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SAO Audited 423 Cases During Current Solar Year: Haqmal

The Supreme Audit Office of Afghanistan says that during the current solar year of 1399, SAO has conducted 423 audits across the country.

Mohammad Naeem Haqmal, head of SAO, at a press conference of "Government Accountability to the Nation", said that as a result of these audits, 26 cases included misuse of authority, embezzlement, land grabbing and other cases which have been referred to the Attorney General's Office (AGO).

Mr. Haqmal added that the perpetrators of the cases include ministers, provincial police commanders, provincial mayors, and other local government employees. In the meantime, Fazel Hadi Fazel, Deputy Director of the ... **P3**



Two early morning explosions rattle Kabul

Kabul police on Sunday confirmed two explosions were reported in the capital leaving at least two people wounded. The first explosion took place in PD9 and the second in PD12 of Kabul city. According to police the first explosion happened in Macroryan 4 in Kabul. Two people were wounded when a Hilux vehicle was targeted in an IED explosion.

The second explosion happened in the Ahmad Shah Baba Meena area. A Toyota Corolla car was targeted. No casualties have yet been reported in this explosion.

No group has yet claimed responsibility.

The latest two explosions come amid ongoing IED blasts that rattle Kabul daily.

On Saturday, three people, including two civilians and a police force member, were killed in three separate explosions in Kabul within two hours of each other.

Saleh claims 85% of released prisoners have returned to frontline



Vice President Amrullah Saleh claimed Sunday that 85 percent of Taliban prisoners who were released as part of the U.S.-Taliban deal have "re-assumed roles in unleashing violence."

"In a brazen act of noncompliance and defiance to the Doha agreement

some 85% of the 5,500 released Taliban have re-assumed roles in unleashing violence and campaign of massacre of civilians," Saleh said in a tweet.

Saleh stated that the government's "noble gesture and sincerity wasn't reciprocated and was seen as

weakness."

The Taliban, however, have frequently rejected such claims.

The group has also shared a list of names of 30 released Taliban inmates, stating that they have either been killed, rearrested, or forced to leave their areas by the

government.

Last year, the U.S. and the Taliban signed an agreement in Doha to end the 19-year-long Afghan war.

As part of the deal, the 5,500 prisoners released signed a pledge stating they would not return to the battlefields.

In late 2020, Afghan government officials stated that some of the released prisoners had returned to the front line.

So, Foreign Ministry in reference to the UN security council report stated, that the Taliban still have close ties to Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

MoFA announced on Sunday in a released statement that the 27th report of the UN Security Council Watchdog Group on Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and its affiliated groups indicated the Taliban has continued its relations with Al-Qaeda and other "terrorist" groups.

According to the statement, the Taliban's ties to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and some other terrorist groups are still intact, and that the killing of several al-Qaeda commanders, including Husam Abd al-Rauf, known as Abu Muhsen al-Masri, in Taliban-controlled areas is the ... **P3**

India sends half a million Covid-19 vaccine doses to Afghanistan

Afghanistan received 500,000 doses of AztraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine from India on Sunday.

According to Health authorities, the vaccine is still waiting for emergency approval from the World Health Organisation before it can use them. Ghulam Dastagir Nazari, head of the immunisation program at the health ministry said the doses would be stored in Kabul until the emergency authorisation was received, which it hoped would happen in a week. ... **P3**



FM Atmar, US Chargé d'Affaires Discussed Intra-Afghan Talks

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Hanif Atmar has met US Chargé d'Affaires Ross Wilson & discussed the peace process and cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the new US administration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in a press release said that FM Atmar acknowledged the United States' commitment and support to the Afghan people and government

over the past nineteen years, and welcomed the new US Government's messages regarding the peace process and the review of the US agreement with the Taliban.

According to the press release, the two sides discussed the latest security and political developments in Afghanistan, the



challenges of the peace process, the importance of regional and international support for the success of the talks, and the strengthening of bilateral and trilateral cooperation, including with Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia. During the meeting, Mr. Atmar stressed the need to increase

consultations between the two governments, review the US agreement with the Taliban, and making decisions conditional on objective facts.

In the meantime, ambassador Wilson assured the US continued commitment and cooperation with Afghanistan.

Iran's Top...

in the interview.

