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World to renew pledges with Afghans in Geneva: EU

European Union Ambassador to Afghanistan Andreas Brandt says the union and the rest of international community will renew their strong commitments to Afghanistan at the Geneva conference.

The ministerial Geneva conference on Afghanistan which is scheduled for November 23-24 will take place virtually.

The pledging ministerial 2020 Afghanistan conference is co-hosted by Afghanistan, Finland and the United Nations.

Andreas Brandt told a press conference on Tuesday in Kabul that a high-level delegation from the EU would take part in the Geneva conference.

The EU diplomat said they had longterm partnership with Afghanistan and had provided political ...



NATO chief warns of high price if troops leave Afghanistan

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned Tuesday that the military organization could pay a heavy price for leaving Afghanistan too early, after a U.S. official said President Donald Trump is expected to withdraw a significant number of American troops from Afghanistan in the coming weeks.

"We now face a difficult decision. We have been in Afghanistan for almost 20 years, and no NATO ally wants to stay any longer than necessary. But at the same time, the price for leaving too soon or in an uncoordinated way could be very high," Stoltenberg said in a statement.

He said the conflict-ravaged country "risks becoming once again a platform for international terrorists to plan and organize attacks on our homelands. And ISIS (Islamic State) could rebuild in Afghanistan the terror caliphate it lost in Syria and Iraq." ...

'We Are Not Sure of Any Positive Outcome from Qatar Peace-Talks', Khalid Says



Acting Defense Minister Assadullah Khalid stated that he is not confident whether the Qatar peace talks will lead to a positive outcome, saying the Taliban has no will to bring peace to Afghanistan.

Speaking at the Lower House of Parliament on Tuesday, Khalid said if peace talks had not started last year, the defense and security

forces might have had great achievements by now.

"After Qatar, we went on the defensive," he said. "The enemy used Qatar as deception and trickery, and so far no decision has been made either to establish peace or to reduce violence. We are not sure that the peace talks will work, but that does not mean we are opposed to peace talks."

Khalid noted that any voice that comes from Afghanistan, can bring peace to the country and guarantees the achievements of the past two decades, the army supports it.

He added, "We have never been opposed to peace, but the enemy and their regional and international supporters have no will for peace. Still they have houses in Rawalpindi and Karachi, and their injured members are being treated there. Pointing to the concerns of the citizens about the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Afghanistan, Khalid said the number of foreign forces may possibly decrease, but they will not withdraw completely. He added that even with the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Afghanistan, the army is able to defend the country. The Afghan forces are handling 96 percent of the operations, and it's only the remaining four percent that is operated by the foreign forces, said

The Acting Defense Minister also said the intelligence currently covers 60 percent of Afghanistan and by next year, the remaining 40 percent will also be under the coverage of the intelligence.

Khalid said the paper system in the Ministry of Defense has been replaced by the digital system and that it will lead to transparency and less corruption. He pointed out that in the next six years the commando forces of the army will be equipped with more weapons.

Amid Corruption Allegations, Geneva Convention to **Tighten and Assess** Aid for Kabul

The Finnish government stated that it will tighten the terms and conditions for aid to Afghanistan at the forthcoming Geneva Conventions. Finnish Foreign Minister, Pekka Haavisto said he will assess the aid provided to the conflictravaged nation to keep a check on international concerns over corruption in the country. ...



Republicans Slam Trump's Plan to Reduce Troops in Afghanistan

U.S. Congressional Republicans on Monday slammed President Donald Trump's plan for a swift reduction of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, warning that it would be a gift to America's

"A rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan now would hurt our allies and delight the people who wish us harm," U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell

U.S. media reported on Tuesday that President Donald Trump is pushing to accelerate the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. "We're playing a limited, limited but important role in defending American national security and American interests against terrorists," said Mitch McConnell.

"That's why last year, 70 senators, a bipartisan super majority voted for an amendment I authored, it



acknowledged the progress made in Syria and Afghanistan, identified the risks that remain, and cautioned that precipitous withdrawal would create vacuums that Iran, Russia and the terrorists would be delighted, delighted to fill," McConnell said. He said violence affecting Afghans is still rampant, the "Taliban is not abiding by the conditions of the so-

called peace deal."

"The consequences of a premature American exit would likely be even worse than President Obama's withdrawal from Iraq back in 2011," McConnell said.

The U.S. Senate majority leader said that a premature withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan would "embolden the Taliban, especially the deadly Haqqani wing, and risk plunging Afghan women and ... P3

Amid Corruption...

