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Japan pledges \$9mn for Afghan children, mothers' health

Japan pledged approximately \$9 million in aid to help UNICEF provide life-saving interventions and address urgent needs and rights of Afghanistan's children and women, a statement said on Tuesday.

Takahashi Yoshiaki, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of Embassy of Japan in Afghanistan, and Ms. Sheema Sen Gupta, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Representative in Afghanistan, signed the agreement in the presence of Dr. Ahmad Jawad Osmani, Acting Minister of Public Health.

The project will be implemented by UNICEF and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health.

The grant will enable UNICEF and its partners to vaccinate more than 1.4 million infants as part of the ...

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"Al Qaeda Leader" Killed in Farah: NDS

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) issued a statement confirming the death of Muhammad Hanif, a senior leader of the Al-Qaeda in Farah province. According to the NDS, the detainee was a main resident of Karachi, Pakistan.

The National Directorate of Security said the al-Qaeda leader for the Indian subcontinent was initially a member of the Taliban and joined al-Qaeda after 2010.

NDS added that he went to Helmand province in 2010 in cooperation with the Taliban and then to Farah province. He has worked in Farah, Helmand and Nimroz provinces.

The statement added that the al-Qaeda leader had "close" ties with the Taliban in the Indian subcontinent and was teaching the Taliban fighters how to plant explosives, make car bombs and make improvised explosive devices.

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) also said that two Pakistani nationals were detained during the operation.

Biden to ask Khalilzad to Continue his Efforts



As a former chairman of the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee and vice president, Joe Biden has been closely involved in Washington's war in Afghanistan and its complex relations with neighboring Pakistan for decades.

As Washington seeks to end the longest war in its history, Biden's presidency is poised to tweak but not completely change the U.S. course in Afghanistan while also adjusting relations with neighboring Pakistan. "We are likely to see more continuity

than divergence from the Trump to the Biden administration in Afghanistan and Pakistan," said Elizabeth Threlkeld, deputy director for South Asia at the Stimson Center, a Washington think tank. "In general, any changes will be more in tone and process than on substance."

Husain Haqqani, Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, says the Biden administration will go ahead with a military withdrawal from Afghanistan -- albeit with a caveat. "Biden will not withdraw by

ceding ground to the Taliban and will definitely be more mindful of the Taliban's continued ties to Al-Qaeda," he told RFE/RL's Gandhara.

Under a landmark U.S. agreement with the Taliban in February, Washington agreed to a "conditions-based" withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan by May 2021 in return for the Taliban's counterterrorism guarantees, peace talks with the Afghan government aimed at finding a lasting political solution, and a permanent cease-fire.

While the number of U.S. troops has already been reduced to 4,500 from 13,000 in February, the peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban appear stalled in Doha. Amid escalating attacks, a cease-fire is nowhere in sight. More crucially, the UN still sees Al-Qaeda as "heavily embedded" with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Haqqani, now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute think tank in Washington, says Biden and his advisers understand the importance of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. "They may prefer to stretch out the military withdrawal, making it truly conditional to end Taliban violence and use the extra time to apply more pressure on the Taliban and Pakistan to ensure an agreement that is a peace deal, not just a withdrawal deal," he said.

In recent years, Islamabad has somewhat repaired its strained ties with Washington after supporting negotiations with the Taliban. Pakistan reportedly exerted pressure on Taliban leaders, some of whom are seen as dependent on sanctuaries in the country's vast western borderlands with Afghanistan.

Haqqani says he expects ...

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Mol: More Than 580 Freed Taliban Prisoners Return to Battlefields

The Ministry of Interior (Mol) says more than 580 released Taliban prisoners have returned to the battlefields to fight with the security forces.

Mol spokesman Tariq Arian in a video clip said that many of the released prisoners had been killed in fighting with Afghan security forces.

Arian noted that the Taliban had escalated their violence in the past month by changing their approach, resulting in thousands of casualties and financial losses. ...

