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ديديان شفافيت افغانستان
INTEGRITY WATCH AFGHANISTAN

Watchdog: Mol's Inaction 'Paralyzes' Anti-Corruption Efforts

Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) on Saturday said that the failure of the Ministry of Interior to pursue cases against corrupt officials whose arrest warrant was issued by the Attorney General's Office has been slowing down efforts to combat corruption in the institutions.

The organization said that the failure to investigate major cases of corruption has also raised serious questions about the fairness of Afghanistan's legal and judicial institutions and their legal reputation.

"The Ministry of Interior is not acting on the arrest warrants issued by the Attorney General and the courts. This situation has practically paralyzed the anti-corruption campaign," said Naser Taimoori, a member of IWA. ... **P3**



Government allows conditional resumption of domestic cricket

The government has allowed the resumption of cricket in the country provided that all precautionary measures for the prevention of coronavirus should be implemented. The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) said on Saturday.

The decision was made during a meeting chaired by Vice President Sarwar Danish. ACB Executive Director Lutfullah Stanikzai was present during the meeting.

Government permission regarding the resumption of cricket in the country would pave the way for Sphageza Cricket League which will be held in the near future. Stanikzai said: "Domestic cricket is opportunity to prepare for the international games and player will be able to examine their skills and fitness before international games."

Vice President Danish said that cricket team earned honor and trophies for the country that is why the ACB could resume domestic games while adhering to health guidelines by the Ministry of Public Health to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Region, world consider Taliban violence unacceptable



forums for peace in Afghanistan, had called the high level of violence by the Taliban as unacceptable and called on the Taliban to end the violence and begin face-to-face talks with the Afghan government. For peace in Afghanistan, the countries participating in regional and international forums have emphasized the need to safeguard Afghanistan's achievements over the past 19 years and called for their continuation and strengthening of peace talks, he said.

According to him, participants of the mentioned conferences will attend the forthcoming international conference in Geneva.

He said at the trilateral meeting between Afghanistan, China and Pakistan, the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to support the Government of Afghanistan in the ongoing cooperation and peace process.

Hewad said, Pakistan and China welcomed the Afghan government's move to release Taliban prisoners and called on the Taliban to end the violence as soon as possible and begin face-to-face talks with the Afghan government.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Afghanistan (MoFA) says the region and the world have expressed their support for the peace process to be led and owned by the Government of Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs held three multilateral meetings to

build and strengthen regional and international consensus on the Afghan peace process last week.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Gran Hewad told a press conference on Saturday that President Ghani had emphasized that both peace and crisis in Afghanistan had tangible

implications for the region.

He said Afghanistan wanted to play a positive role in the region and was trying to become a hub for trade and transit in the region.

Hewad added the countries of the region and the world, participating in regional and international

India Appoints New Envoy to Afghanistan

The Modi government has decided to appoint Rudrendra Tandon as the new envoy to Afghanistan and Vikram Doraiswami as high commissioner to Dhaka.

Tandon, a 1994 batch Indian Foreign Service officer is considered an Afghanistan specialist with stints in Kabul, Jalalabad and has headed Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran desk in the external affairs ministry. He is currently the Indian envoy to ASEAN at Jakarta. Tandon replaces Vinay Kumar who has performed admirably with the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan after striking ... **P2**



Trump bashes NYT article about Russia and Taliban as fake news

The New York Times article alleging that Russia was offering cash to militants in Afghanistan for killing the troops of the US and their coalition allies is a "hit job", US President Donald Trump wrote on Twitter on Saturday.

"This was just another phony hit job by the nytimes. They had no source, they made it up. Fake news!" Trump wrote.

He attached a link to a publication which says that "defense officials say Russian bounty info has not been corroborated." On Thursday, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said at the hearing in the House Armed Services Committee, "It is the opinion of a number of intelligence entities, agencies, that could not corroborate the report."

Trump again suggested that the Pulitzer awards should be taken back from the US newspapers that won it for covering his electoral



headquarters' alleged collusion with Russia, which were proved false. "The 'journalists' who got them were all wrong. Take back the Pulitzers, which have become a joke!" he said. On June 26, the New York Times published an article claiming that a Russian military intelligence unit allegedly secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing

coalition troops in Afghanistan. According to the daily, the intelligence finding was briefed to US President Donald Trump several months earlier, and the White House National Security Council (NSC) discussed the issue at an interagency meeting in late March. Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov called these allegations ... **P2**

Trump bashes...

a lie and a "total hoax."

