



Page 2 | NATIONAL
Biden admin likely to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan amid escalating violence, stalled talks

Biden administration ready to go fast on Iran and slow on Afghanistan

US AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL INCREASINGLY IN DOUBT: The strong signals from Washington that the Biden administration is ...

Page 3 | ECONOMY

Japan Pledges \$122.2M in Aid for Afghanistan



Page 2 | NATIONAL

Kabul
12 / 0



Herat
17 / 0



Nangarhar
21 / 7



Balkh
17 / 9



Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Issue No. 914

www.heartofasia.af

10 afs



President Ghani Hold Talk with Sweden PM, Discussed Peace Process

President Ashraf Ghani had a telephone conversation with Sweden Prime Minister Stefan Löfven on Monday, the Presidential Palace (Arg) said.

Arg in a statement on Monday said that President Ghani thanked Sweden for its assistance to Afghanistan over the years, especially in the field of education and health, as well as its support within the framework of the Resolute Support Mission.

According to the statement, the President called Sweden a longtime friend of Afghanistan and spoke of the progress made in the peace process and the common vision of Afghanistan and the international community for a peace process that would ensure a democratic, sovereign, and united Afghanistan.

The Swedish PM, in turn, assured of his country's continued development and economic cooperation, ...

P3



Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan to sign roadmap for construction of Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway

The high-level talks with participation of heads of key international financial institutions will be held on February 2 in Tashkent on construction of Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway.

The delegation of Uzbekistan will be led by Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade Sardor Umurzakov.

Construction of the given railway is expected to reduce the time and cost of transportation of cargoes between the countries of South Asia and Europe through Central Asia.

The railway will enhance transit capacity of Central Asia and will link it with Pakistan's sea ports Karachi, Kasem, Gwadar.

The roadmap for construction of the railway is expected to be signed following multilateral talks.

U.S. Watchdog: Taliban Attacks Increased in Kabul



The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) says Taliban attacks in the Afghan capital of Kabul are on the rise, with increasing targeted killings of government officials, civil society leaders and journalists.

The US watchdog in a report said that the proportion of casualties caused by improvised explosive devices increased by nearly 17 percent in this quarter, correlating with an increase in magnetically attached IEDs or "sticky bomb" attacks.

"Enemy attacks in Kabul were higher than during the previous quarter," the report quoted the US forces in Afghanistan as saying. "They were much higher than in the same quarter last year." Resolute Support, the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, reported

2,586 civilian casualties from October 1 to December 31 last year, including 810 killed and 1,776 wounded, according to the SIGAR report.

Despite the ongoing violence, casualties across Afghanistan in the last quarter of 2020 decreased by 14 percent, compared with the previous quarter. The quarter did, however, see an exceptionally high number of casualties for the winter months when fighting normally subsides.

By the end of 2020, Afghanistan's unemployment rate was projected to rise to 37.9 percent, up from 23.9 percent in 2019, said the report.

"As the footprint of US agencies continues to shrink, it will become more important that the US and other donors perform aggressive and effective oversight of its dollars and programs," said Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction John F Sopko.

The authorised goal strength of Afghan defence forces has been adjusted downward to 208,000 personnel, the SIGAR report said. It had been roughly 227,000 for many years.

Taliban Reject EU, NATO, Diplomatic Missions Joint Statement on Escalation of Violence in Afghanistan

The Taliban group has reacted to a joint statement by the EU, NATO and the diplomatic missions over escalation of violence in Afghanistan, calling it baseless. The Taliban said in a statement issued on Monday that the group had no involvement in the killing of civilians and had not destroyed any public facilities. The group also said it considers itself responsible for the reconstruction and maintenance of utility facilities. According to the Taliban statement, the presence of foreigners is a major ...

P2



Civilian, Security Force Member Killed in 2nd Kabul Blast

At least one civilian and a security force member were killed in a blast on an army vehicle in Kabul on Monday afternoon, Kabul police said in a statement.

The blast happened about 12:00pm local time from an IED hitting an army vehicle in the Jangalak area of PD7 of Kabul city, the statement said.

