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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Issue No. 816

www.heartofasia.af

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Ghani: '10,708 ANDSF Killed and Wounded Since Feb. 29'

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Tuesday portrayed a grim picture of the situation in Afghanistan, saying that between February 29 and July 21 up to 10,708 members of the Afghan National Security and Defense Forces (ANSDF) have been killed and wounded.

"Between February 29, 2020, and July 21, 2020, ANSDF losses have been 10,708, with 3560 martyred, 6781 wounded and the rest kidnapped, imprisoned or unaccounted for," said Ghani while speaking at the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Kabul.

He said that the Afghan civilian losses during this period have been 3073, with 775 killed, 1609 wounded and 689 kidnapped. Ghani also said that rocket attacks during his provincial visits have become routine.

On Taliban-Al Qaeda ties, Ghani said: "There is no evidence that the Taliban have severed their ties ...

P3



Taliban push to control private companies, aid agencies in Afghanistan

The Taliban wants all private companies and aid organisations operating in Afghanistan to register with the hardline Islamists, officials from the group said. The order was issued last week and comes as the Afghan government and Taliban officials prepare to engage in intra-Afghan talks aimed at ending the fighting in the war-torn country.

The negotiations, slated to be held in the Qatari capital Doha, are part of a February deal between the United States and the Taliban to end the nearly two-decades-old war. Washington is trying to iron out difficulties and bring the Taliban and the Afghan government to the table. The militant group has been running a armed rebellion since it was toppled from power in a U.S.-led invasion in 2001 and has regained control over thousands of check-points across a broad swathe of the country, with commanders overseeing distribution of ...

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Taliban Announces 3-Day Ceasefire for Eid



The Taliban on Tuesday announced a three-day ceasefire during Eid al-Adha ahead of the intra-Afghan negotiations that are expected in the coming weeks.

The group asked its fighters to avoid attacking Afghan forces and to not enter government-controlled areas. This is the third ceasefire in the

country since June 2019 when the group announced a three-day truce in Eid.

Judging from Taliban statements, it is expected that the intra-Afghan negotiations--mentioned in the US-Taliban agreement signed in late February--will not begin until the completion of a prisoner exchange

by the Afghan government and the Taliban. The exchange was also mentioned in the agreement as a confidence-building measure that would pave the way for negotiations.

The government has so far released more than 5,400 Taliban fighters while the Taliban has released over

800 captive Afghan security forces. Violence has remained high in the last two months amid peace efforts by the Afghan government and its international allies.

President Ashraf Ghani, addressing the SOM meeting in Kabul on Tuesday which was held in preparation for the Geneva summit, said 3,560 members of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANSDF) and 775 civilians were killed, and 6,781 ANSDF members and 1,609 civilians were wounded, between February 29 to July 21. The Afghan government welcomes the Taliban's ceasefire announcement, said presidential spokesman Sediq Sediqqi.

"The ceasefire announcement is a key step, but the people of Afghanistan want an enduring ceasefire and the start of direct peace talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban," he added.

Sediqqi said that President Ghani has ordered Afghan forces to observe the three-day ceasefire and avoid any operation against the Taliban "unless they violate the truce.

U.S. praises Norway's role in Afghan peace process

In an effort to ensure an early start to intra-Afghan negotiations, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad has visited Norway. The US embassy in Oslo said: "In meetings with Foreign Minister Ine Marie Eriksen Soreide and other senior officials, Khalilzad thanked Norway for its ongoing contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan."

He also commended the important efforts being made by Norway to advance the Afghan peace process, the US embassy said in a statement on Tuesday. ...

P3



UNDP issues report on socio-economic impact of Covid-19

Since the beginning of March, COVID-19 has spread rapidly all over Afghanistan, with officially reported cases as of July 18 reaching 35,000+ infections and 100+ deaths, according to a UNDP report.

These are likely to be under estimates as the daily new cases are in the order of seven hundred. Alarming, more than a third of the confirmed COVID19 cases are among doctors and healthcare staff.

The MoPH estimates the virus spreads at a Medium Infection Transmission rate and will reach its peak soon.

Afghanistan is struggling to create the required testing capacity being constrained by lack of personnel and medical equipment.

Invariably, the funding and



equipment needs for the medical response is way off the ability of Afghanistan to cope.