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Ghani: Taliban Violence Has Increased 'Substantially'

President Ashraf Ghani addressed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit through a video conference on Tuesday where he highlighted Afghanistan's peace in the region and said violence has remained high by the Taliban despite their commitments.

"Unfortunately, not only the promised reduction of violence and comprehensive ceasefire has not been realized, but the violence by the Taliban has increased substantially," Ghani said.

Ghani said state-to-state cooperation within a regional and global framework is key to dealing with all terrorist networks attempting to disrupt peace, progress and cooperation.

"As respect for sovereignty is a cardinal principle of SCO, we ask all of you to support a sustainable peace process within the framework of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," he



said.

Ghani said that Afghanistan is faced with "multiple forms of turmoil" but peace remains "most urgent and important priority" for the country.

"As a state and society, we have demonstrated the commitment, compassion and courage to make hard decisions to start direct peace negotiations with the Taliban,"

Ghani said, referring to the release of over 5,000 Taliban prisoners.

President Ghani mentioned Kabul University attack in which over 22 people were killed, calling it inhumane. He said the attack "is a symptom of cult of violence and reliance on drug production and smuggling of our natural capital and cultural heritage as sources of funding that requires a ...

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Ghani: Taliban...

reality check.” He said Afghanistan is right at the center of the untapped potential that could bring enhanced prosperity and peace to the region.

“By location, history outlook and choice, we are poised to provide a platform for regional and global cooperation, especially by connecting Central, South and West Asia to and from East Asia by land,” he added.

He said the Afghan government “has signed a memorandum of understanding with Fortescue Metals Group to transform Afghanistan into a center of green industry through the production of 20,000 megawatts from hydro and use it to produce zero-emission steel and other products from an estimated \$1 trillion mineral resources.”

Mol: More Than...

He added that the Taliban car bombs in a number of districts of the country had destroyed residential houses and public facilities, and that dozens of civilians had been killed or wounded. The Mol spokesman added that the Taliban have not stand by any of their commitments and are killing Afghans every day. Arian stressed that the Afghan security and defense forces will respond to the Taliban with all their might. The Afghan government has released 5,000 Taliban prisoners under a US-Taliban peace agreement signed last year in Doha, Qatar.

By: Abdul Sayed

The Truth Behind Al-Qaeda's Silence in Afghanistan

The key clause in the United States' peace deal with Afghanistan's Taliban is a commitment to disallow any militant group from using Afghan soil to plot against America and its allies.

But is the Taliban merely pretending that its long-time ally al-Qaeda no longer maintains bases and fighters in the areas it controls in Afghanistan just to appease the US and withdraw its troops from the country?

As part of a historic deal brokered in February, the Taliban agreed, among other things, not to shelter terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and to cut all ties with the transnational terrorist group best known for orchestrating the 9-11 attacks on US soil.

With that commitment, the US has promised a complete withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan, a departure that some speculate could pave the way for the Taliban's eventual return to power. There are now around 5,000 US troops in the country, a number that will fall to 2,500 by early 2021.

The US is also helping to facilitate a political settlement between the Taliban and President Ashraf Ghani's incumbent government. While peace talks underway in Doha, Qatar, have not yet achieved any substantial breakthroughs, a deal would restore the Taliban's international legitimacy as a political actor.

Yet key questions remain. Has the three-decade-long history of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan truly come to an end? Is the world safe from an al-Qaeda threat that has long emanated from Afghanistan's remote and rocky reaches?

Two narratives offer different answers to these key questions.

The adherents of one line claim plain and simple that al-Qaeda no longer exists in Afghanistan. Opponents of this narrative, however, believe that al-Qaeda's recent silence is an agreed strategy to conceal its presence to facilitate the Taliban's peace deal with the US.

This could mean Afghanistan is still a willing, clandestine hub for Islamist militant groups, posing as ever severe threats to regional and global security. All of those who want the quickest withdrawal possible of US forces from Afghanistan and those who want the Taliban back into power are fully supporting the success of the US-Taliban peace deal, signed in Doha on February 29, 2020.

