



Kabul
14 / -1



Herat
21 / 9



Nangarhar
23 / 5



Balkh
12 / 2



Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Issue No. 907

www.heartofasia.af

10 afs



EU Announced Support for Success of Afghan Peace Process

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Haneef Atmar had a telephone conversation with the European Commissioner for International Partnerships, Ms. Jutta Urpilainen.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in a press release said that the two sides discussed the latest developments in the peace talks in Doha, and the EU's partnership with these Afghan Government.

According to the press release, FM Atmar conveyed his appreciation for the EU's support of Afghanistan's peace process and thanked the Commissioner for the EU's observers' work at Doha and the union's support for the need for the preservation of the last two decades' gains in the Afghan peace talks.

Minister Atmar noted that ensuring an immediate ceasefire, a lasting peace settlement and bringing an end ... **P3**



26 Afghan Forces Killed in Kunduz Clashes

Afghan local officials in Kunduz province say at least 26 Afghan security forces were killed in Taliban's attacks in Kunduz province.

A Provincial Council member of Kunduz, Safiullah Amiri told Reportedly that the Taliban carried out a widespread attack on security outposts in Dasht-e Archi district last night.

According to Amiri, 13 Afghan army forces and 4 of the uprising forces were killed and two others were wounded in Taliban's attack in the center of Dasht-e Archi district.

He cited that an outpost has collapsed to Taliban after killing of 13 security forces. In the meantime, Amir noted that eight government forces were killed after Taliban attacked the security outposts in Bagh-e Sherkat area of PD3 in Kunduz city.

He added that a security forces was killed by a Taliban sniper in Char Dara district during the clashes.

Meanwhile, the spokesman of Pamir 217 Corps Abdul Hadi Nazari in a statement confirmed the Taliban's attack ... **P2**

Taliban urge Joe Biden to honour Donald Trump's deal to leave Afghanistan



The Taliban called on president-elect Joe Biden to honour a U.S. agreement to withdraw all American forces from Afghanistan by May to secure intra-Afghan peace talks and end the two-decade war.

Mohammad Naeem Wardak, a senior spokesman in the Taliban's political office in Doha, said on Monday that "steps must be taken to end the war, not to prolong it".

"The agreement was made for the purpose," he said.

He was referring to an accord the U.S. signed last February that paved the way for a complete withdrawal of troops by May in exchange for security guarantees from the Taliban.

"The lack of complete implementation of the agreement can affect the ongoing process of negotiations," Mr Naeem Wardak said.

The call from the insurgent group came days after the U.S. reduced its troop levels from 4,500 to 2,500 at President Donald Trump's direction, despite opposition from Republican and Democrat politicians who said the decision could affect counterterrorism operations.

Mr Naeem Wardak welcomed the troop reduction and said it was a "good advancement".

While it is unclear whether Mr Biden will withdraw all U.S. troops by the deadline, his nominee for national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told CNN this month that the new administration would support diplomacy with the Taliban.

Mr Sullivan urged the insurgent group to cut ties with terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda, ensure a reduction in violence and participate in "good-faith negotiations" with the Afghan government.

The Biden transition team declined to weigh in.

Andrew Watkins, a senior analyst with International Crisis Group, said the May 1 troop withdrawal deadline was the biggest early challenge for the peace process and one of the most urgent problems facing the Biden team.

"If the Biden administration ignores the deadline set down in the U.S.-Taliban agreement without discussing and clearing a delay with the insurgents, the Taliban will almost certainly respond by escalating their use of force – either via attacks on population centres, facilities housing international troops or both," Mr Watkins said on Monday.

A reduction in U.S. troops – who provide air support to Afghan forces – will not affect the ability of Afghan forces to push back ... **P3**

IFJ Condemns Attack on Radio Station in Kunduz Province

The International Federation of journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) condemned the attack on a Radio station in Kunduz province and urged the Afghan government to investigate the case.

A mob of nearly a dozen people led by the imam of a local mosque attacked Zohra Radio in north eastern Kunduz province on January 15 damaging the radio's equipment and vandalizing the office.