On June 27, Russian Foreign Ministry labeled the initial publication on this issue as intentionally false. According to the Ministry, "that unpretentious fake news clearly illustrates low intellectual abilities of the US intelligence propagandists who have to come up with this nonsense instead of inventing something more credible."

On June 28, Trump tweeted that the US intelligence labelled the reports of the alleged Russian attempts to offer bounty to the Afghan militants for assassination of US servicemen as false. Trump speculated that The New York Times, which published the initial report, could have published "another fabricated Russia Hoax," in a bid to "make Republicans look bad."

The Russian Supreme Court designated the Taliban movement as a terrorist group in 2003. The organization is outlawed on the territory of Russia.

India Appoints...

a deal with Taliban insurgents.

Vikram Doraiswami, who is the Additional Secretary in charge of International Organisations and Summits at the foreign ministry, heads to Bangladesh capital Dhaka, one of the closest allies of New Delhi. Doraiswami is a 1992 batch officer.

Doraiswami replaces Riva Ganguly Das, the 1986 batch IFS officer, who is likely to take over as Secretary East at the external affairs ministry when the incumbent Vijai Thakur Singh retires in September.

By MUHAMMET ALI GÜLER

In Afghanistan, does the future belong to Afghans?

The warm hospitality and sincere friendship of my Afghan friends are still unforgettable for me. Even now, when I visit them, they do their best to serve me as a guest as they see any guest as a guest of Allah in Islam. Whenever I hear of the acts of violence, clashes or attacks occurring in Afghanistan in the news, I feel very sad and empathetic toward those people. The Afghan people deserve better than this endless, vicious cycle of violence which is destroying the country's future.

In order to have a better understanding and comprehend a clear picture of the situation in Afghanistan, I sought the opinions of my Afghan friends before taking on this issue. Some of the Afghans I sought help from were Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks or Hazaras – all of whom are well-educated individuals whose opinions are important due to their international exposure. Some have already done their bachelor's degree while others are pursuing a master's or doctorate in various fields in different countries of the world. All of these people I talked to are my friends, and this provided me with a cordial environment to ask any questions I had on my mind. I frankly believe that someday Afghanistan will experience true peace and will be politically and economically stable. I also believe that the country will become a very hospitable nation in the future.

I must point out that this article is not a full-fledged study. Indeed, I wanted to show my gratitude to my Afghan friends with whom I shared memorable and remarkable times. For this article, I contacted 12 Afghans, many of whom desire permanent peace, and elicited their suggestions on how to attain that peace. Out of the 12 people I questioned, only four of them were unable to provide any suggestions and three of these four were females.

Some of the questions I asked them included: Which political system do you think would suit Afghanistan? Do you think a federal system will be suitable in Afghanistan? How about a federal system with a rotating presidency?

Insight into thoughts

Two out of eight respondents stated that a stronger national government will be more workable in Afghanistan. One explained that a strong government with political party backing might work better than the current system. He further said that a presidential system with political party representation may be applicable if the president comes from the major



party. The problem, according to him, is that there is no major political party in the parliament since most of the parliamentarians are independent.

The other six friends focused more on a federal system. They explained that a federal system could be more suitable with a rotating central government or presidency. One of the respondents highlighted the failure of the current system in Afghanistan which has existed for around 50 years. Another respondent provided an explanation for why the federal system is advisable in Afghanistan.

He said that Afghanistan is a multiethnic country and the main ethnicities are located in different regions. For instance, the Pashtuns reside in the east and south while most of the Uzbeks live in the north. In addition, the Tajiks and Hazaras live in the center and west, respectively.

Therefore, he believes that a federal system could very well facilitate the quick and efficient creation of opportunities for every state and region by focusing on comprehensive security and socioeconomic activity. State of violence

The peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban to end the 20-year war in Afghanistan are still ongoing. The Taliban could be directed toward the political field so that most Afghans perceive it as a political structure. In doing so, the only platform the Taliban could use to defend and express racial, religious and other ideologies would be within parliament instead of through armed struggle; the latter being detrimental to all sides regardless of belief, race and sect.

It is true that only Afghans can initiate the revival of Afghanistan. I believe that future generations of Afghans are capable of taking up the responsibility of improving the country due to their willingness for change by contributing more to the peace talks.

Is federal system applicable?

According to what I have learned from my Afghan friends, a federal system in which each state has its own rulers could very well be an alternative to the current system. In the national government, there are three rotating presidents with distributed power in accordance with their expertise. The respondents were first concerned about the current system when it came to the balance of power and the equal distribution of resources among ethnicities and regions.