In a recent interview with the Atlantic Council, President Ghani stated that his government envisions five phases in managing the COVID-19 outbreak and that the country is now in the Phase. Adversity, He also stated that the economic consequence of the

outbreak means that around 90% of the Afghan population requires food assistance and medical attention.

UNICEF assessed that around 12 million Afghans could be pushed to food security deprivation. If these people are unable to go back to being food secure, the incidence of multi-dimensional poverty could rise from ...

P2

Nearly 3 billion...

cited 100 other threatened native plant and animal species that had lost more than half their habitat to the blazes, raising the prospect of far greater losses. Scientists say global warming is lengthening Australia's summers and making them increasingly dangerous, with shorter winters making it more difficult to carry out bushfire prevention work.

Researchers from the University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, University of Newcastle, Charles Sturt University and Birdlife Australia contributed to the study.

WHO: Virus...

protecting the source" and wearing a mask when asked to indoors and assuring the mouth is covered during a cough.

Also "ensuring you stay home if you've got any symptoms at all, ensuring that if you've been in contact with somebody known to have the virus that you identify yourself and self-isolate," said Harris.

Taliban push...

foreign aid.

A spokesman for the group said its officials had noticed that some companies and NGOs, including national and international organisations, were pursuing activities that they deemed were against the national interest.

"We will not allow any agency to work against the interest of our beloved Afghanistan, Islam...so we want to register all of them to have information about their activities," said the spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid.

Foreign aid forms the backbone of Afghanistan's economy and over 2,200 NGOs operate in the country providing education, health and financial support to the poor.

By Geeta Mohan

Sad to see our Sikh, Hindu brothers leave, says Afghanistan govt

In an exclusive conversation with India Today, the spokesperson to Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, Sediq Sidiqqi, spoke from Kabul and expressed sadness over members of the Sikh and Hindu communities of Afghanistan leaving for India. Calling them "soulmates" he hoped that they would return. According to him, every Afghan is a victim.

Blaming Pakistan for targeting the minorities, he said that India and Afghanistan should not fall into their trap. "Dividing people on the basis of their faith or sects. It is about the country and each citizen of the country," said Sidiqqi.

Endorsing the UNSC report, the senior official said that all top leaders of the main terror organisations in the region are in Pakistan and the state provides safe havens to terror groups. How is Afghanistan viewing the movement of members of the minority community to India? I will not call them minorities. They are our soulmates. There is enormous respect for the Sikh and Hindu community in Afghanistan and we do everything to ensure they are healthy and are provided security. We are all sad to be honest.

Should they have stayed back and fought along with the other Afghans? Absolutely, we all wish that millions of Afghans who have fled the country could have stayed back like millions of us who are still here and fighting. But again, Afghanistan is a free country and Afghans can choose to go and live outside if they want. We are working for the day when all Afghans can return. Many have returned in the past five years. Around four million who fled the country have come back.



Are Pak-based terror groups as much a concern for Afghanistan as it is for India?

We share the same level of concern and in our security, our national security, regional security is threatened by these terrorist groups, especially the Taliban who have enormous support in Pakistan.

There are lot of intelligence reports that the Taliban, their leaders, the Shura are based in Quetta, Pakistan. Quetta is not in Afghanistan. This is persecution by fundamentalists and terrorists and not by the State

I agree. We should look at the bigger picture. It is the responsibility of India as a big nation to make sure that our policies lead us towards prosperity for millions of Afghans. If there is peace, everyone will get peace.

The latest UNSC report puts Pakistan in the

dock with most terror organisations belonging there. What is Afghanistan's reaction to the report?

Our concern has been the same for the past so many years. It is a global concern. It is not just us saying that there are safe havens in Pakistan and there is support for these elements within Pakistan, now US and many other countries are saying the same. For us it is very simple, we just want to know what Pakistan is doing and what it has done so far (about it).

Any conversation likely to take place between President Ghani and PM Modi on the minority situation?

It has not happened yet. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the institution that is looking into this. But, we appreciate the support of India. India is an ally.

By RUCHI KUMAR

Afghanistan's Gen Z Is Fighting Back

There were few things that scared Fatima Khalil, a 24-year-old human rights activist who torpedoed her way across an increasingly volatile and patriarchal landscape of Afghanistan. One of them, Lima Ahmad, her older sister, told me in July, was "that Afghanistan will take away her happiness; it was something she always talked about." Ahmad is now picking up the remnants of a life after Khalil was killed in an attack on her vehicle in Kabul on June 27.