According to AIJA, the angry crowd also attempted to attack Radio Kaihan and Radio Chiragh but were ... **P2**



18.4 Million Afghans Need Live-Saving Help: NGO

Save the Children says there are calls for urgent increases in humanitarian funding to Afghanistan, as figures reveal that just over 18 million people, almost half the population, desperately need life-saving support.

Save the Children in a press release said that data reveals humanitarian needs in Afghanistan includes 9.7million children.

With no immediate end in sight to the decades-long conflict, Save the Children's Country Director in Afghanistan Chris Nyamandi said, "Millions of people are suffering every day because of poverty and conflict. It's especially hard on children many of whom have known nothing but violence. According to the latest UN figures[i], nearly 6,000 people, a third of them children, were killed and injured between January and September last year." "Conflict continues to cause extreme



physical and psychological harm, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes every year. The fighting will continue to fuel humanitarian needs this year. This will threaten people's wellbeing and limit access to essential services like hospitals and clinics as well as humanitarian assistance," said Chris Nyamandi.

"Now the schools are closed because

of the harsh winter conditions and COVID-19 restrictions and they won't reopen until March. Meanwhile, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis," he added.

As Mr Nyamandi explains, the plight of the Afghan people is threatened by inadequate humanitarian funding pledged by wealthy nations at a Geneva based conference ... **P3**

IFJ Condemns...

prevented and stopped by security forces as they attempted to enter into the radio stations. Zohra Radio is planning to file case against the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, Afghan Journalists Safety Committee and Afghanistan Ministry of Information and Culture issued statements condemning the attack.

From January 2020, 11 media workers were murdered in Afghanistan including one on January 1, 2021.

Attacks on journalists, threats from militant groups, gender-based violence against women journalists, government controls on information have also been documented, according to AIJA.

The AIJA said: "The attack to the Zohra radio indicates that media in Afghanistan are unsafe not only from militant groups but also from different interest groups. AIJA demands the Afghanistan government to end the culture of impunity on crime against journalists." The IFJ said: "The safety situation for journalists in Afghanistan must be a major priority for the Afghanistan government."

26 Afghan...

in Kunduz province.

Nazari said that more than 15 Taliban militants were killed and 12 more were wounded during last night's clashes.

He only confirmed that three of Afghan soldiers were killed and four others were wounded.

This comes as the Taliban group has increased attacks on government forces' positions in Kunduz province.

By Mark S. Cogan and Dr. Stephen Nagy

Winners and Losers as Afghan Peace Process Enters Its Endgame

After more than two months of negotiations, the Afghan peace process has resumed in Doha, Qatar, with the Afghan government and the Taliban having finalized a set of procedures and principles that will govern the process going forward. With the business of finite details out of the way, the second stage of the peace process will focus on the creation of a political path to a nationwide ceasefire, and ultimately a lasting political settlement. The peace talks take on a growing sense of urgency as fighting in the country continues—a development that strains the integrity of the U.S.-Taliban agreement that was signed in February 2020. The Trump administration's post-election pull-back of U.S. troops further destabilizes the chances for a sustainable agreement, as the Taliban may just outwait the U.S. until troops are not a significant leverage in any negotiation process.

On the ground, violence has increased across most of Afghanistan's provinces. In November, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan (SIGAR) reported to Congress in a quarterly report that violence increased 50 percent in the third quarter of 2020 compared to previous years, with 2,561 civilian casualties and 875 deaths.

As the "Afghan-only" peace process resumes, there are a number of concerns for international actors, including the United States, China, as well as from neighboring Pakistan and India. While some concerns from India and Pakistan are the byproducts of a regional rivalry, others are reflective of lingering uncertainties over the possible outcome of the Doha talks—a process that cannot ultimately be completely influenced by outside actors. This is especially salient in how the Afghan peace process may impact the U.S. and China's ongoing presence in the tattered state, with obvious implications for deepening Sino-U.S. great power competition.