Therefore, political elites could arrange a system in accordance with the reigning political, economic and social structure and the needs of the Afghan people. The solution is to find the best workable system that would end the long-lasting bloodshed in Afghanistan so as to be able to build a common future.

The people of Afghanistan are worried about their future due to many obstacles, including the war between the Taliban and the Afghan government. In my opinion, the results of peace talks are a significant and decisive factor in regard to the security of Kabul and the surrounding region and the thoughts of Afghans about their political system. The Afghan people have to believe that the time for peace is imminent and that both sides care about the well-being of people in Afghanistan.

By LYNZY BILLING

How Poetry Societies Are Giving Women in Afghanistan a Voice During Coronavirus Lockdown

on a frosty February morning in Kabul, Lima Aafshid's face glows in the pale blue light of her smartphone. She is reciting the words of 13th century Afghan poet Jalaluddin Rumi. Speaking in Dari, her voice is soft, yet clear.

'Let's get away from all the clever humans who put words in our mouth.

Let's only say what our hearts desire.'

For the past six years, Aafshid has been a member of Sher-e-daneshgah, the Kabul University Poetry Association. The group is mostly made up of students in their twenties, members of the city's rapidly growing middle class. Their meeting place is a hip, bustling cafe in Pole-e-surkh, Kabul's vibrant 3rd district. Cigarette smoke swirls around the dimly-lit room as young men and women huddle together and discuss their poetry around a small wood-burning stove.

"You must have poetry inside

of you," Aafshid says. "It's not something that you can just learn with experience. I have been writing since I was a child, and when I started studying journalism at Kabul University I joined Shar-e-Daneshgah to receive critiques of my poetry from others." Aafshid says that the meetings have introduced her to a tight-knit cadre of like-minded young people. And during the global COVID-19 pandemic, technology has helped them continue to meet. Afghanistan has 33,908 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 957 fatalities as of July 10, yet the true number of cases is likely much higher due to a shortage of testing kits. Since March 28, when the Afghan government brought in lockdown measures in the capital in an attempt to prevent the spread of the virus, Sher-e-daneshgah has started hosting virtual poetry sessions, enabling its members to maintain a

sense of community despite the health crisis. Aafshid says that the virtual groups have proven extremely popular. "We started a group on Telegram which now has more than 200 members. In this group, we share our poems one day a week, just like we did in our face-to-face meetings."

Another informal poetry group called Saped-dar also holds a Virtual Poetry Night on Telegram, where members join via video to discuss poetry with different themes each week, from love and war to everyday life. "The group was created because of it as a place for young people to socialize together and learn about poetry," says Aafshid.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, mobile technology and Internet access in Afghanistan has grown at a breakneck pace. A 2018 report found that more than 10% of the population are using social media apps, up from 0.1% in 2004. ... **P3**

Pakistan opens 2 key trade routes with Afghanistan: officials

Pakistan has opened two key trade routes with neighbor Afghanistan that will help boost bilateral trade, Pakistani officials said on Saturday.

Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistani Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan, said the Angor Adda crossing with Afghanistan in South Waziristan tribal district was opened on Friday, two days ahead of its scheduled opening.

Meanwhile, officials in Kurram tribal district said that the Kharlachi border crossing was opened on Saturday.

Sadiq had earlier announced that the Angor Adda and the Kharlachi border crossings would be opened on July 12 for trade with the neighboring country. Both border crossings were closed in March due to COVID-19.

While congratulating the team working at the Angor Adda border crossing to open it for trade ahead of the proposed date, Sadiq said in a tweet on Saturday that "trade should be the mainstay of Pak-Afghan relations and prosperity of regions on both sides of the border."

Last month, Pakistan opened the Ghulam Khan crossing in North Waziristan tribal

district with Afghanistan. Besides these crossings, Pakistan has also opened Torkham crossing in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Chaman crossing in southwestern Balochistan province for trade with Afghanistan.

Earlier this month, Sadiq said Pakistan had shared Torkham and Chaman border terminal master plans with Afghanistan to enable concurrent development on the Afghan side in the spirit of brotherly cooperation and regional connectivity.

He said an enhanced compatibility in trade infrastructure on both sides will help realize the shared goal of optimum trade, connectivity and people to people facilitation between the two countries.

Afghan traders currently use Torkham and Chaman border points for transit trade and both countries are exploring ways to use other crossings for transit trade.