Through the digital crumbs left behind by a member of Generation Z, who documented everything through Facebook posts, photos, video clips, tweets, Instagram stories, and more, Ahmad draws a vivid picture of her baby sister. Khalil, known to her family as Natasha, was a rising star among young Afghans, whose future is increasingly under threat by ever worsening conflict.

In one video clip, Khalil and her friends are parasailing in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, where she was studying. In the background, her friend says, "Natasha, we might die." She responds, "It is better than dying in an explosion in Afghanistan."

In the end, Ahmad says, "she faced her biggest fear." She could have stayed away from Afghanistan—in Kyrgyzstan, where she had studied, or in the United States, where she had opportunities to go—but even grave physical risks were not enough to keep her away from Afghanistan, a country she loved and one that frustrated her in equal parts.

Khalil was born as a refugee in Pakistan, sixth of seven siblings, to parents who were forced to flee their homeland in the 1990s due to civil war. "We did not come from a rich economic background, but when we moved to Pakistan, life became more difficult. My parents were both teachers and also did not speak the local languages and so could not find enough work to support the family. We had many ups and downs, and Natasha was born in this time," Ahmad said, recalling how the midwife had walked out during her sister's delivery because they could not afford to pay her fees. Khalil survived and, from an early age, seemed wise beyond her years. "She already spoke three languages by the age of five. Her excellence in school ensured that she was awarded a scholarship

to study at the Afghan Turk school when we moved back to Kabul. After she graduated, she secured another full scholarship to study anthropology at the American University of Central Asia and later pursued another degree in international human rights," Ahmad said. "She loved to dance and was annoyingly good at it. I often told her to keep her options open in case she wanted to choose to work in a field other than human rights. We discussed the possibility of her opening the first dance school in Afghanistan."

Still she was most passionate about human rights, particularly about women's freedoms. At one point, Ahmad recalled, Khalil got into an argument with a government official who refused to take her photo for the electronic ID cards until she agreed to cover her head with a chador. "She raised a furor and demanded the officials show her where in the Afghan Constitution it says that a woman needs wear a chador for taking ID photographs. She always had her own way of doing things. And eventually she got an ID card with a photo of her without a chador because that is who she was." A childhood friend, ... **P3**

UNDP issues...

51.7% to 61.4%

OCHA warned about bigger Food security risk, and rank Afghanistan among the top 5 countries in the World (beyond Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Chad). The health crisis may therefore rapidly evolve into a dean transportation have also been disrupted and domestic activity has slowed down sharply. This is threatening the livelihood of thousands of Afghan families as border closures and panic-buying has led to a spike in prices of some food stuffs.

The UNDP Has Worked with the Afghan Government since the early days of the pandemic re-oriented its programs in a way to incorporate COVID-19 impact in its short-medium-and longer-term support to development in Afghanistan.

The rationale of UNDP's involvement and support are based on the following premise: If health system

responses to COVID-19 at subnational level are strengthened, if integrated assessments and labour market so n the impact of COVID-19 on society and local economy are conducted and if in formation gap by COVID-19 in border areas are identified and addressed then, Afghanistan national and sub-national authorities will be able to recognize and address emerging and long-term needs, be better prepared to contribute to the COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Framework ,and communities will be more resilient to shocks and better prepared to build back better in the short and long term because of evidence-based planning and programming. UNDP intends to leverage funds in collaboration with other donors such as for example the World Bank's HEAT (High Expertise Advisory Team). This initiative offers leading expertise that is a lined with

the four priority areas of the COVID-19 2. 0 Offer (Governance, Social Protection, Green Economy, and Digital Disruption). HEAT aims to assist senior government officials in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and through future oriented strategies: beyond recovery.

This report describes the current situation and challenges in combatting COVID-19 ; then presents the results of select simulations; first; regarding the likely impact of COVID-19 on GDP due to disruptions in regional and global trade flows; second, options to finance the immediate needs in the health sector; third; the budgetary implications of income support and civil work programs. This is followed by some policy recommendations and how UNDP can and plans to assist the Government to overcome the adverse effects of the pandemic and beyond that set Afghanistan in a pathway to sustainable and equitable development.