The United States

The United States has the most to lose and the most to fear, having been involved in Afghanistan since 2001. The country has spent over \$1 trillion on war funding and a staggering \$6.4 trillion in post-September 11 war efforts. It has been reported that some Taliban now see an end to its long war with the West, having claimed a second "superpower scalp." The incoming Biden administration has been placed in an uncomfortable and precarious situation, as the departing Trump administration has accelerated the withdrawal of



U.S. forces from Afghanistan—without expecting any equivalent moves from the Taliban—from 8,600 to 4,500, and now to 2,500 before Biden's inauguration. The fear for the United States is the prospect of perpetual war, as the Trump administration's deal has sent the Taliban mixed signals. Ultimately, they now have the opportunity to renege on their commitments or simply wait until the United States pulls out completely. While most Afghans clearly do not want the presence of American forces in the country indefinitely, most expected the withdrawal to come at a more opportune time or in coordination with the acceptance of a political settlement. With these uncertainties in mind, concern in the United States should fall on whether Afghanistan could become an international safe haven for terrorist groups such as Islamic State. As a part of the deal signed with the United States last year, the Taliban "will take the following steps to prevent any group or individual, including al Qaeda, from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies." While the strength of al Qaeda appears to be limited to about 600 fighters within Afghanistan, the Taliban, which number as many as 85,000, could try for a military victory if negotiations were to fail and U.S. troops withdrawn.

While extremism remains a core concern for the U.S., Washington also sees Afghanistan through the lens of U.S.-China great power competition. A settlement that results in the ejection of the U.S. from Afghanistan would create a geopolitical vacuum that China would be happy to fill, complicating U.S. efforts to advance

a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. It could also lead to the U.S. being denied access to Afghanistan's rich natural resources. While the latter could be tolerated economically, Afghanistan falling into the Beijing's geopolitical orbit would be much less palatable, especially after investing so much blood and treasure over past two decades in Afghanistan.

China

China's strategic interests in Afghanistan are fourfold: enhancing its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), domestic and international security, resource acquisition and development, and economic integration. Integrating Afghanistan into the BRI would help to open up new markets in a country with vast resource and human potential. A successful Afghan peace settlement may open the doors to such a possibility, especially if the U.S.'s presence in the country is significantly downgraded in any settlement.

Furthermore, through the BRI Beijing aims to reshape regional integration such that its economy is re-oriented away from its east coast and toward its southern regions, positioning the Chinese economy as a hub in a regional network of trade flows. A peaceful and stable Afghanistan would be a critical link in that project. For Beijing, Afghanistan's instability is also tangentially connected to security concerns in China's periphery. Specifically, China sees itself as beset by what it calls "internal security" problems associated with the Turkic-speaking Uighur Muslims from northwestern Xinjiang province. Falling under the so-called three evils of extremism, separatism, and terrorism, Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in ... **P3**

By JIM GERAGHTY

How Close to 'Fully Withdrawn' from Iraq and Afghanistan Are We?

Over on the home page, Michael Brendan Dougherty writes an assessment of "Trumpism after Trump," and it is typically astute and thought-provoking. But there's one point I would quibble with, when Michael writes, "We haven't fully withdrawn from long wars where there is no reasonable hope of a satisfying conclusion or national objective to be achieved."

Fully withdrawn, no. But we're getting pretty close; the U.S. military presence in these countries is now about as minimal as it can get. As of January 15, the Pentagon says the U.S. now has just 2,500 service members in Iraq and 2,500 in Afghanistan. An estimated 900 troops are in Syria.

Those numbers are smaller than our presence in allied countries such as Bahrain (4,000), Germany (33,000), Italy (12,000), Japan (53,000), South Korea (26,000), Spain (3,100), the United Kingdom (9,000), and comparable to our presence in Belgium (1,100), Kuwait (2,100), Turkey (1,600), and Australia (1,000). (All figures are from the Pentagon and represent the number of troops in a country as of September 30, 2020, rounded down.)

The host governments of Afghanistan and Iraq may still be fighting the Taliban, militants, ISIS dead-enders, and the rest, but America's role in those conflicts has been reduced to the bare minimum. The last U.S. casualty in Iraq driven by hostile action was on March 11, 2020. Six servicemen have died since then in non-hostile actions (vehicle accidents, etc.). The last U.S. casualty in Afghanistan driven by hostile action was February 8, 2020. Five servicemen had died since then in non-hostile actions.

The total U.S. casualties from hostile action in Iraq and Afghanistan for the entirety of 2020 were . . . nine servicemen. If this constitutes "Forever Wars," that's an awfully low bar. The ambush in Niger in 2017 killed four Americans; you don't hear any calls for the withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel from Niger. (As of September 30, that's 11 Marines and three Air Force personnel, although some portion of the 5,000 personnel categorized as "unknown" may be operating in that country.)

