



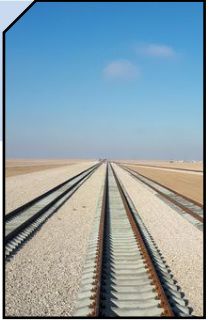
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Heart of Asia

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Karim Khalili, Pakistani FM Discuss Peace Process

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Tuesday held talks with leader of Afghanistan's Hezbe-Wahdat-e Islami party Karim Khalili in Islamabad on the peace process in Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministry of Pakistan said.

Khalili, the former Afghan vice president, arrived in Pakistan on a three-day visit on Monday.

Qureshi described as "good omen" the progress in intra-Afghan negotiations currently underway in Qatar to decide a future political roadmap, according to the statement.

A comprehensive negotiated political settlement is the only solution acceptable to the Afghan leadership," the statement quoted Qureshi as saying. He said Pakistan will welcome decisions at the negotiations among Afghans and said intra-Afghan dialogue is a unique opportunity for the Afghan ... **P2**



Afghanistan calls for Iran pivotal role in Afghan peace talks

Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Mohammad Hanif Atmar on Tuesday called for Iranian effective role in the Afghan peace talks.

Atmar made the remarks in a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan Bahador Aminian.

The Afghan foreign minister thanked Iran for its cooperation in bringing peace to Afghanistan.

The two officials expressed readiness to hold the Sixth Meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation and finalize the comprehensive cooperation document between Iran and Afghanistan.

They also emphasized strengthening and expanding political, economic, and trade relations between the two countries.

Afghan foreign minister, for his part, thanked Iran's positive and constructive role in the Afghan peace process.

He said that Iran has encouraged the Taliban, as an important group in the country's security, to join the ... **P2**

Pentagon continues with troops drawdown despite new law



The U.S. military has continued with its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Department of Defense told Reuters on Monday, despite a new law prohibiting further reductions without the Pentagon sending Congress an assessment of the risks. "Currently, no new orders have been issued which impact the progression of the conditions-based drawdown

expected to reach 2,500 (troops) by January 15, 2021," it said in a statement. Reuters reported that the Pentagon's action will likely anger Republican and Democratic lawmakers opposed to further troop cuts and renew concerns about the outgoing Trump administration's disdain for Congress, even in its waning days. "If they are continuing the

drawdown, that would be a violation of the law," said a congressional aide, speaking on condition of anonymity. The White House declined to comment. Reuters stated that halting the drawdown could jeopardize the U.S.-backed Afghanistan peace process which came after the February agreement last year. As part of the

agreement, the Taliban wants a complete U.S. troop withdrawal by May in return for the insurgents fulfilling security guarantees.

In November, the Pentagon said it would reduce the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan from 4,500 to 2,500 by mid-January.

But this month Congress enacted a defense policy bill – overriding a veto by President Donald Trump – that bars using funds appropriated for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 to pay for a drawdown below 4,000 U.S. troops until acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller submits to Congress a "comprehensive, interagency assessment of the risks and impacts," Reuters reported.

It is unclear how many troops have been moved out of Afghanistan since the law passed.

One defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the U.S. troop level is already close to 3,000. The legislation also requires a risk assessment before the number of U.S. troops can be reduced below 2,000.

The Pentagon said it was "evaluating" the impact the legislation would have on U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan.

Taliban: U.S. Airstrikes Violate Doha Agreement

The United States should work to ensure that airstrikes conducted in Afghanistan are done so in a controlled manner to avoid violating the Doha peace deal reached with the Taliban, the group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Sputnik in an interview. "We have made it clear to them and we are still saying that if the operation continues in violation and in an intentional manner, of course, we will be forced to react, and this is a provocative act," Mujahid said.