They sense and fear that if any new evidence emerges about al-Qaeda's continued threat in Afghanistan, it will potentially scupper a final US-Taliban peace deal. They therefore insist that al-Qaeda no longer exists in the country.

Those most strongly perpetuating this narrative line are the Taliban, their Afghan sympathizers and certain external powers.

This list also includes many Afghan critics of the Taliban who do not support the Islamist group but believe that Afghanistan's conflict is rooted in the presence of foreign troops and thus want them to leave their country as soon as possible.

Those who oppose the notion that al-Qaeda has left the premises are against any political deal with the Taliban. Many of them believe that a US withdrawal will restore the Taliban to power and revert the country into a hub of Islamist militancy.

This narrative's adherents include the current Afghan government, anti-Taliban political forces and certain political and security analysts who closely monitor al-Qaeda and global terror trends. They believe that both al-Qaeda and the Taliban are concealing the former's presence.

The Taliban and its supporters have resorted to labeling anyone who considers al-Qaeda's current existence in Afghanistan a possibility as “anti-peace.” Yet the most credible claims about al-Qaeda's continued existence in Afghanistan come from reports of the United Nations Security Council's sanction committee team monitoring al-Qaeda, Islamic State (ISIS) and the Taliban.

These reports have repeatedly and consistently claimed that the Taliban maintains close ties with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, even after the US-Taliban deal announced on February 29, 2020.

The latest such claim came from the coordinator of the UN's monitoring team, Edmund Fitton-Brown, who stated in a recent online seminar about Afghanistan's future that the Taliban keeps close contact with al-Qaeda's leadership in Afghanistan, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, the terror group's Egyptian leader.

Fitton-Brown has claimed that the Taliban regularly consulted al-Qaeda during their negotiations with the US. He even claimed that the Taliban offered “informal

guarantees” to al-Qaeda to honor their close historical ties. The Taliban and its sympathizers have gainsaid such claims, saying they are a conspiracy to sabotage the US-Taliban deal.

Al-Qaeda has openly acknowledged its cordial relations with the Taliban in the past. Its past and present leadership, including deceased founder Osama Bin Laden and Zawahiri, has frequently made tributes to the Taliban, even naming one of its special brigades after Taliban founder Mullah Mohammed Omar.

Al-Qaeda-Taliban ties were open and evident in Zawahiri's public statement after al-Qaeda's early 2015 withdrawal from Waziristan, Pakistan, which remained its stronghold for more than a decade since 2004. The group was driven out of the region by a massive US drone strike campaign followed by a large-scale Pakistani army operation.

Zawahiri acknowledged in the statement that it was a difficult period in al-Qaeda's history, similar to when the US first invaded Afghanistan in 2001. He credited the Taliban for rescuing al-Qaeda from Waziristan during those tough times, moving their members into strongholds inside Afghanistan.

The Taliban's protection, however, was limited. Credible evidence shows that al-Qaeda's senior central leaders, including Hamza Bin Laden and Shaikh Abu Khalil al-Madni, were killed by US drone strikes in Taliban strongholds after al-Qaeda's withdrawal from Waziristan.

For years, al-Qaeda was grooming Hamza as a future leader. Al-Madni was the senior-most leader of al-Qaeda in the region after Zawahiri, who he appointed as his deputy. The recent killing of Hussam Abdul Rauf, al-Qaeda's media head, also showed how senior al-Qaeda members are cosseted by the Afghan Taliban. Moreover, the senior leadership of al-Qaeda's regional branch for South Asia, known as al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, or AQIS, have also recently been killed in US counterterrorism operations in Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan.

They include AQIS chief Maulana Asim Umar, its military head, commander Khattab Mansur, As-Sahab, AQIS's media head, and Engr Osama Ibrahim Ghouri. All their killings show that they were hosted by the Taliban's local leadership, who were killed with ... **P3**

By Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury

Afghanistan's peace process marked by fragility

Afghanistan has been the graveyard of empires. After the Soviet Union in 20th century, it became a sore in the eyes of the U.S. in 21st century as the U.S. tried to find the elusive peace for Afghans. The recent U.S.-Taliban was one of the last efforts to bring peace in the region. But will it succeed? The Usanas Foundation, an emerging Indian think-tank organized a webinar titled ‘Healing the wounds of Kandahar and Kabul: Searching for Peace in Afghanistan’ on October 30. The session was moderated by CEO of Usanas Foundation Abhinav Pandya.