However, the police have not provided further details about the blast.

No group including the Taliban immediately claimed responsibility for the blast.

Also, a blast targeted an armored vehicle belonging to Khushnood Nabizada, head of the office of the state minister for peace affairs this morning, but there were no casualties, security officials said.

The incident happened around 7:26 am local time in the Shaheed roundabout in Kabul in PD10 after



Nabizada's vehicle was hit by an IED, the security forces said.

Nabizada and two of his children were in the vehicle when the blast happened, but no one, including his driver, was hurt, said relatives. Nabizada is also founder of the Khaama Press, an online news agency in Afghanistan.

Today's targeted attack in Kabul against a senior official involved in the peace process "is another

deplorable incident, akin to an attack on the peace process itself," UNAMA said.

UNAMA condemned this attack and "all attacks against civilians" and urged the "Afghanistan peace talks to move forward."

The EU Delegation and the diplomatic missions in Afghanistan in a joint statement released on Sunday condemned the targeted killings and kidnappings ...

P3

Taliban Reject...

factor in the current crisis in Afghanistan, which has resulted in the deaths of many Afghans for the past 20 years.

The group stressed the implementation of the US agreement with the Taliban in Doha, adding that it has focused on resolving issues through dialogue from the beginning.

The EU Delegation and the diplomatic missions of Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States in a joint statement strongly condemn the continuation of assassinations, kidnappings, and destruction of vital infrastructure – all which directly harm the Afghan people.

The statement stated that the Taliban bears responsibility for the majority of this targeted violence, and its attacks undermine state institutions and contribute to an insecure environment in which terrorist and criminal groups are able to freely operate.

China confident...

will make its special contributions to the international Olympic Games," said Wang.

"As far as I know, the IOC and the Japanese side are actively making epidemic prevention and control plans for the Tokyo Olympic Games and making every effort in the preparation. China will continue to give its full support to the IOC and Japan in hosting a safe and successful Olympic Games," Wang added.

By Conor Finnegan and James Gordon Meek

Biden admin likely to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan amid escalating violence, stalled talks

Amid a surge in high-profile assassinations and violent attacks, the Biden administration is indicating it will keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan past a May withdrawal deadline laid out in the U.S. deal with the Taliban.

President Joe Biden has talked about keeping U.S. forces for counterterrorism or to defend the U.S.-backed Afghan government against a rise in Taliban attacks, but it's unclear under what conditions, to what end and for how long after America's nearly 20 years of war.

U.S. troops are at their lowest level in Afghanistan now, which the Pentagon said in a new report Monday has imposed "limitations" on completing its mission.

The Taliban, while engaged in intermittent talks with the Afghan government, have also sustained high levels of deadly attacks and refused to agree to a ceasefire -- even as the country reels from the coronavirus pandemic and an ensuing economic crisis, with poverty and unemployment rates sharply up.

That violence breaks the spirit of the U.S.-Taliban agreement signed by former President Donald Trump's administration nearly one year ago, which called for the militant group to work towards a ceasefire with the Afghan government and engage in meaningful talks about the way forward. The deal also laid out a timeline for U.S. troop withdrawal that had a full exit by May 2021 if the Taliban met those commitments, as well as a promise to break ties with terror groups like al-Qaida -- whose base in Afghanistan was used to help launch the Sept. 11th attacks.

"The Taliban have not met their commitments. As you know, there is a looming deadline of early May ... but without them meeting their commitments to renounce terrorism and to stop the violent attacks on the

Afghan National Security Forces and, by dint of that, the Afghan people, it's very hard to see a specific way forward for the negotiated settlement," Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said Thursday. Kirby's comments are substantiated by a new Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, report published Monday, which found casualties "exceptionally high for the winter months when fighting normally subsides."

"There has been no cease-fire agreement and high levels of insurgent and extremist violence continued in Afghanistan this quarter despite repeated pleas from senior U.S. and international officials to reduce violence in an effort to advance the peace process," John Sopko, the longtime special inspector general, wrote in the report's introduction. "Nor is it evident, as SIGAR discusses in this report, that the Taliban has broken ties with the al-Qaeda terrorists who orchestrated the 9/11 attacks on the United States."