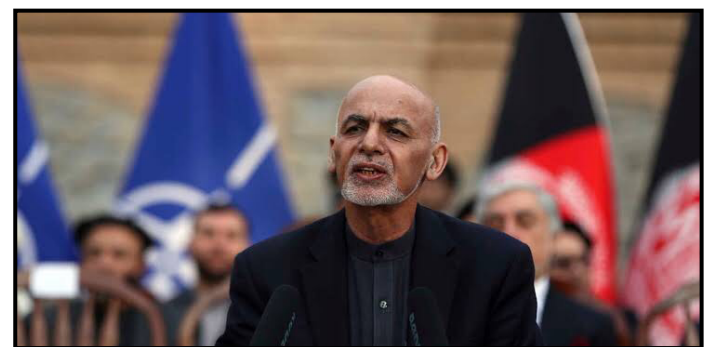
The Taliban group stands ready to hold consultations with Washington to discuss the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan, Mujahid added. ... **P2**



U.S. Envoy Discussed Interim Govt with Afghan Politicians: Sources

The US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad discussed the prospect of an interim government in Afghanistan as a result of the peace process, said sources close to the Afghan politicians who recently met Khalilzad.

According to the sources familiar with the process, Khalilzad in his meetings with the Afghan politicians apparently talked about three options: First, the continuation of the present government and the inclusion of the Taliban in the govt. Second, the inclusion of the government in the structure of a Taliban-led government. Third, the option to establish an interim and inclusive government. According to the sources,



the Afghan political leaders reportedly told Khalilzad that the establishment of an interim government was the appropriate option to end the war in Afghanistan.

Khalilzad arrived in Kabul last week and met with senior Afghan political leaders including Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the High Council of National Reconciliation, former President

Hamid Karzai, former mujahideen leader Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf, Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar and National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib.

"Three options were discussed. The first one is to include the Taliban into the present government, the second option is to merge this government with the Taliban, but both of these options aren't acceptable ... **P3**

'Turkey is...

Despite its EU candidate status, Turkey's progress towards accession has been stalled for years. After a year of ups and downs, including a push by some EU member states to impose sanctions on Turkey over bilateral issues, Turkish leaders have said they hope for progress in ties with the bloc this year, and expect the EU to take steps towards this end.

Taliban: U.S....

This comes as the Taliban has repeatedly accused the U.S. of violating the Doha peace accord. In December, the insurgent organisation claimed that U.S. airstrikes in Kandahar province caused the deaths of 12 civilians, and Mujahid said that the Taliban have made their demands clear to their U.S. counterparts.

Karim Khalili,...

leadership to bring peace to the country. "We believe that peace in Afghanistan is linked to peace and stability in the region," he said. Qureshi told Khalili that Pakistan is taking measures to promote bilateral trade and has also introduced a liberal visa policy for Afghan nationals. Khalili appreciated Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace process, according to the statement.

Afghanistan...

peace talks. The second round of peace talks between the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban group began in Doha, Qatar on Saturday.

By Osama Bin Javaid

Why Afghanistan-Taliban peace talks have not reached breakthrough

It has been almost a week since negotiators arrived back in Doha to resume a second round of peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, with a United States team talking separately to both sides. But top Afghan government officials and Taliban leaders have been conspicuous by their absence from this round of meetings.

On the Taliban side, chief negotiator Mullah Abdul Hakim and the head of the Taliban office in Qatar, Mullah Baradar, have not yet returned from their trip to Pakistan.

In recent weeks, US diplomats and military leaders have also visited Pakistan. In a meeting between Pakistan's military and acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs David Helvey, the two sides discussed an urgent need for a reduction in violence in Afghanistan.

Islamabad insists it is "playing a positive role and its leadership is committed to helping Afghans find a solution" through talks.

Meanwhile, US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and his entourage have returned to Doha after brief stopovers in Islamabad and Kabul.

An Afghan official told Al Jazeera "the committee members are in Qatar and others are arriving as the talks proceed".

"We are ready and prepared for the talks, there is no delay from [us] and no new proposals have been conveyed to us," Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem told Al Jazeera.

Those close to the talks said the sense of urgency from either side to find common ground, reduce violence and move forward seems to be missing in the current round of negotiations.