I find a lot of the rhetoric about "Forever Wars" hasn't changed since the Bush administration, even though

the situation on the ground has changed considerably.

To argue that the U.S. needs fewer troops in Iraq and Afghanistan than it currently has in those countries is to argue that the U.S. should have no military presence in the country beyond the Marines to guard the embassy and military attaches working there. The problem is, U.S. embassies and the people who work there walk around with bullseyes on their backs—to say nothing of other Americans living in those countries. Either we maintain a small military presence to assist the host governments in counterterrorism operations out of prudence, or we leave our civilians in those countries at greater risk. I suspect there are some people who think the U.S. should just wash its hands of those countries entirely, shut down our embassies before anyone can attempt to reenact Tehran or Benghazi, and simply not deal with those countries anymore.

The United States closed its embassy in Kabul in 1989 and largely ignored the country for the next decade and change . . . and we all remember how that turned out.

Biden plans to...

forged five years ago among nearly 200 nations to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Trump vowed in 2016 to pull the United States out of the agreement, making good on that promise in November 2020.

* Reimpose methane pollution limits for new and existing oil and gas operations repealed by Trump.

* Using the federal government procurement system – which spends \$500 billion every year – to make facilities more reliant on clean energy and purchase zero-emissions vehicles.

* Ban new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

* Cancel the permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would carry oil from Canada to the United States.

IMMIGRATION

* Repeal the ban on almost all travel from some Muslim-majority countries.

* Send to Congress a sweeping immigration bill that could legalize millions of immigrants living in the United States

without legal permission.

* Reinstatement of the program allowing "Dreamers," people who were brought to the United States illegally as children, to remain in the country.

* Reverse Trump's policy that separated immigrant parents from their children at the border, including ending the prosecution of parents for minor immigration violations, and prioritize the reunification of any children still separated from their families.

* Reverse Trump's more restrictive asylum policies, such as imposing additional restrictions on anyone traveling through Mexico or Guatemala and attempting to prevent victims of gang and domestic violence from receiving asylum.

* End Trump's National Emergency declaration that allowed him to shift federal funds from the Department of Defense to build a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

* Order an immediate review of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for vulnerable populations who cannot find safety in their countries ripped apart by violence or disaster.

Iran Expresses Readiness to Build Herat- Mazar-i-Sharif Railway

Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami referred to sustainable development as Iran's strategy in the region, saying Iran is ready to connect Khaf-Herat railway to Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of training Afghanistan railway staff, Eslami said Iran's development is intertwined with that of its neighbors.

Peace and security in regional states are in fact like those in Iran, he added. The Iranian minister said that Iran has always tried to establish sustainable peace in the region and to remove foreigners' intervention. Referring to Iran's support for Afghans, Eslami said that countries with cultural commonalities will be able to develop by using human resources.



Taliban urge Joe...

against the Taliban, according to a spokesman for the country's National Security Council, Rahmatullah Andar. The Afghan government and the Taliban resumed negotiations early this month under the shadow of violence, after several journalists, government employees and independent human rights advocates were killed. Two female Supreme Court judges were killed on Sunday on their way to work in the latest unclaimed gun attack in the capital Kabul. The latest wave of violence fostered fear and anxiety among Afghans and forced some prominent journalists to flee the country. Since November, five journalists have been killed in attacks and two others died in Kabul from unknown causes. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and the U.S. blamed the Taliban for the killings. The insurgents deny the allegations. Attempting to end the bloodshed, Mr Ghani's negotiating team is pushing harder for a ceasefire agreement before negotiating other key agenda items - including a power-sharing deal - with the Taliban. However, the group wants to declare a ceasefire in the final stages of the talks. "The Taliban should understand that such actions for which it bears responsibility outrage the world and must cease if peace is to come to Afghanistan," the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Ross Wilson, said on Sunday, condemning the attacks on the female judges.