Amar Sinha who was India's former envoy to Kabul and currently member NSAB shed light on the agreement signed between U.S. and Taliban and how it has brought Afghanistan a chance to a path of peace in years. This is the first-time certain set of conditions have been placed before the Intra -Afghan talks could take place. Such negotiations are made possible because US and Taliban's interest have coincided in reducing U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

After a long 19-year protracted war the U.S. looks for a “graceful exit” from the region.. Unfortunately, the agreement has inbuilt tolerance for violence against Afghans. Zero commitment has been given by Taliban to reduce violence particularly towards Afghan government. Taliban has justified violence on the pretext of removing foreign troops from Afghan soil and since it considers

Afghan government as proxy of Foreign powers the struggle is continued until they are uprooted and an Islamic Emirate is established.

With the U.S. announcement to negotiate with Taliban there was a mad rush among other countries to reconcile with Taliban. So instead of the Taliban reconciling with Afghan government, it is the Afghan government which looked weak and hollow in the agreement which was finalized at Doha.

Sinha believes that there is a need to make Taliban accountable and honest in its approach. The Taliban gave assurances to the USA that they have cut ties with Al-Qaeda which is not true as a lot of financial transactions have taken place between these two groups. The agreement also does nothing to make Taliban cut links from its support groups outside Afghanistan. By leaving out the Taliban's rogue friendship with ISIS and Al Qaeda unchecked peace would be elusive and a burden on Afghan government. It seems more like a US withdrawal agreement than a peace agreement. Sinha is not pessimistic but also not overtly optimistic about the peace deal. Sinha explained that the Taliban acts as a cheap option for Pak army to wreak havoc in Afghanistan and India.

Dr Michael Rubin, former Pentagon official, Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, started by reminding

that things could always go worse for the USA. Americans are inward looking and tend to consider diplomacy against the backdrop of American political calendar. American diplomacy with rogue regimes is more involved with the process than peace. The end goal is lost in ensuring the continuity of the process. Examples are spread throughout history in case of Iran, Iraq and North Korea or Taliban.

History is important in understanding Afghanistan as no precedent of negotiation exists within Afghanistan in modern times. But as the US economy falters and the strategic cost of remaining in Afghanistan goes up it would be wishful for any American diplomat to say that financial commitments to Afghanistan will continue, according to Rubin. He also explained that for the Taliban it is difficult to cut links with Al Qaeda as it's like cutting links with ‘brothers, fathers and cousins’. The US has to recognize that the association will continue.

On the question of whether peace would be achieved Rubin noted that US is prepared to leave the ‘mess’ on India and Russia's hands

Rubin claimed that US judgement was clouded by Cold War era trust between US and Pakistan but the United States is slowly recognizing that Pakistan has become a vassal state of China and would be no longer dependable if peace is to be ensured in the region.

Trade Exchanges to Increase by Connecting Khaf-Herat Railway



It is predicted that three million tons of products would be imported to and exported from the country annually if Khaf-Herat Railway to Afghanistan's Mazar-i-Sharif is connected. Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami has said, “Once Khaf-Herat railway is connected, the objective of transit of 1.8 million tons of goods would be realized.”

It is scheduled that Khaf-Herat Railway would be inaugurated in late November; the roads minister added. He pointed to the key and important role of this railway project in the increasing volume of trade exchanges and transit volume of the country as well as the expansion of economic relations between Iran and Afghanistan and added, “Rail connection of Iran to neighboring countries and its development from all possible routes has always been emphasized to increase the share of transit by rail.” By implementing this giant project, suitable ways will be provided for the country to transit cargo and passenger to Afghanistan and also to other destinations including European countries such as Turkey and the Indian Ocean, he said.