New US administration

The reason for a lack of urgency in the continuing talks is being attributed to the change in the US administration led by President-elect Joe Biden and their policy on Afghanistan.

Biden will inherit a situation where just 2,500 US soldiers will be left in Afghanistan after the outgoing Trump administration ordered an accelerated withdrawal of troops.

Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor-designate for Biden's administration, recently said the US will support diplomacy along the lines of the US-Taliban peace deal signed in February last year to ensure "Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for



terrorists to attack the US".

The first round of talks, which kicked off in September, ended in December after the two sides agreed on procedural rules.

A road map for post-war Afghanistan, a nationwide ceasefire and disarmament of the Taliban and other armed groups were part of the agenda of the latest round of talks which opened on Tuesday.

During his trip to Kabul, US special envoy Khalilzad met Afghanistan's national security adviser Hamdullah Mohib, foreign minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar and other leaders, but President Ashraf Ghani did not meet him.

While scheduling issues and health concerns were cited as reasons, people close to the presidency said Khalilzad's discussions on an interim government – a longstanding Taliban demand – has not gone down well with Ghani.

Khalilzad was praised for his shuttle diplomacy during the signing of the US-Taliban deal, which paved the way for intra-Afghan dialogue. But the pace of progress has slowed, with record violence in the war-torn country.

Members of the Afghan government delegation in Doha say the US diplomatic team led by Khalilzad has conceded too much to the Taliban.

Sources in the Afghan presidency say the Ghani administration released 5,000 Taliban prisoners at the

insistence of the US, but there has been no reduction in violence.

But there has been a spike in violence during the past few months – including targeted killings of officials, activists and journalists – blamed by the Afghan government and the US on the Taliban.

Sources added that a further release of thousands of more prisoners in exchange for a short-term ceasefire is an option on the table.

A source close to the president told Al Jazeera that if releasing prisoners brings an end to violence and paves the way for a permanent ceasefire, then Ghani could avail such an opportunity.

An alternative deal that sees more Taliban prisoners freed alongside an extension of the Ghani government's tenure could possibly work, according to officials close to the talks.

But, despite the outgoing Trump administration pushing for a ceasefire agreement before it leaves office on January 20, there has been a lukewarm response from the Taliban and the Afghan government. The Taliban said that – as per its agreement with the US – the reduction of violence is incumbent on the release of prisoners, as well as the removal of their names from global financial blacklists.

End to violence?

According to the US-Taliban deal, all American soldiers are supposed to leave Afghanistan by April. ... **P3**

By: Asad Durrani

Asad Durrani | The Three Ks: Some old ideas revisited

Khurshid Ali Khan was no run-of-the-mill general. Behind a laissez-fair demeanor, he was a serious practitioner of military art, with a sterling soldierly character. In a wargame, he tasked me with making a plan, but then I suggested modify it to bring out a few lessons. Nothing unusual, except whenever a visitor would pick holes in my design, K always clarified why it was forced upon me.

As NWFP governor, he asked me -- as I had recently left the service -- to outline a few ideas on how to address some intractable issues. The paper I wrote was titled "Three Ks that defy resolution". These were Kabul, Kashmir and Karachi.

The K word was to acknowledge the proposal's sponsor. A quarter century may have elapsed, but in a discussion the other day when similar subjects came up, I had to revisit my old thesis. It was based on some ideas that we from the military used to pester the political governments with, and having headed the National Defence College, one believed our core issues needed a structured approach. The concept was heavy on strategy and avoided concrete steps unless they were required to illustrate an argument.

It was really self-evident. Issues with a long gestation period -- all three Ks were brewing for decades -- would need to

be thought through for the long haul. Overtime, there would be developments needing adaptation or modification of original assumptions, even of plans.