18.4 Million...

last November. "Aid to Afghanistan has alarmingly dropped at a time when the humanitarian need is rising. We're now in the unenviable position where aid falls far short of what's needed to meet the needs of the people," said Nyamandi. The press release said that COVID-19 in Afghanistan is having a catastrophic impact on millions of vulnerable families. According to the press release, in 2020, World Bank estimates revealed that the pandemic had led to massive disruptions to imports including vital household items, which in turn is leading to rapid inflation. In response, Save the Children is calling for at least another US\$3bn in humanitarian assistance to help the Afghan people in 2021. The press release cited that without it the humanitarian community will struggle to meet the growing needs of an entire generation of children whose lives have been blighted by conflict. "Millions of people are suffering every day because of conflict, poverty, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a desperately sad situation that needs urgent attention from the international community," added Mr Nyamandi.

Winners and...

China's far Western provinces, including Xinjiang, have been targeted by Beijing in terms of culture, identity, political and religious freedoms, and human rights. As a result Uighur Muslims have begun to make their way into Afghanistan using fake passports and are becoming absorbed into jihadist movements in Central Asia, fighting alongside the Taliban and al Qaeda. China's aims in Afghanistan, while dominated by economic interests, cannot afford to ignore the consequences of an emboldened population, fed by a huge source of internationally-verified documentation of abuse, from seeking violent forms of retribution in Western Xinjiang and beyond. The radicalization of the Uighurs would surely exacerbate political differences between Beijing and the minority group, who see themselves as natives to Xinjiang province or to what they commonly refer to as East Turkestan. Thus, China's interests in Afghanistan are both economic and political. The country is willing to offer an unlimited supply of cheap credit to the new Afghan government, which would surely have Taliban influence, in exchange for contracts to build a massive highway network through the mountainous Wakhan Corridor, which would facilitate access to untapped Afghan mineral wealth. China is also interested in expanding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Beijing is interested in mitigating regional insecurities—Afghanistan in particular—because doing so will accelerate BRI projects. Yet China's interests in Afghanistan are balanced on what seem to be contradictory claims, that their "internal" security problem with the Uighur minority will not experience blowback in an environment that will be more favorable to the Taliban, who have expressed support for the Uighur Muslims' cause. Pakistan

When the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, visited Pakistan in September 2020, he expressed his gratitude for the role Islamabad has played during the reconciliation process. Pakistan, while not a party in the ongoing talks in Doha, is still a critical actor, sharing a 2,600-kilometer border with Afghanistan. It also shares a complicated relationship with Kabul and Washington. The 2019 Country Report on Terrorism for Pakistan accused Islamabad of providing a "safe harbor" for regional terrorist groups, including the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network (HQN), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the latter two of which have conducted numerous attacks into neighboring India. When deputy Taliban leader Abdul Ghani Baradar visited Pakistan in late December, he was met with criticism from India, who cited several released videos that claim that Baradar told a group of men that the Taliban makes all decisions relative to the peace talks only after consultation with clerics and leadership in Pakistan. Taliban leader Mullah Fazal Akhund was also filmed greeting Taliban fighters in Pakistan. For the Pakistani leadership, fears are divided between these groups it has harbored and its renewed but fragile relationship with Washington. Many have accused Pakistan of backing the Taliban's efforts in Afghanistan out of fear that its rival India could gain an upper hand. These divided loyalties are reminiscent of the 1990s, when Islamabad favored Taliban rule in Afghanistan, providing resources and training to founder Mullah Omar, and giving full recognition to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as it was then called. Pakistan cannot hope for a strong relationship with the United States under the incoming Biden administration intact while balancing a favorable relationship with the Taliban. It is Pakistan's hope (and fear) that they will be able to be architects of a new regime in Afghanistan,

one that will be sensitive to Pakistan's strategic interests and not provide safe haven for anti-Pakistan militant groups to launch cross-border attacks from Afghan territory. India Finally, India's contributions to the peace process are both economic and political in nature. New Delhi has become a prominent investor in Afghan infrastructure development, as well as supporting governance and ICT initiatives. However, India's fears are glaringly obvious—that it benefits the most from the political status quo. Any changes to the current arrangement would mean difficulties in neighboring Kashmir and unsettle regional security in favor of Pakistan. India also wants, with as much certainty as possible, to work toward a regional consensus that is centered on the growing bilateral relationship between itself and Kabul. India is also concerned with the pace of U.S. troop withdrawals, which benefit the Taliban—in turn benefiting China. Concerns over India's future relationship with Afghanistan have prompted it to open up to bilateral talks, which are now essential if New Delhi wants to preserve its economic and political objectives going forward. As the peace process resumes, regional rivalries will again be tested by whatever political solution can be achieved by the Afghan talks. The United States and India have the most to lose in the political settlement, one where the Taliban clearly have the upper hand. China and Pakistan benefit the most by some changes to the status quo, although both have lingering vulnerabilities to extremism. In the interim, the pending U.S. troop withdrawal gives the Taliban additional leverage over the government of Afghanistan, which remains trapped by a reality that has brought the country only perpetual war and suffering—and now the possibility of peace. Both roads, all sides fear, will be guided by the Taliban.