He added that the scrutiny is also to oversee the progress made in Afghanistan since the decline of Taliban regime.

Haavisto outlined international community's concerns over alleged corruption and that it does not want to risk its past achievements in Afghanistan.

NATO chief...

The U.S. decision comes just days after Trump installed a new slate of loyalists in top Pentagon positions who share his frustration with the continued troop presence in the war zones. The expected plans would leave 2,500 troops in Afghanistan after mid-January.

U.S. officials said military leaders were told over the weekend about the planned withdrawal and that an executive order is in the works but has not yet been delivered to commanders.

'A friend in...

downtown Minsk and other Belarusian cities. During the early post-election period, the rallies snowballed into fierce clashes between the protesters and police. The current unrest is being cheered on by the opposition's Coordination Council, which has been beating the drum for more protests. In response, the Belarusian authorities have castigated the ongoing turmoil and demanded that these unauthorized demonstrations be stopped. Following the protests, the EU, the UK, the US and Canada slapped sanctions on a number of Belarusian officials.

By: Ajmal Shams

What does Biden's win mean for Afghanistan?

Former Vice President Joe Biden has been elected as the new president of the US, although his victory has not been acknowledged by President Donald Trump. However, the US has strong democratic institutions that will ensure his entry to the White House on Jan. 20, 2021. Several world leaders, including Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, have already congratulated Biden for winning the US presidency. With the US being a global power and influencer, the result of the presidential election has a worldwide impact and Afghanistan is no exception

For the past four decades, the US has actively engaged with Afghanistan politically, economically and militarily. It is not only conventional wisdom, but an entrenched reality that the US has been able to shape and guide the direction of politics in the country. Afghanistan and the US have been strategic partners and the US-Afghan alliance is pivotal to Afghanistan's long-term political and economic stability.

The US government's agreement with the Taliban in February 2020 was more than an attempt by President Trump to deliver on his campaign promises during his first term in office. It was grounded in pragmatism and driven by US interests. The US has been engaged in its longest war in Afghanistan, which it believes is no longer worth the blood and treasure. Unlike Afghanistan, where virtually all major decision-making powers are concentrated in the hands of the president, the US has mechanisms in place that are based on inclusiveness and a whole-government approach. Both President Trump and Biden's campaign strategies remained largely US-centric. Although the two leaders may differ on several foreign policy issues, they do converge on the way forward for Afghanistan, which is to end a war that is no longer helping the US advance its strategic interests. This theory is now popular across much of the US political and security intelligentsia.

Within the Afghan government, there are concerns that the US may have given more concessions to the Taliban than they deserved. The Afghan



government does not consider the US-Taliban agreement as the basis for intra-Afghan dialogue. Kabul has argued that Afghanistan was not party to the deal and had not been consulted while the terms of the agreements were being negotiated between the US and the Taliban.

US Special Envoy for Afghan Peace Zalmay Khalilzad has, however, visited the Afghan leadership on a regular basis during the negotiation process with the Taliban. Most importantly, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has also been in contact with the Afghan leadership during the talks.

In fact, it was the aforementioned deal that led to the release of more than 5,000 Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government. The intra-Afghan negotiations were initiated as part of the same agreement. Thus, the government's denial of any association with the US-Taliban agreement does not seem to be valid.

The reduction of violence is an important component of the agreement. Yet violence has significantly increased, especially over the past few months, and has taken the lives of dozens of

civilians in addition to a large number of Afghan security personnel. The deterioration of security has angered the government and disappointed ordinary people. The initial euphoria regarding the peace agreement seems to be gradually diminishing as peace talks in Doha are not moving forward due to disagreements on the agenda of negotiations between the two sides. This situation does not augur well for the peace process.

The Afghan government may think Biden's victory might mean some shift in US policy. However, Biden's view on Afghanistan during his term as former US vice president is no different from President Trump's. Biden wrote in Foreign Affairs earlier this year, "It is past time to end the forever wars, which have cost the US untold blood and treasure," adding: "As I have long argued, we should bring the vast majority of our troops home from the wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East and narrowly define our mission as defeating Al-Qaeda and Daesh."