In Afghanistan, for instance; after the Soviet pullout, infatuated with the resistance we realised at great cost that the tribesmen may have pursued a common agenda against the occupiers, but were now rivals for Kabul's throne. A historian in the decision-making echelons would have sounded the right alarm. Genuine Afghan hands were strongly opposed to using unconventional warriors in set-piece battles like Jalalabad, and later against the Northern Alliance.

When the Taliban emerged as an anti-Mujahideen force, its momentum may have surprised us; but not the old Communist cadres growing beards to drive militia tanks and fly the helicopters. Later we may have factored in the role of spoilers, but our counter-measures were mostly transactional. India's Afghan strategy was, of course, Kautilyan, but because of our neighbourhood advantage it could be contained. But our official sources exaggerated it to the extent that paranoid Afghans were convinced our involvement in Afghanistan was essentially to keep India out. After the Soviets left, America's interests were

never aligned with ours. We still sucked up to them -- and even believed post-9/11 that our bilateral ties were again "strategic".

Besides improving ties with Iran and Russia, and keeping China and Turkey on board, we did well to retain leverage with Taliban against great external pressure for two decades and could thus bring them to the table whenever required. But we now need some experts in Afghan psyche and those with credibility among the key factions to steer the intra-Afghan dialogue, or to disengage from this messy affair.

The Kashmir imbroglio was no less complex. Surprised by the robustness of the popular surge for independence in the early 1990s, we never really got a handle over the multiple challenges such movements present -- providing an effective political umbrella; influencing the militancy so that it didn't lead to any unintended consequences; and creating the necessary rapport with resistance groups. Finding the right mix of military and non-military prongs required a more subtle direction than swinging between arming the resistance to abandoning it. Engaging India in the Composite Dialogue framework was wise, and there may have been even some collateral benefit... **P3**

18.4 Million People Are in Need of Assistance in Afghanistan: OCHA



The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says across Afghanistan, about 18.4 million people are in need of assistance, a number that rose sharply last year with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

OCHA in a press release said that the survival of the 15.7 million most vulnerable depends on the humanitarian actors operating there receiving sufficient financial resources to deliver a response, she noted, adding that "the consequences of late or inadequate funding are very real." "While enduringly resilient, people are increasingly

desperate, resorting to debt and other more dangerous coping mechanisms to survive including marrying off their young daughters and sending their children to work," Parvathy Ramaswami, Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. for Afghanistan, said in the foreword to a humanitarian response plan.

The press release added that the outlook for 2021 has worsened further due to significant unmet needs last year due to funding shortfalls and the acute focus on COVID-19, as well as the slow rollout of complementary development assistance, the response plan noted.

Aqina-Andkhoy Railway to be Inaugurated Soon

Aqina-Andkhoy Railway to be Inaugurated Soon Following the operation of the Khaf-Herat railway in the west of the country, the Independent Railway Authority of Afghanistan has announced that the construction of the Aqina-Andkhoy railway has been completed and is ready for inauguration. The Aqina-Andkhoy railway has been completed and will be inaugurated by Afghan and Turkmen officials in the near future, the Afghanistan Railway Authority said on Tuesday. The agency added that the Aqina-

Andkhoy railway is 30 kilometers long as its construction costs about \$ 30 million. The Afghan Railway Authority has called the construction of the Aqina-Andkhoy railway an important step towards establishing an internal railway network that connects Afghanistan to the Turkmen and regional railway networks. According to the informations, the Aqina-Andkhoy railway is being constructed in a fundamental way and tens of tons of commercial goods will be loaded and unloaded daily.



Asad Durrani...

in Gen. Pervez Musharraf's four-point salvo; but if anyone believed Indians would voluntarily give up their position of advantage, he should have his head examined. After August 5, 2019, the handling of developments in the Valley clearly showed there were hardly any experienced hands in our Kashmir policy cells, and our responses were therefore limited to cartography and rewriting milestones.

I don't think I ever understood the rise and fall of Karachi, but it was quite clear our once vibrant multi-ethnic megapolis was heading for an implosion - and all of us with our eyes wide shut. Even a cursory look at this narrative suggests issues with roots in history, or simply too complex, were beyond the depth of our state structures. On core issues, one needed a core group to charter a course, steer its conduct, and adapt it to the evolving environment.