"We don't need to return to the negotiating table. It's America that has to find the ticket to come to the table," he added.

On Monday, Zarif hinted at a way to resolve the impasse over which side moves first, by saying the steps could be synchronized.

In the latest steps by Iran to develop its missile programme, the Iranian military on Saturday opened a plant to produce hybrid solid fuel for missiles and a factory to build shoulder-fired rockets, state television reported.

YEMEN STANCE

Separately, Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday that a new U.S. stand on the Yemen war could be a helpful step, after Biden said this week Washington was ending its support for a Saudi Arabia-led military campaign in Yemen.

"Stopping support ... for the Saudi coalition, if not a political manoeuvre, could be a step towards correcting past mistakes," state media quoted ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh as saying. But he added: "This alone won't solve Yemen's problem, and the air, sea and land blockade that killed thousands of people in the country due to a lack of food and medicine must be lifted, and the military attacks of the aggressor states led by Saudi Arabia must be ended". Biden said on Thursday the more than six-year war, widely seen as a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, "has to end." He also named veteran US diplomat Timothy Lenderking as the US special envoy for Yemen in a bid to step up American diplomacy to try to end the war.

By REBECCA KHEEL

Biden faces familiar dilemma in Afghanistan

President Biden is facing a dilemma that also confounded both of his immediate predecessors: to stay or to go in Afghanistan.

Biden inherited a May deadline from the Trump administration to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Experts are warning that doing so could have dire consequences for Afghan and U.S. security, but Biden also faces domestic political pressures from those who say it is far past time to end America's longest war.

During the presidential campaign, Biden promised to end so-called forever wars, but also said he would leave a small number of special forces in countries such as Afghanistan to conduct counterterrorism missions.

Since taking office, the Biden administration has said only that Afghanistan is one of the many policies it is reviewing in its early days. But the administration could be forced to make a decision sooner rather than later with a key NATO meeting in two weeks.

"As an administration, we have to decide, and we are reviewing, what we're doing in Afghanistan," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said at a Friday briefing. "We're reviewing the Doha agreement. We're reviewing the compliance with the Doha agreement. We have recommitted ourselves to a political solution. We don't believe there's a military solution. And that process of review is ongoing."

Kirby also noted the mid-February NATO defense ministerial that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will participate in, saying "obviously" Afghanistan "will be a key topic of discussion inside that venue, as well." U.S. forces have been in Afghanistan since they invaded in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

After inheriting the war from former President George W. Bush, former President Obama at first surged thousands of more troops into a war he felt was neglected after the Iraq War started. But Obama then declared an end to combat operations in 2014 with hopes to withdraw by the end of his presidency.

Ultimately, though, Obama reversed plans to withdraw on the advice of his military advisers, leaving office with about 8,000 troops in Afghanistan.

Former President Trump railed against foreign entanglements as part of his "America First" agenda. But he, too, at first sent thousands more troops back to Afghanistan.

But Trump also initiated direct talks with the Taliban, resulting in an agreement that was signed in Doha,



Qatar, last year that dictates a full U.S. military withdrawal by May if the insurgents uphold certain commitments.

U.S. military officials repeatedly said the Taliban was not upholding its commitments. But Trump continued to draw down anyway, leaving office with about 2,500 troops there — the lowest level since 2001, but still short of his desire for a complete withdrawal.

Under the agreement, the Taliban is supposed to deny safe haven to terrorist groups intent on attacking the West, including al Qaeda. U.S. officials also expect the Taliban to reduce attacks on Afghan forces and participate in good-faith peace talks with the Afghan government.

The Taliban has yet to break with al Qaeda, according to U.S. military officials. And far from reducing violence, the Taliban has stepped up its attacks on Afghan forces. From October to December, enemy-initiated attacks in Afghanistan were higher than during the same period in 2019, according to a Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction report released Monday. Among the trends in the Taliban's violence at the end of 2020 was "an uptick in targeted assassinations of Afghan government officials, civil-society leaders and journalists," according to the report.

In particular, the number of attacks in Kabul was "much higher" than the previous year, U.S. Forces Afghanistan

told the inspector general. The increase includes attacks from both the Taliban and Afghanistan's ISIS affiliate.