Pakistan announced in October last year to open the Gwadar port for the Afghan transit trade as the trade related infrastructure at the port was already to handle bulk cargoes to and from Afghanistan. The first ship carrying containers for Afghan transit trade arrived at the Gwadar port on Jan. 14, 2020.

Covid-19: WB provides \$200 million to Afghanistan

The World Bank (WB) has approved a \$200 million grant to help Afghanistan mitigate COVID-19 impacts and provide relief to vulnerable people and businesses, according to a statement on Friday.

The Afghanistan COVID-19 Response Development Policy Grant comprises \$100 million from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank Group's fund for the poorest countries, and \$100 million from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), managed by the World Bank on behalf of 34 donors. The Afghanistan COVID-19 Response Development Policy Grant will support the government of Afghanistan to strengthen policies

that promote faster recovery and keep basic infrastructure such as water, electricity, and telecommunications afloat and running.

"The program will provide vital fiscal resources to manage the impacts of the pandemic in the context of rapidly slowing economic growth and declining government revenues," said Henry Kerali, World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan. "Policy actions supported by the program will both help mitigate the impacts of the current crisis on the poor and vulnerable and also lay critical foundations for longer-term recovery. The World Bank will continue to stand with the people of



Afghanistan through this crisis."

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant adverse health, social, and economic impacts in Afghanistan, shrinking the economy and driving down public revenue. The grant will support changes in regulations to increase access to finance for small

and medium-sized enterprises, protect healthcare workers, and raise awareness on gender-based violence in schools. It will also support plans to encourage students to return to school when educational institutions are to reopen after the COVID-19 crisis.

How Poetry Societies...

A 2019 study found that over 90% of Afghans have at least one member in their household who owns a mobile phone and 46.3% have an Internet connection.

Pakiza Arezo, a former literature student who now works with the Ministry of Information and Culture in Kabul has been a member of Mirman Baheer since the group's founding. "Our members are mostly Pashtun girls from the provinces whose families disapprove of them writing and reading poetry in front of men. Their society is more conservative," she says. "So we formed a women's only group."

For these women from rural areas, who overwhelmingly lack access to the Internet or smartphones, participation is still possible. "For women who aren't able to join in the group discussions in person, because of the distance, issues around security or family permission, we will listen to and discuss their poetry by telephone," Arezo says.

Azero says that growing access to the Internet is helping to transform the prospects of female poets in rural areas and to offer opportunities for their work to be shared widely and, importantly, anonymously if the poet chooses. "Social media has encouraged women to share their ideas, and opinions, and offered a space for women to be more open minded," she says.

Technology has enabled Afghan women to share their experiences in ways that were not available to them before, agrees Farzaneh Milani, an Iranian-American author and professor of Persian literature and Women's Studies at the University of Virginia. She says technology has played a key role in the movement for women's equality in the country. "Although the ties between women and poetry have been deep and strong in Afghanistan, digital online poetry sharing is an ultimate act of unveiling for women in the borderless cyberspace," Milani says. "Giving presence to the unseen and the voice to the unheard."

In Kabul, Aafshid is optimistic about the opportunity that poetry brings for Afghan women's rights. But she also recognizes that fundamental societal attitudes must shift to meet this change. "Women have a right to shape the policies that determine the political and cultural landscape in their own country," says Afshid.

To get there, she says, Afghan women's perspectives needed to be recognized. "Women need to feel safe to share their voices publicly. Until then, they will only find safety in anonymity online and among one another."

Russia, China...

Syria dossier, presented the draft on Thursday that was put to vote on Friday.

"We categorically reject claims that Russia wants to stop humanitarian deliveries to the Syrian population in need," Russian Deputy UN Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy wrote in a tweet ahead of the vote.

A 'death sentence for many' The council was expected to vote on a second Russian draft text to approve aid deliveries for one Turkish crossing for one year.

Al Jazeera's diplomatic editor James Bays reporting from the UN said if nothing is agreed on by the end of Friday, there would be no aid crossing the border for a time.

UN director Louis Charbonneau reacting to the vote said on Twitter: "Russia and China again cynically vetoed renewal of Syria UN cross-border aid mandate, this time hours before it expires. "They politicise humanitarian aid like they accuse others of

doing elsewhere. Millions of Syrians rely on aid. This could be virtual death sentence for many." According to a statement from the Chinese ambassador, Bays said China would like some sanctions relief for the Assad regime in the resolution.

"That's one thing that would potentially make them change their position," Bays said. But because the council is operating virtually during the coronavirus pandemic, members have 24 hours to cast a vote so a decision would not be known until Saturday.