Although it may be too early to comment, one can safely assume that Biden will ... P3

Editorial

The need for UN mediation in the Afghan peace process

The Afghan peace process is at a standstill. Although the Afghan government delegation is still in Doha, it has not met with the Taliban, and peace talks have stalled. The main opposition of both sides is whether the peace agreement between the United States and the Taliban is the basis of the inter-Afghan peace talks or not. The Taliban see their agreement with the United States as the basis of inter-Afghan peace talks, but the Afghan government does not accept this. Both sides have made differing proposals, but the opposition has remained and the agenda for inter-Afghan talks has not yet been finalized. Efforts by other countries to solve this problem have not yielded any results and fundamental changes in this

The Afghan peace process is coming to a standstill as tens or even hundreds of Afghans are being killed every day due to the severity of the war, and the withdrawal of U.S. troops

is being discussed these days. As a result, Afghanistan will go to a civil war. President Trump is seen as serious about withdrawing U.S. troops, and a large portion of U.S. troops are due to leave Afghanistan.

With this situation, the Afghan government will be weakened and the fighting will intensify, the Taliban will try to occupy large areas and the situation will become very bad. Accordingly, there is a need for fundamental progress in the peace process as U.S. forces withdraw from Afghanistan. Peace talks are now deadlocked and obstacles to peace have been created that both sides have failed to overcome.

On the other hand, there is no external pressure on both sides, and there is no mediator in the peace process who can help solve this problem. Accordingly, an impartial mediator is needed. Until now, some prominent countries either support the Afghan government or the Taliban, so the mediation

of these countries cannot solve the problem.

Even some countries in the region do not want the Afghan crisis to end. Accordingly, there is a need for the United Nations to intervene as a mediator in the Afghan peace process. UN mediation will be impartial and effective on the other. On the other hand, the United Nations should contribute to facilitating this process and even take over the technical and financial parts of the Afghan peace process.

In addition to a good mediation, the United Nations can put pressure on both sides and force them to change their current position, which has created obstacles to the peace process. If the United Nations does not intervene in the Afghan peace process and the peace process does not strengthen, not that this process will not succeed, but the interventions and games of the regional countries in Afghanistan will increase and we will go to another civil war.

French Police Evacuate Afghan Migrants



French police yesterday(on Tuesday) evacuated a street refugee camp outside the Stade de France stadium in north Paris in view of the threat of the Corona epidemic. The number of refugees in this camp has been reported to be around 2000, most of which are Afghan and African refugees. Dozens of policemen were deployed for this operation, who were given the responsibility for this work amid the ongoing lockdown across the country.

These refugees have taken in buses were taken to Covid 19 Testing Centers. Those found positive after the test have been placed in isolation, while those found negative have been taken to various

shelter homes and sports halls located in the capital. Earlier, during the first lockdown imposed during March-April, a camp with 700 people was also evacuated from the suburb Aubervilliers.

Following the French police's operation to evacuate the camp today, Paris Police Chief Didier Lallement told Reporters that those who did not have a bonafide asylum claim would not be allowed to live in French land.

It is important to note here that Paris is a major stop of the European Refugee Route. For this reason, the number of refugees here has been increasing, which has been dispersed by the police from time to time.

76.95

Afghanistan Signs Agreement with Siemens Energy

The Afghan government on Monday signed an agreement of cooperation with Siemens Energy, a global company, to help boost the Afghan energy sector, the Presidential Palace said in a statement.

The agreement was signed by the Ministry of Finance, the National Water Affairs Regulation Authority and Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, the country's power distributor, and Siemens Energy

Ataullah Nasib, the head of the investment facilitation unit, said 28 percent of Afghans have access to power and that it will increase to 65 percent in 2032

Addressing the event, President will be implemented by the Afghan



"We will build an Afghanistan where citizens can look forward to reliable power, not only for their homes and offices but to ensure that their products, whether agricultural, industrial or services can rely on sustained, 24-hour energy, seven

days a week, 365 days a year," President Ghani said at the signing

Christian Bruch, CEO of Siemens Energy, said the company will help Afghanistan produce electricity from renewable energy resources.

"Afghanistan is blessed with using these resources, the country will make a big step forward in development. Siemens Energy has all the ingredients to support you in

Republicans Slam...

girls back into what they experienced, back in the 1990s." Under a draft order circulating at the Pentagon on Monday, the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan would be halved from the current deployment of 4,500 troops, The New York Times reported, quoting U.S. officials.

McConnell said the U.S. troops withdrawal from Afghanistan would be welcome news to Iran, "which has long provided arms and support to the Taliban and explicitly seeks our retreat from the Middle East."

"A disorganized retreat would jeopardize the track record of major successes this administration has worked hard to compile," McConnell said.

This comes as Defense Ministry on Monday said that the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces are capable to defend the country if there is a withdrawal of international forces from the country. But Afghan experts have said the withdrawal should be done responsibly.