Meanwhile, intra-Afghan talks have been halting, at best. The start of the talks was delayed six months amid a political dispute in Kabul and hesitation from the Afghan government at a prisoner swap. Even after the two sides first sat down in September, it took until December to agree on just the procedures for the negotiations.

With the Taliban having yet to live up to its commitments, a bipartisan panel commissioned by Congress recommended this past week Biden indefinitely delay the May withdrawal. While a delay does risk the Taliban increasing violence further, the Afghanistan Study Group warned the country "is highly likely to fall into chaos" if the administration pushes forward with a "calculated" withdrawal or "create the sort of threats that imperil U.S. security" if it decides on a quick withdrawal.

Retired Gen. Joseph Dunford, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a co-chair of the panel, said he is hoping the Biden administration's eventual decision will "move beyond the narrative of what's been characterized as a forever war."

"The fact of the matter is we've got 2,500 Americans on the ground right now, and the strategy is by, ... **P3**

By Kersten Knipp

Tehran buddies up to the Taliban

During talks in Tehran, Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, told a Taliban delegation: "The US strategy supports the continuation of violence and war between Afghan groups within the political spectrum," according to Iran's state news agency IRNA. In turn, Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's political bureau chief, did not mince his words: "We don't trust the United States and we will fight any group that supplies mercenary services for the US."

He also accused the former Trump administration of failing to act constructively in accordance with its agreement signed with the Taliban after drawn-out negotiations in Doha in February 2020.

Talks between the Taliban and Iran are no longer unusual but they are not a foregone conclusion either. Relations between the two sides have not always been as close as they are now. On the contrary, both parties were deadly enemies not

so long ago. In 1998, Iran nearly launched a military offensive against the Taliban after Afghani militants and Pakistani fighters killed 11 Iranian citizens, including several diplomats in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Seeking and finding new partners

And after the terror attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, Iran supported the United States in its battle against the Taliban. The Americans identified al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden as the man responsible for 9/11. At the time he was living in Afghanistan and Taliban leaders refused to hand him over, prompting the US, together with Afghan fighters, to wage a war to topple the Taliban regime.

But the Taliban continued to fight against the new Western-backed government in Kabul and against the Afghan army and its NATO allies. The militant extremists were financed by Saudi Arabia and later, after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, by private

fundamentalist foundations.

Riyadh only cut off funding after Washington put the Saudi kingdom and its close allies in the region under increasing pressure. Subsequently, the Taliban started looking for a new partner, finding it in Iran.

Shia-Sunni marriage of convenience

At first, that new relationship did not look too promising. In terms of faith alone, the two sides — although both Muslim — are as distant from one another as possible.

While Iran regards itself as the protector and leader of the Shiites, the Taliban stand for a radical Sunni interpretation of Islam. But this diametrical opposition no longer plays a role, according to Hamidreza Azizi from the German Institute for Security and International Affairs (SWP) in Berlin.

"On the contrary, it has become apparent that both sides are taking a very pragmatic approach. From an Iranian viewpoint, the Taliban are simply too influential ... **P3**

Pakistan hopes...

Pakistan," as well as multiple dubious think tanks and NGOs.

"If the watchdog still keeps Pakistan in the gray list in this review, we will surely get out in the next review expected to take place in the middle of this year," he said.

However, last week Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told the Senate in a positive tone that he was expecting a decision "in favor of Pakistan."

Qureshi said they had made "substantial progress" on the remaining six points. In September, the country's parliament amended 14 laws relating to its legal system to comply with the FATF requirements while already satisfying the watchdog on 13 other points.

On Jan. 28, the State Bank of Pakistan also amended some anti-money laundering provisions, combating the Financing of Terrorism and Countering Proliferation Financing regulations in line with the watchdog recommendations.

"Pakistan has taken such steps of arresting and convicting the proscribed terrorists and organizations in the past also, but the authorities have to take more constructive and practical steps for the trials of 78 banned individuals and organizations," said James

Schwemlein, a Washington-based expert on South Asian economy at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

He referred to recent judicial and legal actions against several top terror suspects taken by Imran Khan's government.

However, he was not positive. "For now, it seems difficult for Pakistan to get out of the gray list," he told Anadolu Agency in a telephone interview.