TAPI nations meet virtually, talk progress

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) on Tuesday said latest activities and implementation of the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline project were discussed among relevant nations during a video conference. Abdul Qadir Mutafi, MoMP spokesman, said the video conference took place late on Monday evening and was focused on latest developments in the project, intergovernmental commitments, financial resources, and other issues. All sides talked about cooperation and coordination for the sake of the project implementation. He said Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum Mohammad Haroon Chakhansori, Governor of Da Afghanistan Bank Ajmal Ahmadi, and Advisor to the President on Finance and Banking affairs, and the Minister of Natural Gas and Petroleum of India,



Director of Turkmen Gas, Nadeem Babar, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Mohammad Murad Amanov, Director of TPCL attended in the conference. According to him, cooperation and coordination were discussed for the purpose of

project implementation. According to Mutafi, the Government of Afghanistan renewed its commitment in areas of economic, technical and legal aspects of the TAPI project in accordance with the intergovernmental commitments of

the countries involved in the project. He added the countries concerned also renewed their commitment to speeding up work on the TAPI project and to continue the latest developments on Afghan soil and to implement.

U.S. praises...

The envoy briefed his hosts on current impediments to the start of intra-Afghan negotiations and how all sides were working to resolve them, the statement added. The Norwegian foreign minister and Khalilzad discussed key issues affecting the Afghan peace process, especially the critical importance of including women in intra-Afghan talk.

Poll: 80% of Americans...

The past few months have proved to be beneficial for Biden's campaign. He managed to swiftly consolidate the Democratic Party in ways Hillary Clinton, the party's 2016 nominee, struggled to do. Biden's fundraising, a weakness for him in the primary, has surged, allowing his campaign to build out infrastructure and start ad spending in both traditional battleground states and more aspirational targets, including Texas and Georgia. Biden has also benefited from Trump landing on the wrong side of the public in his initial reactions to the pandemic. For example, 3 in 4 Americans back requiring people to wear masks in public, which Trump initially dismissed. Another pandemic test for the president lies ahead in August and September, as Trump and his administration aggressively try to sell a skeptical public on reopening schools. The poll finds that about third of Americans are opposed entirely to the idea, while close to half say major adjustments to instruction will be required. Democrats have been buoyed by public polls finding Biden ahead of Trump both nationally and in some battleground states by a comfortable margin. However, Biden advisers caution that they expect the race to tighten in the final stretch before Election Day as more Republicans who may be dissatisfied with Trump's job performance gravitate back to their party's leader. Publicly, Trump and his advisers say they have been here before: underestimated and counted out. They point to public polls throughout the summer of 2016 that showed Trump trailing Clinton, only to eclipse her on Election Day.

Afghanistan's Gen...

Zuhal Ahad, an Afghan journalist with the BBC, concurred that Khalil would advocate for women's education even in school, urging married classmates to continue or pursue higher education. "I was sure she was going to be a future leader of Afghanistan," she added. In September 2019, Khalil joined the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and immediately delved into field work. It was while on her way to work that she was killed by a roadside bomb believed to have been targeting the AIHRC vehicle. The blast killed not just Khalil but also the driver, Ahmad Jawed Folad. Although no group has claimed responsibility, Afghans have attributed a recent spate of attacks in Kabul to the Taliban, who have been known to disregard civilian lives in their attacks. In just the first quarter of this year, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented 1,293 civilian victims—533 killed and 760 injured. Khalil's death has accentuated the multigenerational nature of the Afghan conflict, now threatening young people who have never known peace. The latest generation, though, appears ready to fight back in new ways. "She was never happy with the status quo. If it did not satisfy her, she demanded change with a sense of entitlement. She didn't feel the need to be in the system that was made by others for her. I have noticed this characteristics among other Afghans of her generation, too," said Ahmad, whose Ph.D. thesis explores the

potential of Afghanistan's Gen Z, a topic that was inspired by Khalil herself. "Even though we were raised by the same parents in the same family, with the same economy, her approach to life was uncomplicated. She was outspoken and did not care to wear layers of social and emotional norms." Afghanistan's Gen Z has had some advantages that shaped its worldview differently than its predecessors'. "For one, they are so connected to the rest of the world. Growing up in my generation, Afghanistan was so isolated from the world. But for Natasha it was normal to socialize with friends from other countries or cultures," Ahmad explained. In turn, the increasing sophistication and accessibility of technology have played an important role in allowing the current generation of Afghans to aspire for a better life. "In my opinion, their exposure and interaction with the rest of world, where people of their generation lived peacefully, make them entitled to the same comforts and [they] adopted the same values," Ahmad added. The sense of entitlement to peace has also meant that the current generation is willing to take bigger risks. "We were both raised in war, but she was not scared of breaking social taboos like I was. Natasha's generation is bold in their opinions, thoughts, and actions, irrespective of the criticism that comes their way," Ahmad said. Like many of the educated elite of this generation, "Natasha had the opportunity to live in other countries if she wanted to, she was very