Pakistan Committed to Enhance Trade Relations with Afghanistan

Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser has said his government had focused on enhancing trade relations with Afghanistan for economic stability and prosperity of the entire region. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan would inaugurate Rashakai Economic Zone on November 21, that would boost trade and development of the area. Pakistani Defense Minister Pervez Khattak also said boosting trade with Afghanistan would not only

generate employment opportunities in both the countries but would be also helpful in restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Asad Qaiser said Pakistan was committed to peace process in Afghanistan adding regional development and peace in Pakistan was linked with restoration of law and order situation in Afghanistan. He said Pakistan had invited Afghanistan to join CPEC so that it could also achieve development and prosperity.



Japan pledges...

expanded program on immunization (EPI), protect around 10 million children under five years, and provide more than 3.1 million women of child-bearing age with tetanus toxoid vaccine.

The statement said the grant will contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3) that focuses on healthy lives and promotes well-being of all children of all ages.

Importantly, it will contribute to the global efforts to eradicate polio, especially in Afghanistan, which is one of only a few countries in the world yet to eliminate polio. "The Government of Japan has aided different sectors in Afghanistan for many years. This specific support will help the Government of Afghanistan in providing quality and equitable vaccination services to mothers, new borns and under five-year-old girls and boys", said Dr. Osmani. Dr. Osmani further highlighted the importance of the Japanese contribution and assured Japan and UNICEF of their usual quality immunization service delivery to target women and children with special focus on polio eradication.

Japan's financial support will contribute to key national priorities including: children under one year to achieve and sustain immunization of all antigens, at 90% national level coverage and 80% district level coverage; reduction of measles to less than 5 cases per million population; and reduction of neonatal deaths caused by neonatal tetanus to less than 1 case per 1000 live births.

"Unfortunately, Afghanistan is still one of the only a few countries that have not yet eliminated polio. Therefore, we sincerely hope that Afghanistan become a polio-free country in the near future like other countries on the globe," said Takahashi Yoshiaki.

"Every year, half a million children miss their vaccinations due to challenges beyond their control: ongoing conflict, harsh terrain and inclement weather, low demand among communities caused by rumour and misinformation. This grant is vital to overcome the gaps in vaccinations and deliver vaccines to every child in Afghanistan," said UNICEF Representative ad interim in Afghanistan, Sheema Sen Gupta.

Japan has been assisting Afghanistan's nation-building efforts in various fields, including security, infrastructure, agriculture, rural development, human capacity development, education, health, culture and humanitarian assistance. The cumulative Japanese assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 amounts to approximately 6.8 billion USD.

The Truth Behind...

them in most cases.

Although Afghan and US sources claim these killings, al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been surprisingly reticent about them. Many Afghan and Western analysts consider the silence as a part of a strategy to conceal the two sides' enduring ties. Although al-Qaeda violated Taliban leader Mullah Omar's strict orders in launching the 9/11 attacks, including planning from Afghan soil, the Taliban never blamed or criticized al-Qaeda for the massive costs they paid for the attacks.

On the contrary, the Taliban has termed the collapse of their regime and the losses and problems they faced due to al-Qaeda as a tremendous religious sacrifice they would repeat if necessary. Mullah Dad Ullah, Mullah Hassan Rohani, Ustad Yasir, Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Sangeen Zadran are a few of the senior Taliban leaders who have repeated this admiration for al-Qaeda on different occasions. Declassified documents seized from Osama bin Laden's hideout - a window into the secret world of al-Qaeda - confirm that al-Qaeda and Taliban ties were not limited to public statements. The leaderships of both groups had intimate close working relations, regularly consulting on important matters, according to the documents.