A bureaucratic or politically partisan system could not be entrusted with this -- not only because its key members were mostly on the move, but also as those at the helm often force the pace to add a feather in their otherwise colourless cap.

K took the paper to BB --then in her second incarnation as PM --who didn't seem terribly pleased as with the Taliban now taking big strides in Afghanistan, she didn't want to share the spoils of the "victory" with a hybrid group that had the Opposition on board.

Nevertheless, she appointed a pretty clued-up security adviser, who all by himself had no sway with the hands-on the Afghan wheel, which only moved in the military track. Before that Nawaz Sharif had made it clear his Kabul policy would be conducted by his kitchen cabinet, not the Afghan cell. Soon thereafter he outsourced the Kashmir struggle to a private contractor. However, both mainstream parties had a common approach on Karachi: break up the MQM and let the devil take the hindmost.

It is of course unfair to put all the blame for fly-by-night policies on political leadership. Members of the Deep State were reluctant to permit any rank outsiders, regardless of experience or expertise, in the decision-making corridors. Who knows when a group, even if dominated by the civil and military hierarchy, working under the chief executive and essentially in an advisory role, would get enough traction due to its sound judgment. That could blow the myth of the State's claim to total wisdom.

No surprise there. People in power are always protective of their turf. But the worst part is that they seldom pick up the courage to tell their political masters, civil or military, that most of our festering issues may not be fixed in an estimative timeframe -- and therefore their management should take priority over a wishful outcome.

U.S. Envoy...

for the international community. The third option was to establish an interim and inclusive government," said Gul Rahman Qazi, a close aide to former president Hamid Karzai.

"Some issues were being discussed between Mr. Khalilzad and the Afghan political leaders about the future government," said Mirwais Ghiyasi, a close aide to Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf. "The interim government issue has been raised at a time as we transform from a system-less government to a state where there is a system," said Sarwar Danish, the Afghan Second Vice President.

President Ashraf Ghani refrained from meeting Khalilzad during his recent tour.

The Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday, referring to the recent rumors about the establishment of an interim government as an outcome of a peace process with the Taliban, said that the Afghan people do not support the dissolution of

democracy and that his main duty as president is to peacefully transfer the power to his successor according to the law.

Speaking a public gathering in Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan, Ghani said that the present political system needs to be protected and the power must be transferred peacefully and legally.

"This seat is not mine, this seat (presidency) belongs to the nation of Afghanistan, this system has dignity, you all voted for me," said Ghani. "If the objective of the Taliban is to dominate and give us the peace of the grave, that will have very negative consequences," Ghani said.

"My basic goal is to be able to hand power, through the will of the people, to my elected successor. This is crucial to enable us to honor the sacrifice of our civilians, our activists, and others," Ghani said. "One thing needs to be clear; the Afghan society is not willing to go back and we're not a type of society that the Taliban-type approach of the past can be imposed on us. That was the

peace of the graveyard. We want a positive peace where all of us together overcome our past, embrace each other and together rebuild an Afghanistan that can be what I call a roundabout (regional hub)."

Rumors about the interim government were also debated in a session of the Meshrano Jirga.

"The Interim government is just an imagination, interim government is recommended by those who have remained out of power," said Akbar Stanekzai, a member of the senate.

"The interim government is something that will be addressed by the Afghan people and the decision of the Afghan people and their views," said Gulalai Akbari, a senator.

The Taliban have so far not announced their official position about the establishment of an interim government in Afghanistan. However, the group in the past has said that the talks on the future government will be among their top priorities during the talks.

WHO hopes...

we should be able to be vaccinating in February in these countries, but we cannot do that on our own," said Aylward. "We require the cooperation of vaccine manufacturers to prioritize."

There is also a need for financial cooperation and assistance. "And we require the cooperation of those key suppliers to make

sure that we have the necessary data to ensure these vaccines meet all the criteria necessary in terms of efficacy, safety and quality."