intelligent, but she chose to come back here to work here for our future," Ahad added. From Ahmad's ongoing research, she has found less shame around the choice to live freely. She added that if the Taliban do return, they will have to take into account this generation, which will not submit to their will as the previous ones did. Khalil's rage about the increasing violence in Afghanistan makes Ahmad think that she would have hated being called a shaheed—martyr—as many are currently eulogizing her. "She was murdered. As someone who loved life like no one else, I know she would have been very angry. I can feel this immense energy within myself that she is mad, she is really mad ... and I can feel it." Terms like shaheed glorify death, Ahmad concluded. "It normalizes a horrible thing ... one where you don't even have the agency. This glorification of death is making our children feel like if you die in the way that Natasha and so many other young people died, then you will be a hero," she said. "I don't want Natasha to be a symbol of death. I want her to be the symbol of life." Afghan and international organizations are closely following the investigation into Khalil's death. Amnesty International has launched a petition asking for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to take proactive measure to provide protection and justice to human rights defenders like Khalil. Ahmad hopes that by keeping the issue alive, the way Afghans view life and death in the country will change.

Ghani: '10,708...

remains open, we have offered proof of our commitment and moral courage by the release of Taliban prisoners, a move without precedent in the annals of peace-building," he said. On the controversy over the release of the Taliban's 5,000 prisoners, Ghani said: "To demonstrate the government's commitment to peace, the Islamic Republic will soon complete the release of 5000

with Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations nor have they socialized peace among their commanders and fighters." Ghani said that to ensure that the window remains open for peace in the country, the Afghan government has offered proof of its commitment and moral courage by the release of Taliban prisoners. "To ensure that the window

Taliban prisoners as part of the exchange with ANDSF prisoners. With this action, we look forward to the start of direct negotiations with the Taliban in a week's time. We call on the Taliban to join us at the negotiating table and to concluding promptly there a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. Commitment to a ceasefire during the coming 'Eid will be an indication of things to come."

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Heart of Asia

Chief Editor: M. Hamid Hamdard
Reporters: Safiullah Nasary, Shafiq Amirzay, Jawad Temori & Hameedullah Hamidi
Graphic & Design: Arman
Phone: +93-202502100 - +93-777989696
Website: www.heartofasia.af
Email: heartofasiadaily@gmail.com
Address: Behind Rahman Baba High School - Opposite to 3rd District, Kabul - Afghanistan
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Poll: 80% of Americans think the country is headed in wrong direction

With the November election 100 days away, more Americans say the country is heading in the wrong direction than at any previous point in Donald Trump's presidency, putting the incumbent leader in a perilous position as his re-election bid against Democrat Joe Biden enters a pivotal stretch.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research makes clear the challenge ahead for Trump on that front: 8 in 10 Americans say the country is heading in the wrong direction. That's more than at any point since Trump took office. The poll also finds just 38 percent of Americans say the national economy is good, down from 67 percent in January, before the pandemic upended most aspects of their everyday life.

The AP-NORC poll also finds Trump's approval rating for his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic falling to a new low, with just 32 percent of

respondents supportive of his approach. Even Trump's standing on the economy, long the high water mark for the president, has fallen over the past few months after seeming ascendant earlier this year.

Overall, 38 percent of Americans approve of the president's job performance — well within the narrow range that Trump's approval ratings have stayed throughout this presidency, but down slightly from earlier this year before the pandemic. Most Republicans — 81 percent — approve of Trump's job performance, but just 68 percent of Republicans support his handling of the pandemic.

"People are sick and tired of a government that is divided and broken and unable to get things done," said Kate Bedingfield, Biden's deputy campaign manager. "What people feel like they're getting from Trump right now is a hodgepodge mess of self-interested political talk." ... **P3**



A look at the world

WHO: Virus is just 'one wave', not seasonal

The novel coronavirus is neither seasonal, nor does it occur in waves, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday.

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said in answer to questions at the twice-weekly UN press briefing held virtually in Geneva that the COVID-19 virus likes all weathers unlike influenza, even though many people think it is seasonal.