These documents reveal that al-Qaeda continued to provide economic support to the Taliban, much as the group did before 9/11. There is also reams of video evidence released by al-Qaeda's official media outlets showing its men fighting under the Taliban's command in many Afghanistan provinces. The Taliban apparently kept al-Qaeda informed from the

beginning about its secret negotiations with the US. Tayyab Agha, the Taliban's political office head who had established communications with the US government, was previously in direct contact with Osama bin Laden. Agha even sent letters to Bin Laden two weeks before his killing. A Bin Laden letter addressed to his deputy in Waziristan at the time also reveals he was afraid that some Taliban leaders would not stand up against US demands on al-Qaeda. Bin Laden had even suggested a "Plan B" to help the Taliban in case of any such pressures whereby al-Qaeda leaders would hide outside of Afghanistan, including in Pakistan, and later covertly re-enter and scatter inside the country.

But Zawahiri's statement about Taliban support for al-Qaeda's withdrawal from Waziristan and later the killings of its leadership in Afghanistan indicates the group never needed to exercise Bin Laden's plan B. The establishment of AQIS, the regional South Asian branch of al-Qaida, can also be seen as part of al-Qaeda's wider strategy for driving America's withdrawal from Afghanistan. Analysis of AQIS's media outlets shows that the group is mainly involved in fighting against the US and Afghan state forces in Afghanistan and not globally. AQIS has never attempted or showed any transnational terrorism ambitions against US allies outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as al-Qaeda's core based in Waziristan did during 2004-2011. AQIS's leadership has, however, shown militant interest in Pakistan's Kashmir conflict with India.

Tellingly, the group formally announced directly after the signing of the US-Taliban accord on February 29, 2020, that it would disengage from Afghanistan and focus instead on the decades-long India-Kashmir conflict. As al-Qaeda's history shows, the terror group was never seriously involved in the Kashmir conflict, although it did have pre-9/11 close ties with certain Kashmir-based jihadist groups. Instead, it absorbed Kashmiri jihadists into its ranks, utilizing them for its global goals. Al-Qaeda's attempt to establish an indirect symbolic presence in Kashmir likely really aims to divert attention away from its enduring presence in Afghanistan, contrary to the terms of the Taliban's deal with the US. It also suggests that one of the primary purposes of al-Qaeda's establishment of AQIS was to show it was not a threat to the US's global interests and was focused only on local issues, similar to the state-sponsored Pakistani Kashmiri jihadist groups. As al-Qaeda has fully supported the Taliban in its two-decade-long insurgency against US and Afghan government forces, it likely also supports the Taliban's tentative peace deal with the US and its underly aim of drive American troops out of the country. The Taliban is still clearly al-Qaeda's most vital strategic partner in the region. And it's still unclear if al-Qaeda will seek to use Afghanistan to secretly shelter its leaders and monitor its global franchises, or will again plan terror operations against the US and its allies from Afghan territory, including if the Taliban is restored to power. Either way, al-Qaeda's silence in Afghanistan is deafening and as always potentially deadly.

Afghanistan Peace...

the Biden administration to adopt a nuanced approach to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan by prioritizing an economically and politically stable Afghanistan.

"A better policy toward Afghanistan would be to talk more to America's allies there: the Kabul government," he said. "And not keep giving in to the Taliban."

In Kabul and Doha, the Afghan government and the Taliban are closely watching developments in Washington.

"It [the agreement] serves the

interest of the Afghan nation and the interest of the American nation," Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem told VOA. "It should not be subject to any significant change and should be implemented in the form in which it is agreed upon."

In Kabul, senior Afghan officials are already calling on the incoming U.S. administration to review the agreement with the Taliban and reevaluate the peace process.

"As the government of Afghanistan, we didn't sign this agreement. We were not a party to it," Sarwar Danish,

signing of the US-Taliban accord on February 29, 2020, that it would disengage from Afghanistan and focus instead on the decades-long India-Kashmir conflict.

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Afghanistan's second vice president, said on November 9. "From a legal standpoint, we do not bear any responsibility about the details of this agreement."

A former official involved in President Barack Obama's foreign policy team in South Asia, however, does not see Washington granting any of Kabul's wishes. Requesting anonymity because of the sensitivity of the ongoing talks, he says there is talk that Biden might ask the current U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad to continue his efforts.