If Pakistan failed, it might face difficulties convincing international lenders and investors, warned Hasaan Khawar, an expert on international development and public policy.

"The actions of FATF can even affect our loan programs with the IMF. Due to a pandemic, our economy is already at a point where any sanctions will scare away potential investors. ...that's why Pakistan has to drag itself out of this list," he added.

"FATF is a very technical organization and if Pakistan will be successful in convincing the team on the facts on groundwork which they have done to curb terrorism and terrorist financing this will eventually be favorable for people of Pakistan and will end their prolonged sufferings at the hands of these terrorists," said Schwemlein.

Afghan Gov't Allocates About \$900mn for Code 22

The Afghan government has allocated a budget of USD 893mn for Code 22, which is used for the purchase of furniture and food, travel expenses and maintenance of buildings, vehicles and equipment of government offices. This year's budget has not been yet approved by the parliament since the inception of the current fiscal year, December 21.

Members of the parliaments have argued that the budget for Code 22 should instead go toward addressing the economic issues of the country. "The Afs 69 billion in Code 22 is very high for offices considering the current

economic condition in the country," Tolo News quotes Mohammad Azim Kebarzani, an MP and member of the finance and budget committee of the house. "We hope that the government would invest in key economic projects and save such money instead of excessive spending."

According to sources, the allocation for Code 21, which is for paying government employees' salaries, has been reduced by \$19mn.

The government has estimated \$6bn for the current year's budget, including \$2bn for the development budget and \$4bn for the ordinary budget.



Saleh claims 85%...

evidence that backs these claims.

The UN Security Council report also noted threats and coordination between the Pakistani Taliban, regional terrorist groups, and the Islamic Jihad group, a group of 100 militants that operate in Faryab and Kunduz provinces, in areas under the Taliban influence, MoFA said in the statement.

Based on these findings, UN-Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team considers the situation in Afghanistan to be challenging and widely exposed to terrorism, the statement added.

The Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry also called on international partners to uphold Republic's rightful stand against the Taliban and push the group for a ceasefire and violence reduction.

This comes on the heels of a US treasury report just a few days back, the report indicated that Al-Qaeda with the support of the Taliban is gaining its strengths back and that the Taliban have not cut ties with the group.

India sends...

The vaccines were produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII), which is producing the AstraZeneca/Oxford University vaccine for mid- and low-income countries.

"The (WHO) certification process is underway and hopefully it will be done in a week and we will start the vaccination process in all 34 provinces," Nazari added.

SAO Audited...

Supreme Audit Office for Financial Audit and Enforcement of Legislative Documents, also said that the office's investigations in the areas of compliance with laws and regulations, financial and administrative, anti-corruption and information technology system audits in public sectors include ministries, independent government departments, state-owned companies and municipalities.

Tehran buddies...

to ignore. Conversely, the Taliban have not dropped their radical convictions but they have also shown themselves willing to play a political role. That is also clear from their talks with the United States about the future of Afghanistan. And that, in turn, is a reason for Iran to retain contact with the Taliban."

And never has this been more evident than over the last two years as tensions with the US have escalated in the wake of the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. "That development is another reason Tehran does not want to lose its contacts with Afghanistan," said Azizi. This, however, has not stopped the Iranian government from maintaining diplomatic relations with the official government in Kabul.

"The Iranian leadership is clearly of the opinion that without contacts to all the various parties and players in Afghanistan their interests could be imperiled if there is a shift of power in the future," Azizi added.

Common front against 'IS' Iranian and Taliban representatives have met repeatedly for this very reason. And that is not all. Tehran

also supplies the Taliban with weapons. According to reports in the web magazine "War on the Rocks," senior Iranian politician Ali Shamkhani admitted this fact to the Afghan government on December 2018. The magazine quoted him as saying that they were "only small arms, not combat weapons."

At the time, Shamkhani said the arms served to increase the safety of the Taliban in the Iranian-Afghan border region. There are numerous smugglers in the region and there are frequent illegal border crossings. Various rival Sunni militant groups, such as the Jundullah, are also active in the area.

Iran and the Taliban share a slew of common interests. Both are striving to achieve the complete withdrawal of the US military from Afghanistan and both are fighting against the so-called Islamic State (IS) terror organization, which has also gained a foothold in Afghanistan.