"And even though respiratory viruses, in the past, did tend to do this, you know, different seasonal waves. This one is behaving differently. This one is one where we have to be aware, and it is learning about us as we're learning about it," said Harris.

"It's a virus that likes all weather. But what it particularly likes is jumping from one person



to another when we come in close contact, so let's not give it that opportunity."

Asked about the second wave of the virus, she said: "We are in the first wave."

"It's going to be one big wave, it's going to go up and down a bit. Now the best thing is to flatten it and turn it into just something lapping at your feet."

"But at the moment, first, second, third wave -- these things don't really make sense."

She went on to say "there is a huge outbreak". "The most intense and the highest numbers are being experienced in the USA. They are in the middle of summer. Also, Brazil, they are an equatorial country."

Of the nearly 16.5 million cases globally, the US on July 28 had more than 4.29 million cases confirmed with 148,056 deaths, the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center said.

"We also have seen large outbreaks and very warm equatorial countries like the Philippines. So, each season does not seem to be affecting the transmission of this virus currently," said the WHO spokeswoman.

What is affecting the transmission of COVID-19 is mass gatherings, she said.

"It is people coming together and people, not social distancing, not taking the precautions to ensure they're not in close contact."

Harris said it is vital to be aware that countering COVID-19 needs what is known to work: "social distancing, the handwashing, ... **P2**

Nearly 3 billion animals killed or displaced by Australia fires



Nearly three billion animals were killed or displaced by Australia's devastating wildfires in 2019 and 2020, according to a new report, with experts calling it "one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history".

The study, released on Tuesday by scientists from several Australian universities, said 2.46 billion reptiles, 180 million birds, 143 million mammals and 51 million frogs were harmed in the blazes that ripped through the country. While the report did not say how many animals died directly because of the fires, the prospects for those that escaped the flames "were probably not great" due to a lack of food, shelter and protection from predators, said author Chris Dickman, a professor in ecology at the University of Sydney.

The fires ravaged more than 115,000 square kilometres (44,400 square miles) of drought-stricken bushland and forest across Australia in late 2019 and early 2020, killing more than 30 people and destroying thousands of homes. It was the broadest and most prolonged bushfire season in modern Australian history, with scientists attributing the severity of the crisis to the impacts of climate change.

An earlier study in January estimated the fires had killed a billion animals in the hardest-hit eastern states of New South Wales and Victoria. But the new survey was the first to cover fire zones across the continent, said lead scientist Lily van Eeden, of the University of Sydney.

Results from the survey were still being processed, with a final report due to be released late next month, but the authors said the number of three billion animals affected was unlikely to change.

"It's hard to think of another event anywhere in the world in living memory that has killed or displaced that many animals," WWF-Australia Chief Executive Officer Dermot O'Gorman said in a statement.

"This ranks as one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history."

The plight of Australia's popular koalas garnered international media attention during the fires, with thousands of the tree-dwelling marsupials believed to have perished.

But a government report early this year ... **P2**

China suspends Hong Kong treaties with 3 countries

China on Tuesday announced the suspension of Hong Kong's extradition treaties with the UK, Canada, and Australia, local media reported.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing, China's Foreign Minister Spokesman Wang Wenbin said: "China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region suspends extradition treaties and judiciary assistance treaties with Canada, Australia, and the UK in response to their previous interference in China's internal affairs," according to CGTN broadcaster.

Earlier, the UK, Canada, and Australia suspended extradition agreements with Hong Kong after China implemented the



law that makes it a crime to undermine Beijing's authority in the territory. Beijing termed the move by these states as "foreign intervention in Hong Kong."

Early today, New Zealand also suspended the extradition treaty with Hong Kong.

"New Zealand's suspension of the extradition treaty with Hong Kong is based on a wrong interpretation of the national security law for Hong Kong, and China reserves the right to further respond," Wang said.

Hong Kong local government said it has informed about the suspension of extradition treaties and agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters the governments of Canada, Australia, and UK "in response to their unilateral suspension of the extradition treaties with Hong Kong."

"These countries are politicizing judicial cooperation and show double standards in national security area," the government said, according to daily Global Times.

Hong Kong has been part of China since 1997, when the UK handed over the former colony to Beijing.

Last year, the Asian financial hub witnessed mass protests against a move to legalize extradition of accused people to mainland China.



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