While the Biden team seems to want to use U.S. troops as leverage to secure an agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government, the militant group has warned that the U.S. must meet its commitment to exit the country. The Taliban's deputy negotiator threatened insurgents would resume attacks on U.S. service members if not.

"In the history of Afghanistan, no one ever gave a safe passage to foreign invading troops, so this is a good chance for the Americans that we are giving them safe passage to go out according to this treaty. We hope that when they are reviewing it, they will come to the same positive (conclusion)," Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai told reporters in Moscow where the Taliban were meeting Russian officials, according to Voice of America.

While Biden has talked about some U.S. troops remaining for counterterrorism, that would violate the deal from the



Taliban's perspective.

It's also unclear whether several hundred U.S. troops could sustain that mission. According to the SIGAR report, after Trump ordered U.S. forces down to 2,500 in November, military commanders told the inspector general's office that they had difficulty conducting the United States' twin missions: counterterrorism and the training and advising of Afghan security forces.

The Pentagon "acknowledges that the latest force level introduces some limitations on force capacity and on the train, advise, and assist mission," SIGAR reported, although U.S. Forces in Afghanistan "insists this quarter that its ability to execute ... has thus far 'not been adversely affected by the reduction of force levels.'"

But to Afghan security forces and their political leadership, those reductions have had an impact, and while they "respect" whatever decision Biden will make, according to Vice President Amrullah Saleh, they believe "the mission is not accomplished" yet.

"If they withdraw prematurely, they can put any title on their withdrawal and exit, but there is also a title that the terror groups will put on their withdrawal: Defeat, surrender and escape," Saleh told the BBC earlier this month, accusing the Trump administration of "taking it easy" on

and giving "massive concessions" to the Taliban.

Delegations from the Afghan government and the Taliban met in September, six months after they were scheduled to start peace negotiations. After decades of bitter fighting, the two sides reached an agreement on the rules governing talks in December, but have yet to finalize an agenda, let alone a path forward on political settlement.

In addition to 2,500 U.S. troops, U.S. allies have approximately 8,000 service members in the country under NATO command. Reuters reported Sunday that the alliance is planning to keep those troops in Afghanistan beyond the May deadline, but NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu told ABC News, "No decision has been made. ... No NATO ally wants to stay in Afghanistan longer than necessary, but we have been clear that our presence remains conditions-based. Allies continue to assess the overall situation, and to consult on the way forward."

Amid Biden's review, there's also growing pressure on the administration to not withdraw U.S. forces without first securing the release of American Mark Frerichs, who went missing one year ago in Afghanistan and is believed to be held hostage by a Taliban-affiliated group.

"As questions linger regarding the future of American forces in Afghanistan after the previous administration's ... **P3**

By Jamie McIntyre

Biden administration ready to go fast on Iran and slow on Afghanistan

US AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL

INCREASINGLY IN DOUBT: The strong signals from Washington that the Biden administration is leery of the Trump plan to withdraw the remaining 2,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan over the next three months has the Taliban crying foul and the Afghan government cheering. Little progress has been made at the peace talks in Doha, Qatar, which are on the verge of breaking down, with the Taliban insisting the U.S. stick to the deal it made a year ago and the Afghan negotiators threatening to end the talks if the Taliban don't return to the bargaining table.

Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Friday it's not all clear

the Taliban are holding up their side of the bargain, which requires the group to cut all ties with terrorists, reduce violence, and negotiate in good faith.

The Taliban must "participate in a real way, not a fake way, in negotiations with the Afghan government," said Sullivan at a U.S. Institute of Peace event. "What we're doing right now is taking a hard look at the extent to which the Taliban are, in fact, complying with those three conditions, and in that context, we will make decisions about our force posture and our diplomatic strategy going forward."

2,500 TROOPS NOT ENOUGH: The Pentagon said last week that the top U.S. commander in

Afghanistan, Gen. Scott Miller, had agreed that the current troop cap of 2,500 American forces was "a sufficient number to accomplish the mission," so long as the United States is limited to counterterrorism.