Dr. Kate O'Brien, WHO director of immunization and vaccines, noted the need for readiness to put vaccines into arms.

"We've been hearing about high-income countries that are working really hard but

struggling to deploy the vaccines that they have.

"So I think we really cannot underestimate the task that it is for a country to be ready to start to deploy any of these vaccines," she said.

She noted vaccines like that, particularly from Pfizer, require special cold chain processes keeping the vaccine at between minus 60 and 90 C.

Why Afghanistan...

But more recently, the Pentagon has hinted that the Taliban had not met pledges to reduce violence or taken concrete steps to sever links with al-Qaeda.

The US government's plan to fully withdraw its forces from Afghanistan has even faced criticism from Republicans at home and NATO's secretary-general.

But the stakes are high if the

US decides to alter its plans to leave Afghanistan, with the likely result being yet more violence.

Although almost all victims of the recent increase in violence have been Afghans, the Taliban has insisted that it is fighting a foreign occupation and those who help it.

Before the breakthrough talks, one Taliban leader told Al Jazeera, "My father was a fighter, I fought against

the Soviets and then the US occupation. If the occupiers fail to see that they must leave, my children will fight them as well." Both Taliban and government leaders have said that these talks are a "unique, historic opportunity" for Afghans to solve their differences. Future generations will judge them on whether they succeed or fail.

For now, both sides are biding their time.

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Yemen: NGOs fear the worst after Houthi 'terrorist' designation

A decision to designate Yemen's Houthi movement as a "terrorist" organisation appears to be the Trump administration's parting shot to the group's regional ally, Iran, but there are now real fears the decision may have a devastating effect on millions of Yemenis in desperate need of humanitarian aid.

The Houthi rebels took control of Yemen's capital Sanaa in September 2014 and about 70 percent of Yemenis live in areas under their control.

The group runs a de facto state in that territory, which includes control of financial institutions and coordination with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that supply food and other aid to Yemenis.

The imminent United States designation of the Houthis has worried those NGOs – will they now

continue to be able to deal with a "terrorist organisation"? And if not, will that mean a halt to aid being sent to Yemen?

"The designation threatens to further shrink the space and access we need to deliver humanitarian assistance," said Abeer Etefa, the World Food Programme's Middle East spokeswoman.

"The humanitarian response does not operate in a vacuum: we work with banks, commercial traders and transporters, who in turn have links to global insurers and so on ... Right now, this looks like a worst-case scenario for Yemen. Life has just got harder for millions who are already struggling to survive."

Famine fears

The argument being made by opponents of the Houthi terrorist designation is the move will



impose difficult bureaucratic and legal barriers to working in Yemen. The country imports 90 percent of its food, and aid organisations are already struggling to help Yemenis in need. While the outgoing US Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo said the US would be issuing licences to NGOs working in Houthi-controlled territory, the fear is the situation is already so dire that any further impediments will only exacerbate the slide to a potential famine in Yemen.

A look at the world

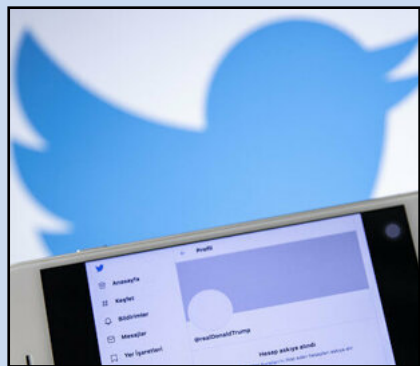
Twitter loses \$5B, shares down 12% since Trump ban

Twitter's stock price was down as much as 12.3% on Monday after outgoing US President Donald Trump was permanently banned from the platform.

After closing at \$51.48 per share on Friday, the US-based social networking service saw its stock price open down at \$47.16 a share on Monday, then fell to as low as \$45.15 per share shortly after opening bell at 9.30 a.m. on the US East Coast (1430GMT).