The NGO Oxfam warned that stopping cross-border aid would be "a devastating blow to the millions of Syrian families who rely on this aid for clean water, food, health care and shelter".

Russia and China argue the UN authorisation violates Syria's sovereignty, and aid can increasingly be channelled through Syrian authorities.

Concession In the only concession to Moscow, the new draft asked

for just a six-month extension of cross-border aid authorisation, instead of one year. But Germany and Belgium still wanted both border crossings kept open.

According to Washington's ambassador to the UN, Kelly Craft, keeping only one border crossing open would cut off 1.3 million people living north of Aleppo from humanitarian aid. David Miliband, president of the International Rescue Committee, described the veto as a "dark day" for Syrian civilians and the UN.

He added it "defies logic or humanity to dismantle a system designed to bring life-saving aid to Syrians in the form of food, health supplies, vaccines, and now critical COVID-19 provisions".

Russia has vetoed 16 council resolutions on Syria since Syria's President Bashar al-Assad cracked down on protesters in 2011, leading to civil war. For many of those votes, Moscow has been backed in the council by China.

Watchdog: Mol's...

"This institution (Interior Ministry) is still unable to act against the strongmen--we have examples of strongmen appointed to government positions, this is only day dreaming if you expect an investigation against them (strongmen)," said Abdul Rauf Eshpon, a member of parliament. Meanwhile, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has also criticized the impunity of strongmen, who are accused of playing significant roles in major cases of corruption and embezzlement in the country. "One of the factors is the intervention of the strongmen in legal issues, one of the major examples of this is the issue of the football federation where the interior ministry failed to take action despite persistent demands," said Shabnam Salehi, a member of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

Last month, John Sopko, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), criticized the Afghan

government for not taking practical action on 6,500 cases of corruption that have not been assessed.

"We hope we will see that the arrest, trial and imprisonment of powerful individuals engaging in corruption occurs on a regular basis," Sopko said.

Ordinary Afghans react: "The law is implemented only on the poor, it is not for the strongmen, we never saw a lawmaker, a strongman or a member of provincial council go to trial," said Omid Wesal, a resident in Kabul.

Another Kabul resident, Shujauddin, said: "The prisons are full of the poor, there is no son of a lawmaker in the cell or the son of a minister--the son of those people accused of embezzlement are enjoying themselves at their homes."

On June 26, The UN mission in Afghanistan also raised concerns over corruption in Afghanistan. Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, on Thursday briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan

and described corruption as a major challenge for the country. The UN envoy said that the impunity of well-connected political figures remains a major obstacle to fighting corruption in Afghanistan. "Like so many countries, Afghanistan continues to be plagued by corruption, which corrodes the confidence of the population and the donor community, and fuels the ongoing conflict. In spite of the progress made in previous years in anti-corruption reforms, this progress has slowed in the past year, with key institutional reforms being neglected, including the establishment of the all-too-important independent anti-corruption commission.

"Apparent impunity of well-connected political figures remains a major issue. Additional progress in the fight against corruption is therefore crucial as the 2020 Pledging Conference on Afghanistan approaches," she said.

President Ashraf Ghani has repeatedly stated in the past that fighting corruption is among his top priorities.

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76.1	\$	76.2
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890	₹	900

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Russian FM: Worried about U.S. continuous accusations against China

Russia is worried about Washington's increasing accusations against Beijing, said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Friday in an online conference. We hope the U.S. will not pass the line, Lavrov said.

Worrying signs indicate that some of the American authorities have attacked Chinese officials on a personal level, he said.

The Russian Foreign Minister hopes the two biggest economies can find a diplomatic way to solve their differences.

Mentioning the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) - the only arms control pact between Russia and the U.S. - Lavrov said his country is able to ensure its own security.

"We know, and we strongly believe that we are guaranteed to ensure our security for the long term even in the absence of this agreement," TASS news agency quoted Lavrov as saying at the conference.

He said that Russia is ready for any developments, so if the United States refuses to renew the treaty, "options may be different."

But the overall focus will be on continuing dialogue with the United States on strategic issues, on new weapons control instruments, in the context of all factors affecting strategic stability, he added.

According to Lavrov, Russia does not need an extension of the treaty more than the United States does.

If the United States categorically refuses to extend it, Russia will not persuade it, Lavrov said. Moscow and Washington signed the New START Treaty in 2010. The agreement sets the limits to the numbers of various strategic weapons possessed by both countries.