But in a podcast in November, former Army Vice Chief of Staff retired Gen. Jack Keane revealed that Miller had told him that 4,500 was the lowest he can go and still maintain essential missions. That was something another former Afghanistan commander, retired Gen. David Petraeus, zeroed in on during a Friday Aspen Security Forum event with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

"I have a nagging fear as an old soldier that the drawdown of ... **P3**

Taekwondo Competition Held in Kabul

A one-day taekwondo competition was held in Kabul on Sunday with 100 athletes participating.

The Afghan athletes came from Kabul, Takhar, Balkh and Kunduz province and competed for spots within the Asia and Olympics games. In less than six months the Olympic games are set to begin in Tokyo, on July 23.

"Our athletes are well-motivated and well-prepared for the Olympic games," said Bashir Taraki, head of the national taekwondo team, who added that "today's competition will help us to get a good result in the Olympic games."

A young taekwondo competitor, Mohammad Fawad from northern Takhar province, was the champion of the competition.

Within the next week, four Afghan taekwondo athletes, including two women, will leave Afghanistan for a training camp in Uzbekistan to prepare for the Olympic games, according to officials.

Tokyo's Olympics

Japan's Olympic sponsors are scaling back advertising campaigns and delaying marketing events for this year's Summer Games, concerned that public sentiment toward the event is souring amid a fresh wave of COVID-19, Reuters reported on Saturday.

Sponsors also worry that organisers have not told them what contingency plans there are in case the pandemic derails the Games again this year.

That uncertainty over the Olympics marks a fresh blow to domestic sponsors, including many of Japan's biggest companies, such as Canon Inc and Japan Airlines Co Ltd, who have collectively pitched in more than \$3 billion to support the event.

Assurances by both the Japanese government and the International Olympic Committee this month that the Games would begin as scheduled on July 23 have not quelled concerns.

In interviews with two dozen sponsors, organisers and officials, sources described deepening uncertainty and frustration as national infection numbers hit record highs in January, turning the public mood against the event.

Nearly 80% of the public now believes the Games should be cancelled or delayed further, according to a January survey by Kyodo.

Fears that an extended emergency declaration could further erode public confidence in the Games is also a worry, at least 11 of the sources said.

"We're asking ourselves, 'are we really going to do this?'" said a person seconded by his company to the Olympic organising committee. The person, who like most of those interviewed, declined to be named as he is not allowed to speak to the media, said even raising the topic of a "Plan B" was discouraged.

Canon's chief financial officer Toshizo Tanaka told reporters on Thursday the company was working under the assumption that the event would go ahead as planned. "But we are considering internally how to respond just in case it can't be held," he said.

In response to Reuters questions about sponsors altering their ad and marketing strategy, the Tokyo organising committee said it was working closely with all of its stakeholders towards the success of the Games and said it was receiving their full support. The committee also said it expects a series of measures implemented by Japan's government, Tokyo, and other prefectural authorities to improve the virus situation.

Japan Pledges \$122.2M in Aid for Afghanistan

The Government of Japan has announced its upcoming disbursement of 122.2 million USD for the support of humanitarian and development programs in Afghanistan.

The Japanese embassy in Kabul in a statement said that this assistance marks a big step forward in ensuring Japan's commitment as conveyed at the Geneva Conference in November 2020, where Foreign Minister Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu acknowledged the long-lasting friendship between Japan and Afghanistan, and pledged

financial assistance up to 180 million USD per year from 2021 to 2024.

"Specifically, this new assistance will enable implementation of 17 humanitarian and development assistance projects, to be conducted by FAO, ICRC, IOM, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Japan Platform (JPF), OCHA, OSCE, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNMAS, UNODC, WFP, WHO and World Bank, all aiming for the betterment of livelihoods through multiple approaches," the statement said.



Japan has been assisting Afghanistan's nation-building efforts in various fields including security, agriculture, rural development, human capacity development, education, health, infrastructure, culture and

humanitarian assistance. With the upcoming 122.2 million USD disbursement, the cumulative Japanese assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 will amount to 6.9 billion USD.