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Russia hosts online summit of SCO leaders

Russia is hosting an online meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on Tuesday.

Leaders of the SCO's Council of Heads of State will discuss measures to strengthen cooperation, including in the context of the global political and socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a press release.

"They will focus on ways to promote the SCO member states' practical interaction in politics, security, trade and the economy, cultural and humanitarian ties, as well as political dialogue, above all in the interests

of stability in the SCO space," read the statement.

"They will also discuss the enhancement of their countries' trade and economic collaboration and coordination at the main international venues."

Formed in April 1996, the SCO is a political, economic, and security bloc comprising eight members - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan.

SCO member states account for around 42% of the world's population, 22% of the land area, and around 20% of global GDP.



A look at the world

UAE says doesn't seek confrontation with Turkey, Iran

The top diplomat of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday said his country does not seek conflict with Iran and Turkey. In his keynote speech at the annual Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, which was held online by the Emirates Policy Centre, Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash said Iran and Turkey have become increasingly



aligned in the region.

He said the UAE does not agree with their policies but "we do not seek confrontation."

The minister argued that his country "encourages constructive dialogue and positive diplomatic engagement." Gargash hailed the US-brokered agreement on normalization with Israel, saying it "does not diminish in any way our concern about the plight of the Palestinian people."

He said the accord may allow the Gulf country to have a better position in resolving the Palestinian conflict.

The UAE and Israel agreed to normalize their relations in September, with the two sides inking a host of memorandums of understanding in the fields of investment, trade, science, and technology.

The deal drew widespread condemnation from Palestinians, as well as countries including Iran and Turkey.

Armenia, Russia, Azerbaijan Sign Agreement to End Karabakh War



The Prime Minister of Armenia announced over the signing of an agreement between Russian officials, Azerbaijan, and Armenia so as to end the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Issuing a statement, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced that his country has signed an agreement with Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan to end the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to the Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, the decision was painful for him but had to be made in the current situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that in accordance with the joint statement, Russian peacekeepers will be deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh along the corridor connecting the region with Armenia and along the contact line, according to Sputnik.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said that the agreement on cessation of hostilities in Karabakh puts an end to the settlement of the conflict. He called the new ceasefire agreement historic and said it would end the bloodshed and lead to long-lasting peace.

The joint statement came after the Azerbaijani side said it seized control of the Shushi (Shusha) - the second-largest city in Nagorno-Karabach, as the Azerbaijani forces were closing in on the capital of the self-proclaimed republic. Baku said it would end fighting if Pashinyan guarantees that the Armenian troops will be withdrawn from the regions of Aghdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin.

EU calls on Myanmar to include Rohingya in voting

The European Union on Monday called on Myanmar to include ethnic and religious minorities, including the Rohingya Muslims, in the electoral process.

"The EU continues to call for the full inclusion of all ethnic, religious and minority groups of the country, including the Rohingya community, and for ensuring the legitimate civil and political rights of all," EU Commission spokeswoman Nabila Massrali said in a statement.

"We look forward to by-elections being held at the earliest possible in those



constituencies where November polls could not take place. This also is crucial for the democratic process."

The 27-member bloc also called on Myanmar "to improve the electoral regulatory framework consistent with international standards and best practices."

The Southeast Asian nation of 54 million held general elections on Sunday, the second time since the 50-year-long military rule ended in 2011.

A total of 5,643 candidates representing more than 90 parties contested for 1,171 national, state, and regional seats.

State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy is expected to win a second term but observers have questioned the credibility of the elections because of the disenfranchisement of millions of voters.

Along with the Rohingya, who were denied voting rights ahead of the 2015 polls, voting was also cancelled in large parts of states including Rakhine, Shan and Kachin due to "security concerns."

More than 740,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar into neighboring Bangladesh in 2016 and 2017 as the military unleashed a series of atrocities which saw entire villages being burned down, extrajudicial killings, and rape. The UN has called it a campaign which had "genocidal intent."



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