The agreement due to expire in February 2021 can be extended for another five years by mutual consent.



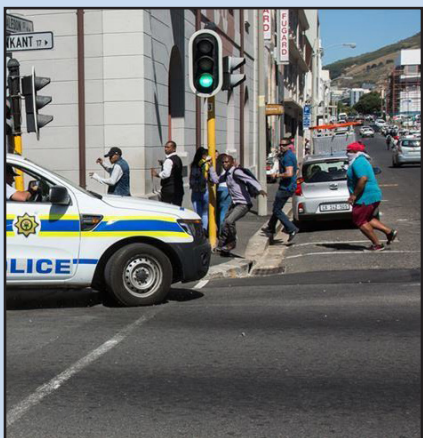
A look at the world

200 hostages rescued from South Africa church, 5 dead

Five people were killed outside a church near the South African capital as a hostage situation played out early on Saturday, local police announced.

Four men who were shot dead and burned in a vehicle outside the compound of the International Pentecostal Holiness church located west of Johannesburg, with a security guard responding to a complaint at the church also shot and killed in his vehicle, police spokesman Vish Naidoo told local broadcaster eNCA.

"We are investigating multiple murders," said Naidoo, adding that members of a special police task force had rescued about 200 people who had reportedly been taken hostage inside the church.



"We also recovered over 40 firearms, including rifles, shotguns and hand guns. We are also investigating the possibility of them being in possession of firearms unlawfully," he said.

Naidoo said police also arrested over 40 suspects allegedly involved in the hostage-taking, with six currently in the hospital being treated for gunshot wounds.

Three of the suspects are security personnel with the South African police service, South African National Defense Force and Johannesburg Metro police.

According to preliminary investigations, the attack was linked to a leadership dispute in the church.

"The initial group that allegedly attacked this church said they were here to take over the premises," Naidoo said.

"We also have information that there are conflicting groups within the church and that might be a possibility of a motive but we don't want to elaborate too much on the motive," he added.

U.S. imposes 25% tariffs on €1.1 billion worth of French goods



The Trump administration imposed 25% tariffs on \$1.3 billion (€1.1 billion) worth of French goods on Friday, but will freeze the collection of the tax due to the coronavirus crisis.

The tariffs are being issued over France's tax on large tech companies that the US says unfairly targets American companies.

The French law, named "Gafa" for Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple, imposes a 3% tax on companies' digital turnover (advertising and commissions) in France and concerns companies that make at least €750 million globally and €25 million in France.

French President Emmanuel Macron said in January that he had an "excellent discussion" with the US president and that they would "work together on a good agreement to avoid any escalation of tariffs."

French economy minister Bruno Le Maire also said in January the country would delay collecting the tax.

Global discussions of a digital tax were subsequently delayed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development due to the pandemic.

The US tariffs will include cosmetics and handbags, according to an official statement obtained by AFP.

The additional tariffs are to be delayed until the end of the year due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis, the US trade representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement.

The tariffs will therefore not go into effect until January 2021.

Russia, China veto approval of cross-border aid for Syria

Russia and China have vetoed a last-ditch attempt by members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to extend approval - which expires on Friday - for humanitarian aid to be delivered across two border crossings into Syria from Turkey for the next six months.

The UN says millions of Syrian civilians in the mostly rebel-held northwest of the country depend on the humanitarian aid delivered from Turkey, describing it as a "lifeline".

The remaining 13 council members voted in favour of the German-Belgian draft resolution on Friday. The UN authorisation, which allows the body to distribute aid to displaced Syrians without needing permission from Damascus, is due to expire later in the day.

Third failed vote



The 15-member council has been split, with most members pitted against Syrian allies Russia and China, who want to cut the number of border crossings to one, arguing those areas can be reached with humanitarian help from within Syria. This was the third failed vote on the issue by the council and the second veto by Russia and China this week.

The UNSC first authorised the cross-border aid operation into Syria six years ago, which also included access from Jordan and Iraq. Those crossings were cut in January due to opposition by Russia and China.

On Tuesday, Russia and China vetoed a bid to extend for a year-long approval which would have allowed for the maintenance of two crossing points on the Turkish border - at Bab al-Salam, which leads to the Aleppo region, and Bab al-Hawa, which serves the Idlib region.

Russia then failed to win enough support on Wednesday for its proposal to authorise one crossing for six months.

Germany and Belgium, two non-permanent Council members responsible for the humanitarian aspect of the UN's ... **P3**



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