Biden administration...

U.S. forces to below half the number that general Miller reportedly previously assessed was the minimum needed, could prove inadequate in assisting, enabling the Afghan national security forces when the fighting season resumes after winter," said Petraeus, who outlined what he admitted was a worst case scenario, "kind of civil war that we saw in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Afghan government supported by the Soviets after their own departure."

Ghani said his country needs not only U.S. troops but also troops from other NATO countries, which are not effective without the support of the U.S. "NATO is very much interested in continuing, but they need U.S.," Ghani said, "If Taliban realize that they can prevail through violence, they will not let go."

READY TO MOVE ON IRAN: At that Friday event, Sullivan seemed to suggest the Biden administration is anxious to begin the process of rejoining the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers.

"Our view is that if we can get back to diplomacy, and put Iran's nuclear program in a box, that will create a platform upon which to build a global effort, including partners and allies in the region and in Europe and elsewhere, to take on the other significant threats Iran poses, including on the ballistic missile issue," Sullivan said, arguing Iran's nuclear capabilities and malign activities increased during the Trump years.

"But from our perspective, a critical early priority has to be to deal with what is an escalating nuclear crisis as they move closer and closer to having enough fissile material for a weapon, and we would like to make sure that we reestablish some of the parameters and constraints around the program that have fallen away over the course of the past few years."

President Ghani...

as well as the support of the Afghan security and defense forces.

Sfegan Löfven added that establishing a ceasefire and ending the war and bloodshed in Afghanistan is a priority for his country, and that Sweden supports a peace process that will lead to the preservation and continuation of the achievements of the past two decades and an independent, democratic and united Afghanistan.

Biden admin...

hasty and reckless drawdowns, we are increasingly concerned that we may be losing our leverage to ensure American hostages in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including Mark Frerichs, are safely returned home to their families," Frerichs' two home-state senators, Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin of Illinois, wrote to Biden on Sunday to mark the one-year anniversary of his

disappearance. "We urge you to examine this case and ensure that the release of Mark Frerichs and other American hostages be prioritized in future negotiations with the Taliban and that any further troop reductions be conditioned upon their safe return," the Democratic senators added.

The Taliban have denied that they or their partners kidnapped the 58-year old civil engineer and Navy veteran, but Frerichs

is believed to be held hostage by its partner the Haqqani Network.

"We know the Biden Administration is re-evaluating the U.S. role in Afghanistan and the peace accord that was agreed to last February and hope they will view Mark's release as an important step that needs to happen before anything else," his sister Charlene Cakora said in a statement Wednesday. "We want Mark home safely."

Civilian, Security...

in the country.

The EU Delegation and the diplomatic missions of Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States said that the continuation of assassinations, kidnappings, and destruction of vital infrastructure - all which directly harm the Afghan people.

"The violence is targeted at civil society, judicial, media, religious, medical and civilian

government representatives who are essential to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan," it said.

"The Taliban bears responsibility for the majority of this targeted violence, and its attacks undermine state institutions and contribute to an insecure environment in which terrorist and criminal groups are able to freely operate," it said.

The Taliban has rejected their involvement in the targeted killings.

The statement has called on the government of Afghanistan to more actively and transparently

investigate these attacks to ensure that those who instigate and carry out violence against the population are identified and brought to justice.

The statement also said that the Taliban "must understand that their violent, destructive actions outrage the world and must cease if peace is to come to Afghanistan."

Five journalists and three civil society activists have been killed in various incidents since November 7, while a number of attacks has been reported against government employees in different provinces of the country.

Myanmar coup...

strongly supports the "peaceful reconvening of the National Assembly [parliament], consistent with the results of the November 2020 general elections."

Japan also urged the Myanmar military to "uphold democracy and release the civilian leaders." "We believe it is important that the relevant parties resolve the situation peacefully through dialogue and in line with the democratic process," the Japanese government's top spokesman Katsunobu Kato told reporters, according to Kyodo News.

Addressing a news conference in Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin called on all sides in Myanmar to "properly manage their differences and uphold political and social stability."