Countries in the region, including Pakistan, Iran and Russia have also asked for a responsible withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

The reports come as violence has significantly increased in the country despite peace efforts. Meanwhile, the peace negotiations in Doha have stalled over differences on ground rules for the talks.

What does Biden's...

continue President Trump's policy on Afghanistan. What that means for the conflict-ridden country is a cautious optimism. While President Trump deserves all credit for being courageous enough to pursue the path of peace by breaking the stalemate on Afghanistan, Biden is expected to bring his long-standing foreign policy intellect into the process. It is hoped that Biden's incoming administration will follow the path of peace in Afghanistan while continuing the US commitment to Afghanistan's political stability, economic development and preservation of democratic values.

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Facebook,...

were using to organize protests against the vote count. The 350,000-member group echoed Trump's baseless allegations of a rigged election rendering the

as the vote counting went on, copycat "Stop the Steal" groups were easily found on Facebook. As of Monday, Facebook appeared to have made them harder to find, though it was still possible to locate them, including some groups with thousands of

companies wield their power to filter speech and ideas, Trump and the Republicans accuse the social media companies of anticonservative bias. Democrats also criticize them, though for different reasons. The result is that both parties are interested in stripping away some of the protections that have shielded tech companies from legal responsibility for what people post on their platforms. Biden has heartily endorsed such an action.

But it's the actions that companies have taken around the election that are likely to be a dominant focus at Tuesday's hearing.

The GOP majority on the

Zuckerberg and Dorsey with subpoenas last month if they didn't agree to voluntarily testify for Tuesday's hearing. Republicans on the Senate Commerce Committee lambasted the two CEOs and Sundar Pichai, Google's chief executive, at a hearing last month for what they said was a pattern of silencing conservative viewpoints while giving free rein to political actors from countries like China and Iran.

Despite fears over security in the run-up to Nov. 3 and social media companies bracing for the worst, the election turned out to be the most secure in U.S. history, federal and state officials from both parties say — repudiating Trump's unsubstantiated claims of

Facebook insists it has learned its lesson from the 2016 election and is no longer a conduit for misinformation, voter suppression and election disruption. This fall Facebook said it removed a small network of accounts and pages linked to Russia's Internet Research Agency, the "troll factory" that has used social media accounts to sow political discord in the U.S. since the 2016 election. Twitter suspended five related

But critical outsiders, as well as some of Facebook's own

employees, say the company's efforts to tighten its safeguards remain insufficient, despite it having spent billions.

"Facebook only acts if they feel there's a threat to their reputation or their bottom line," says Imran Ahmed, CEO of the Center for Countering Digital Hate. The organization had pressed Facebook to take down the "Stop the Steal" group.

There's no evidence that the social media giants are biased against conservative news, posts or other material, or that they favor one side of political debate over another, researchers have found. But criticism of the companies' policies, and their handling of disinformation tied to the election, has come from Democrats as well as Republicans.

Democrats have focused their criticism mainly on hate speech, misinformation and other content that can incite violence, keep people from voting or spread falsehoods about the coronavirus. They criticize the tech CEOs for failing to police content, blaming the platforms for playing a role in hate crimes and the rise of white nationalism in the U.S. And that criticism has extended to their efforts to stamp out false information related to the election.

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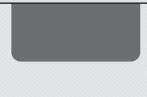
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For days after the election members.

Warily eyeing how the

Judiciary panel threatened

World to renew...

and financial assistance to the

war-torn country over the past

He said the EU announced

474 million euros in aid to

Afghanistan at the 2018

Geneva inter-ministerial

conference on Afghanistan.

The fund was spent on civil

reforms, justice and elections.

The ambassador said in the

next week's conference in

Geneva, the international

years.

community would renew its strong commitment to Afghanistan. He hoped the Afghan government would live up to its anti-corruption pledges.

Brandt said Covid-19 had hit not only Afghanistan but European countries as well, adding that the EU had so far provided 146 million euros in aid to Afghanistan.

The diplomat said Afghanistan had made significant progress the key achievements. He added that major progress had recently been made in the peace process as well. The EU and the rest of the

over the past 19 years in

various sectors and women's

rights and their participation

in various fields were one of

international community supported a peace process that would pave the way for a political settlement in Afghanistan, he declared.

Biden to receive first national security briefing on Tuesday

Projected U.S. presidential election winner Joe Biden will meet with the U.S. national security experts on Tuesday in Wilmington, Delaware, to discuss key issues related to security, according to media reports quoting Biden's team. Diplomatic, intelligence and defense advisers will brief Biden as well as Kamala Harris.