The decline erased \$5 billion from Twitter's market capitalization before the stock price later recovered to \$49 per share around 12.20 p.m. (1720GMT) for a market value of approximately \$39 billion.

The sudden decline came the first trading



day after Twitter on Friday permanently banned Trump's account, which had around 89 million followers.

The ban could spark fury from Trump supporters on Twitter, risking a loss in the number of users for the company, and raising questions about regulation, according to some analysts.

Explaining the move, Twitter had said: "After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence."

The decision came after two months of Trump's claims of voter fraud and election theft in the Nov. 3 US presidential election, and his supporters storming the Capitol building, forcing lawmakers to evacuate their session confirming President-elect Joe Biden's win, and causing multiple deaths.

Social networking giant Facebook also suspended Trump's account for at least the rest of his presidency, until Jan. 20, as CEO Mark Zuckerberg argued the outgoing president risked more violence and he intended to use his account to undermine a peaceful transition of power.

'Turkey is determined to press ahead on EU reforms'



Turkey is determined to press ahead on EU accession reforms, Turkey's foreign minister told a group of European Union diplomats on Tuesday.

"We are determined [to apply the] reform agenda," Mevlut Cavusoglu told the EU member state ambassadors, meeting at the official Cankaya Palace in the capital Ankara.

"The EU should not hinder but give support to us," he added.

Saying that the bloc and Turkey are tied closely, he explained: "Turkey is in Europe, and Europe is part of our destiny. The same thing applies to Europe."

Turkey, an EU candidate country since 2005, plays a large role in the security of Syria and Libya plus the Caucasus, Balkans, Middle East, and Black Sea regions, and also has a key part in migration, energy, trade, supply chains, transportation, communication, security, counter-terrorism, NATO, and defense, he stressed.

"All these issues are vital for both the security and prosperity of Europe. If we act together, we can make significant changes in all areas. As Turkey, we are ready for this partnership," he said.

Unfortunately, he said, the desired cooperation between Turkey and the EU had failed to materialize over the years due to some bilateral issues that remained unsolved, and this was also a loss for Europe.

Cavusoglu said they have repeatedly urged the use of dialogue to solve these bilateral issues, and in this process, they expect progress in concrete areas in relations with the EU.

"Turkey is dependent on the EU accession process. If we find a positive response from the EU, we also show the necessary will," he said.

Later Monday Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to also meet with the EU ambassadors. ... **P2**

WHO hopes to roll out vaccines for all in February

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) called Monday for a collective commitment so that within the next 100 days, coronavirus vaccination for health workers and those at higher risk in all countries can begin, with one official saying the hope is for a rollout during February.

At a bi-weekly press webinar, WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus said that a year ago, the first death from COVID-19 was reported.

The world health body issued technical guidance on such issues as surveillance, lab testing, infection prevention and control, a readiness checklist, risk communication and community engagement.

"A year on, there have been almost 2 million deaths from the COVID-19 virus, and while



we are hopeful about the safe and effective vaccines that are being rolled out, we want to see this sped up and vaccines allocated equitably in the coming weeks," he said.

"I call for a collective commitment so that within the next 100 days, vaccinations for health workers and those at high risk in all countries are underway."


He said governments, manufacturers, civil society and religious and community leaders must unite to create the "greatest mass mobilization in history for equitable vaccination."

WHO senior adviser Dr. Bruce Aylward said: "Over 40 countries have now begun vaccinating against COVID-19. However, all of the vaccinations, or virtually all, were in high-income or middle-income countries so far."


"We have got to see vaccines going into arms in lower and lower-middle income countries." "Over 40 countries have now begun vaccinating against COVID-19 using five different vaccines."

He said the WHO is working to accelerate the vaccines' rollout through the COVAX facility, which seeks to get them to lower and middle-income Advance Market Commitment (AMC) countries, 92 nations in Africa, the Americas and Asia.

"We expect in strong confidence that ... **P3**




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