"We hope that all sides in Myanmar will properly handle their differences under the constitutional and legal framework and maintain political and social stability," CGTN Network quoted Wang as saying.

Release of all politicians detained urged New Zealand said it is "deeply concerned" by the military's seizure of power in Myanmar and called for "a rapid return to civilian rule."

Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said in a statement: "New Zealand is a long-standing supporter of Myanmar's democratic transition."

"We call for the swift release of all those political actors detained," Mahuta said.

Indonesia also expressed concern over the military coup in the country, calling on all parties to "exercise self-restraint."

The country's Foreign Ministry called for the observance of the principles of the ASEAN Charter and "adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government."

"Indonesia urges all parties in Myanmar to exercise self-restraint and put forth dialogue in finding solutions to challenges so as not to exacerbate the condition," the statement said. It also underscored that all electoral differences should be

addressed in accordance with available legal mechanism.

India in a statement said it supports the "democratic process" in Myanmar.

"We have noted the developments in Myanmar with deep concern. India has always been steadfast in its support to the process of democratic transition in Myanmar," the country's Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

"We believe that the rule of law and the democratic process must be upheld."

Bangladesh also hoped that democratic process and constitutional arrangements will be upheld in Myanmar.

"As an immediate and friendly neighbor, we would like to see peace and stability in Myanmar. We have been persistent in developing mutually beneficial relations with Myanmar and have been working with Myanmar for the voluntary, safe and sustained repatriation of the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh," the country's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"We expect these processes to continue in right earnest," it said.

Exchange Rates

77.1	\$	77.2
93.4	€	93.5
104.7	£	104.8
478	Rp.	479
20.9	රු	21
1045	₹	1055

Contact Numbers

Kabul Police - 119

Kabul Ambulance - 112

Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital

0202301360

Ata Turk Hospital

0202500312

Corona call center - 166



Aksos
اکسوس کتابپلورنٹی
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



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

Myanmar coup: Global call for return to 'civilian rule'

Leaders and governments across the world expressed concern on Monday over the military's seizure of power in Myanmar and detention of political leadership.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the detention of the civilian leaders, including its de facto leader and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, as the Burmese military staged a coup early dawn and declared a state of emergency for one year. "These developments represent a serious blow to democratic reforms in Myanmar," said Stephane Dujarric, UN chief's spokesman.

Guterres said the elections held last November provided a "strong mandate" to Suu Kyi-led National League for Democracy (NLD) to govern the Buddhist-majority country.

Early on Monday, the military declared a state of emergency hours after detaining Suu Kyi, Myint

and other senior members of the ruling the NLD party.

The coup took place hours before the first session of the country's new parliament was set to convene.

The military claimed the coup was staged due to "election fraud" in the Nov. 8 elections, which resulted in the dominance of the NLD in parliament.

'Respect rule of law'

Expressing deep concern over the developments, Australia said it is a "long-standing supporter of Myanmar and its democratic transition."

"We call on the military to respect the rule of law to resolve disputes through lawful mechanisms and to release immediately all civilian leaders and others who have been detained unlawfully," the country's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The ministry added that Australia ...

P3



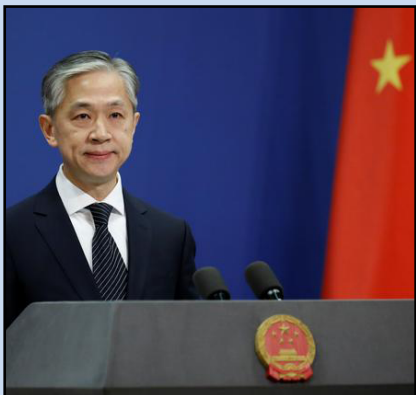
A look at the world

China confident of successful Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics: FM spokesman

(CCTVPlus)--China is confident to host a successful Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, said Wang Wenbin, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at a press briefing in Beijing on Monday.

In response to reporter's questions on the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Wang said last week Chinese President Xi Jinping and International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach had a phone conversation on holding the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

The two sides agreed to overcome the



impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, and actively promote the steady progress in all preparation work for the Games.