An earlier report from Reuters noted that Biden has tapped finance, trade and banking regulation experts for his transition team that ranges from core Democrats to progressive activists, reflecting ongoing debate within the

party about how to address climate change, wealth inequality and other issues.

Meanwhile, he will further lay the groundwork for his new administration as incumbent President Donald Trump pursues a flurry of lawsuits challenging the election results in an effort to cling

Judges so far have tossed out lawsuits brought by Trump's campaign in Michigan and Georgia, and legal experts say the litigation has little chance of changing the outcome of the November 3 election.



A look at the world

Facebook, Twitter **CEOs facing questions** on election measures

A Senate panel is calling on the CEOs of Facebook and Twitter to defend their handling of disinformation in the contest between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden. But the senators are deeply divided by party over the integrity and results of the election itself.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is holding a hearing Tuesday to question Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter's Jack Dorsey on their companies' actions around the closely contested election. The two social media CEOs are expected to testify via video.



Prominent Republican senators — including the Judiciary Committee chairman, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina — have refused to knock down Trump's unfounded claims of voting irregularities and fraud, even as misinformation disputing Biden's victory has flourished online.

Graham, a close Trump ally, has publicly urged: "Do not concede, Mr. President. Fight hard."

Zuckerberg and Dorsey promised lawmakers last month that they would aggressively guard their platforms from being manipulated by foreign governments or used to incite violence around the election results — and they followed through with high-profile steps that angered Trump and his supporters.

Twitter and Facebook have both slapped a misinformation label on some content from Trump, most notably his assertions linking voting by mail to fraud. On Monday, Twitter flagged Trump's tweet proclaiming "I won the Election!" with this note: "Official sources called this election differently."

Facebook also moved two days after the election to ban a large group called "Stop the Steal" that Trump supporters ... P3

No winners in Gulf crisis: Qatar



Qatar's foreign minister reaffirmed his country's readiness for dialogue to resolve the Gulf crisis in which "nobody is a winner". Speaking online at the opening of the Global Security Forum held in New York on Monday, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani said: "All the allegations directed at Qatar and the reason for imposing the blockade were false."

The minister stressed that Qatar, since the beginning of the crisis, has been open for dialogue on the basis of respecting each country's sovereignty.

"There is no winner from the Gulf crisis, and the result is more instability in the region," he said, adding: "Qatar did not carry out any hostile action against the blockading countries."

Commenting on the Qatari-American relations, he said: "Relations between Qatar and the US are strategic, whether it is President-elect Joe Biden or the current president, Donald Trump."

He added: "Our relationship with the US is based on solid foundations and extends over a period of 45 years."

He also referred to Qatar's appreciation for Iran's opening of its airspace during the blockade, saying: "We seek fruitful dialogue to resolve differences in the region, and Iran is part of the region."

Iran and the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council must agree on living in peace, he said, adding: "We hope that the blockade will end and the crisis will be resolved."

On the Afghan situation, the Qatari top diplomat said his country "will play any role to help resolve the conflict in Afghanistan." Saying the steps taken by the US and the Taliban "are positive so far", he stressed: "What is more important is peace between the Afghans themselves, between the government and the Taliban."

Al Thani stressed Qatar's firm position on resolving the Syrian crisis and bringing those who committed war crimes against the Syrian people to justice.

'A friend in need, is a friend indeed': Lukashenko praises Russia, China for their support

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has commended the support of Russia and China during this period of extraordinary foreign pressure being put on Belarus.

"At a time of unprecedented external pressure, Belarus has received wide-ranging support from its traditional allies. We have received the most tangible assistance and support during this difficult time from Russia, China and other countries. Thus, once again we've been reassured that a friend in need



is a friend indeed." Lukashenko said on Tuesday, quoted by BelTA news agency.

During a government session, Lukashenko spotlighted pertinent issues, discussing the further development of relations with Russia and China and the implementation of agreements reached following top-level meetings and visits by Russian officials to Belarus this year.

Last Friday, Lukashenko said in an interview with foreign media that Belarus would never switch its course from Russia towards other countries. He stressed that the Belarusian government had never turned its back on Russia and never betrayed the interests of Russian-Belarusian cooperation.

Nationwide demonstrations have engulfed Belarus following the August 9 presidential election. According to the Central Election Commission's official results, incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko won by a landslide, garnering 80.10% of the vote. His closest rival in the race, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, came in second, with 10.12% of the ballot. However, she refused to recognize the election's outcome, and left Belarus for Lithuania. After the results of the exit polls were announced late on August 9, mass protests erupted in ...