EU Announced...

to the targeted assassination of political and social activists in the country were the key priorities of the Afghan government which should be taken into account during the second round of the talks in Qatar. The press release said that

Urpilainen assured Mr. Atmar of the European Union's firm support to the continuation and success of the Afghan peace process. Ms. Urpilainen reaffirmed EU's long-term support to peace and stability in Afghanistan with an emphasis on immediate ceasefire.


The two sides also discussed EU's pledge of financial aid during the Afghanistan 2020 Conference held in Geneva and Afghanistan's commitment for accountability. They discussed the situation of Afghan refugees in EU member states and further strengthening cooperation in this regard.

Exchange Rates

77.1	\$	77.2
93.2	€	93.3
103.7	£	103.8
478	Rp.	479
20.9	₹	21
1035	₹	1045

Contact Numbers

- Kabul Police - 119
- Kabul Ambulance - 112
- Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital
0202301360
- Ata Turk Hospital
0202500312
- Corona call center - 166



Shigal

English Academy

شېگل انگلیش اکاډمي

Easy English Learning

Western Street of Kabul University Close to Dehbori Park.

+93 (0) 789 98 9696

shigal.edu@gmail.com

Shigal English Academy

www.shigal.edu.af



WAYGAL Printing Co.

If You Can Think It, We Can ink it.

OFFSET PRINTING

- Logo Design
- Business Card
- Books
- Letterheads
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- File Folders
- Brochure
- Flyers
- Calendars
- Posters
- other...

+93 (0) 704 734 984

+93 (0) 782 98 9696

+93 (0) 202512626

Dehbori Crossroads in Front of Park Kabul

waygalprinting.co@gmail.com

Heart of Asia

Chief Editor: M. Hamid Hamdard
Reporters: Safiullah Nasary, Shafiq Amirzay, Jawad Temori & Hameedullah Hamidi
Graphic & Design: Arman
Phone: +93-202502100 - +93-777989696
Website: www.heartofasia.af
Email: heartofasiadaily@gmail.com
Address: Behind Rahman Baba High School - Opposite to 3rd District, Kabul - Afghanistan
Print: Waygal Printing .Co - +93 - 202512626

Biden plans to reverse Trump policies during first days in office

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden plans to sign dozens of executive orders and send sweeping bills to Congress in his first days in office, aiming to roll back some of Donald Trump's signature policies on immigration and climate change while taking action to ramp up the government's response to the coronavirus crisis.

Here is a list of what to expect, according to interviews with several of Biden's advisers, a review of campaign promises and a recent memo by the president-elect's incoming chief of staff Ron Klain.

COVID-19 CRISIS

* Seek a \$1.9 trillion spending proposal aimed at accelerating the distribution of coronavirus vaccines while providing economic relief to millions of Americans hurt by the pandemic.

* Impose a mask-wearing requirement on all federal property, planes and buses.

* Extend relief on federal student loan payments and extend an eviction moratorium.

* Sign an executive order that helps schools and businesses reopen safely, expands coronavirus testing and establishes clearer public health standards.

* Direct federal agencies to take immediate action to deliver economic relief to working families bearing the brunt of the crisis.

* Return the United States to the World Health Organization. Trump withdrew from the agency, saying it failed to properly oversee the COVID-19 pandemic.

CLIMATE

* Bring the United States back into the Paris Climate Agreement, the global pact ... **P3**



A look at the world

UN urges Israel to 'halt, reverse' new settlements in West Bank

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on Israel to "halt and reverse" its decision last week to build nearly 800 new homes for Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank.

