the global crisis. "Since January, we've worked closely with health organizations, like the CDC, to connect people to

accurate information about COVID-19 and we will continue to do more," the spokesperson said in an email to Fox News.

### A look at the world

#### Russia remains committed to nuclear test ban - Foreign Ministry

Russia remains committed to the ban on nuclear tests and continues to implement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty despite the fact that the treaty has not come into force, the Russian Foreign Ministry's press office said on Saturday commenting on the United States' 2020 Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments (Compliance Report).

The Foreign Ministry pointed out that "the US allegations that Russia allegedly violated the nuclear testing moratorium by conducting nuclear experiments inconsistent with the US 'zero-yield' standard are not expectedly substantiated by evidence."

"Along with this, Americans admit that they



know neither about the number of those experiments in 2019 nor about whether they were conducted or not. We underline that in accordance with its international commitments, Russia should not follow any 'US standards' in the nuclear testing field," the ministry added.

"We officially confirm that Russia remains strictly committed to the nuclear testing moratorium and continues to implement the provisions of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty with regards to the nuclear testing ban, in spite of the fact that the treaty has not come into force," the ministry stressed.

"Unlike the United States, we ratified it 20 years ago and have been implementing with success. Along with this, we proceed from the assumption that any disagreements on criteria for compliance with relevant commitments can and should be settled within the framework of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty after it comes into force," the statement says. "As long as the United States has not ratified this treaty, we think it counterproductive to discuss with that country's representatives the issue of compliance with that nuclear testing ban," it emphasizes.

The Foreign Ministry pointed out that "the insinuations seem to have been ... **P2**

#### Europe unites against Israel's West Bank annex plan



Encouraged by US President Donald Trump's so-called "Deal of the Century," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last month announced his government would formally annex the Jordan Valley and all settlement blocs in the West Bank. The annexation was scheduled to be declared by Netanyahu on Wednesday.

But uncertainty surrounds Netanyahu's position in light of widespread international criticism of the plan along with differences with the US on its application.

Annexation "will certainly happen in July," but it has to be done in partnership with the US, Ofir Akunis, Israel's regional cooperation minister, told Army Radio.

The annexation "will only happen after a declaration by Trump," he added.

The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is viewed as occupied territory under international law, thus making all Jewish settlements there -- as well as the planned annexation -- illegal.

Palestinian officials have threatened to abolish bilateral agreements with Israel if it goes ahead with the annexation, which will further undermine the two-state solution. Like Turkey and much of the international community, the EU does not recognize Israel's sovereignty over territories it has occupied since 1967.

#### INTERPOL Denies Issuing Red Notices for Donald Trump, U.S. Officials, as Iran Claimed

On June 29, the Iranian state news outlet Press TV reported that Iran's leadership issued a warrant for the arrest of several U.S. officials, most notably President Donald Trump, "on charges of planning and implementing a terrorist attack in the Iraqi capital that assassinated Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani and his companions."

Tehran Prosecutor Ali Alqasi-Mehr claimed that 36 U.S. officials in total had been identified as being involved in the killing. The Press TV report claimed that Iran had requested that the international police organization INTERPOL issue "red notices" for all the individuals on the list.

INTERPOL's Red Notice is a request to law



enforcement worldwide to locate and arrest a person wanted by one or several member countries, pending legal action. Contrary to popular belief, a Red Notice is not an arrest warrant.

Later on the same day as the Iranian announcement, INTERPOL issued a statement saying that it would refuse to consider such red notice requests. It noted that article 3 of the organization's governing constitution strictly forbids "intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character." Polygraph.info attempted to reach INTERPOL for additional clarification, but received no response. The White House also declined to comment on the matter. A search of INTERPOL's Red Notice database reveals no such notice for Donald Trump.

INTERPOL's own claim that it rejects any red notices that are politically motivated is itself somewhat misleading, as the organization has a long been criticized for issuing red notices on behalf of authoritarian governments for the purpose of persecuting or silencing dissidents. Russia has issued a number of red notices seen as politically motivated. They included red notices for Ukrainian citizens and for Bill Browder, a British citizen and prominent Putin critic. A U.S.-born businessman, ... **P2**



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