Wang believes that as China took the lead in controlling the epidemic, it would create favorable conditions for hosting the Games.

"China took the lead in putting the domestic epidemic under control and has accomplished economic recovery, creating favorable conditions for successfully hosting the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. We have been strictly implementing the prevention and control measures to overcome the impact of the epidemic, and actively and steadily promoting the preparation work for the Winter Olympics. The international community including the IOC have fully confirmed our work and given us strong support. We are full of confidence to host a splendid and extraordinary Winter Olympics. Just as president Xi said, we believe with the strong support of all sides, China will complete all the missions as scheduled and make full preparation to ensure the success of the Games. Beijing, as the the only city internationally which can host both the Summer and Winter Olympics, ...

P2

UNICEF reminds all parties to conflict in Syria of obligations to protect children



The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on Sunday reminded all parties to the conflict in the war-torn Syria of their obligations to protect children after four children were reportedly killed in two attacks in northern Syria.

"Once again, UNICEF reminds all parties to the conflict of their obligations to protect children at all times and refrain from violence in civilian areas," Bo Viktor Nylund, UNICEF representative in Syria, said in a statement.

"These recent attacks are a stark reminder that violence continues in Syria and children continue to be in danger day in, day out," said the statement.

"Since the start of this year, at least 22 children have reportedly been killed," the statement noted.

"Ten years into the conflict, children continue to be the hardest hit by unprecedented destruction, displacement and death. They have lost their lives, homes and childhoods. It is high time that the violence in Syria comes to an end," the statement stressed.

Several people, including four children, are reported dead, with many more injured, following a weekend of deadly bomb attacks in towns in northern rural Aleppo, Syria.

According to media reports, a car bomb detonated in the town of Azaz on Sunday, killing four and injuring at least 22. One of the dead was reportedly a 12-year-old girl. The attack comes just a day after an attack in Afrin, also in the Aleppo region, also a car-bombing, which reportedly killed six civilians, three of whom were children.

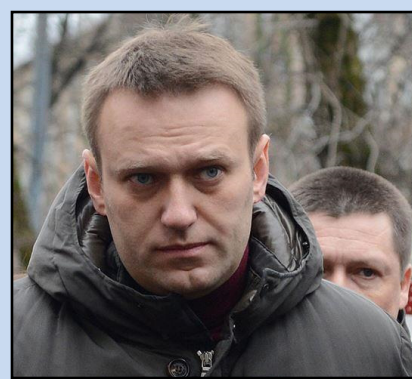
Russian attorney general demands Navalny's imprisonment

The Russian Attorney General's Office said on Monday it will demand in court to cancel a suspended sentence for Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny and put him in jail.

In a statement published on its official website, the office said Navalny's "illegal behavior" became a foundation for demanding cancellation of the suspended sentence and execution of the jail sentence imposed by the court verdict.

In 2014, Navalny was convicted for fraud and embezzlement and sentenced to three years and six months of jail time.

The court suspended the sentence on six-



year probation, obliging Navalny to register with the police two times per month.

In 2020, after Navalny's alleged poisoning with a nerve-agent, Novichok, the registration with the police was halted for the period of treatment.

In October 2020, it became known that Navalny was discharged from the clinic. According to the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service, he did not provide any objective reasons for his non-appearance at police, and therefore it put Navalny on the wanted list for evading the control of the criminal executive inspectorate.

On his return to Russia on Jan. 17, Navalny was arrested at the airport, which provoked mass protests throughout Russia.

According to the human rights activists, over 5,000 people throughout Russia were detained in the latest unauthorized rallies in Navalny's support on Jan. 31.

The largest number of detentions occurred in the capital Moscow -- 1,608 people -- and in the second-largest city Saint Petersburg -- 1,122.

Navalny will appear in court on Feb. 2 on hearing about replacing his suspended sentence for real prison time.



Shigal
English Academy

AMERICAN
ENGLISH FILE



Western Street of
Kabul University Close to
Dehbori Park.



+93 (0) 789 98 9696



shigal.edu@gmail.com



Shigal English Academy