The decision is "a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution, and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace" in the Middle East, Guterres said in a statement on Monday.

"The establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.

"Settlement expansion... further erodes the possibility of ending the occupation



and establishing a contiguous and viable sovereign Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 lines," Guterres said.

Israel on Sunday approved the construction of 780 homes in the occupied West Bank, ordered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on January 11. All Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank are regarded as illegal under international law and by much of the international community.

Last November, Mike Pompeo became the first US secretary of state to visit a Jewish settlement in an official capacity, months after the US broke with international law and international community consensus to announce it no longer considered settlements as unlawful. There are currently some 450,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank, living among 2.8 million Palestinians.

Also on Monday, the United Kingdom expressed concerns over Israel's approval for the construction of the settlement units, warning the move could threaten future peace negotiations and calling for construction to stop.

"Settlements are illegal under international law and risk undermining the physical viability of the two-state solution. We call for the construction of these in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank to cease immediately," a Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement.

Azerbaijan lost over 2,800 soldiers in Nagorno-Karabakh



The Azerbaijani army lost at least 2,855 soldiers during its operation to liberate Armenian-occupied territories in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and its surroundings, the country's Defense Ministry said Monday. The ministry updated the death toll from the Nagorno-Karabakh war, which started on Sept. 27, 2020 and ended on Nov. 10.

The number of martyrs, previously announced as 2,841, was updated to 2,855 after learning of some funerals and the identities of the deceased.

Announcing that 50 soldiers were still missing, the ministry also shared with the public a list of soldiers who were buried.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Relations between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been tense since 1991, when the Armenian military occupied Upper Karabakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh, internationally recognized as Azerbaijani territory, and seven adjacent regions.

When new clashes erupted Sept. 27, 2020, Armenia launched attacks on civilians and Azerbaijani forces and even violated humanitarian cease-fire agreements.

During the six-week-long conflict, Azerbaijan liberated several cities and nearly 300 settlements and villages, while at least 2,802 of its soldiers were known at the time to be martyred. There are differing claims about the number of casualties on the Armenian side, which sources and officials say could be as high as 5,000.

The two countries signed a Russian-brokered agreement on Nov. 10 to end the fighting and work toward a comprehensive resolution.

A joint Turkish-Russian center is being established to monitor the truce. Russian peacekeeping troops have also been deployed in the region.

The cease-fire is seen as a victory for Azerbaijan and a defeat for Armenia, whose armed forces have withdrawn in line with the agreement.

Violations, however, have been reported in recent weeks, with Armenian soldiers reportedly hiding in the mountainous enclave.

Kremlin critic Navalny to be jailed for 30 days

A Russian court ruled Monday that opposition politician Alexey Navalny will be kept in custody until Feb. 15, less than 24 hours after his return to the country.

"Alexey Navalny was detained for 30 days until Feb. 15, 2021," Vadim Kobzev, a lawyer for Navalny, announced on Twitter.

Navalny, who received treatment in Germany after alleged poisoning, was arrested in the capital Moscow upon his return Sunday evening. He was held at a police station in the city of Khimki.



Moscow's Khimki Court ruled that he will remain in custody for violating the probation period that ended on Dec. 29 last year.

Navalny, 44, a fierce critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, fell sick last August on a flight to Moscow. After an emergency landing in the Siberian city of Omsk, he spent two days in a Russian hospital before being sent to Berlin for treatment.

After tests in several laboratories, German officials said Navalny was poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok, which was also used according to the UK government in a 2018 attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the British town of Salisbury.

Russian authorities deny any involvement in the case and contend that chemical weapons have neither been developed nor produced by Russia since the last chemical round was destroyed in 2017, as verified and certified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.



Aksos

اکسوس کتابپلورتنگی
Aksos Book Store



Add a Book
to
Your Life

Dehbori Crossroads in front
of Park Kabul
0798 98 9696, 020 250 46 52
aksosbookstore@gmail.com
www.aksosbookstore.af
Aksos Book Store
Aksos Book Store



Shigal
English Academy

Easy
English
Learning

Western Street of
Kabul University Close to
Dehbori Park.
+93 (0) 789 98 9696
shigal.edu@gmail.com
Shigal English Academy
www.shigal.edu.af