"Iran is concerned that continuing instability in Afghanistan would give IS and other radical groups more room to maneuver and potentially endanger the security of Iran's eastern borders," says

Hamidreza Azizi. He says that is why Tehran sees it as imperative to press the Afghan government and the Taliban to reach a compromise.

Snuggling up to the Taliban not popular at home

The US government, too, is pursuing the same goal. Striving to achieve a national peace solution was part of the US deal reached with the Taliban in February 2020. However, in the light of the ongoing violence, US President Joe Biden's administration has already indicated that it intends to review the agreement reached under Trump. That could postpone the complete pull-out of US troops from Afghanistan indefinitely. The bellicose statements from Iran and the Taliban at their talks in Tehran could be a response to that possibility.

SWP's Azizi is doubtful that Iranian and Afghan citizens are enthusiastic about the budding up between Tehran and the Taliban. "The approach might serve the security interests of Iran and preserve its influence in Afghanistan but it comes at the cost of grave damage to its image among its own population," says the Iran expert.

Biden faces...

with and through the Afghan National Defense Security Forces. So I think that's an important part of the message in getting bipartisan support," he told reporters. "We're already down to 2,500, so we made it clear to everybody that our patience is not infinite."

But Biden will also have to contend with members of his own party who say it is time to leave Afghanistan.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) scoffed at the Afghanistan Study Group report, saying "the big names in American foreign policy have made some of the biggest mistakes of the last 20 years."

"President Biden needs to spend less time listening to the fancy names who came out with this report, and he needs to go to places like Scranton, and listen to what people there are saying," Khanna said in an interview. "I trust President Biden's judgment. If he listens to people that he grew up with, that he campaigned with, that trust him, I think he will make

the right judgment, as opposed to listening to the people who got us into this mess."

Khanna advocated for withdrawing from Afghanistan with a warning to the Taliban that the United States will come back with "overwhelming" force if there is a threat to the homeland, arguing that would be a "very powerful" deterrent. Diplomacy toward an agreement between the Taliban and Afghan government should also continue, he added.

"There is no perfect solution in safeguarding peace and human rights in Afghanistan," he said. "We have to get out and do the best we can to stand up for human rights through diplomacy, understanding that it's not going to be perfect."

After the release of the Afghanistan Study Group report, the State Department reiterated that a review of the U.S.-Taliban agreement is ongoing, adding that it is "deeply appreciative" of the panel's "thoughtful work" and looks "forward to closely examining the

recommendations contained in the comprehensive report."

The Pentagon did not comment directly on the report, but likewise reiterated a review of the agreement is ongoing.

In the Pentagon's first briefing of the Biden administration in January, Kirby also said the Taliban has "not met their commitments," adding that "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."

On Friday, Austin spoke with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Kirby would not say whether the two discussed the May deadline, but said they spoke about "the importance of the peace process, and they talked about the importance of this being Afghan-led. They talked about the enduring commitment that we have to Afghanistan writ large."

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Pakistan hopes to get off watchdog's gray list

Despite the strong "Indian lobby," Pakistan hopes that a watchdog for global money-laundering will not make a "politically motivated" decision at the next meeting later this month and delete the country's name from the FATF gray list.

Pakistan's anxious eye is on the four-day virtual meeting of the Financial Action Task Force – a Paris-based global money-laundering watchdog – starting on Feb. 22, which is expected to decide whether or not to remove Islamabad from its gray list.

The country has been on the FATF radar since June 2018, when it was placed on its gray list for terrorist financing and money laundering risks after an assessment of the country's financial system and security mechanism. Since then, Pakistan has been escaping the

watchdog's financial crime blacklist with the support of Turkey, China, and Malaysia.

In October last year, the 36-nation watchdog said that Pakistan has "successfully complied with 21 out of 27 points of the action plan but decided to keep the country on its gray list until February 2021."

"It's not that Pakistan is not trying hard to get out of the gray list, but the lobbying against the country by India is very strong," said a Pakistani representative in the FATF.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency on the condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to talk to the media, the official also pointed out a recent report by the EU DisinfoLab about a vast network of hundreds of "fake media" outlets serving "Indian interests."

After disclosing the EU DisinfoLab report on



Indian Chronicles, he expressed that New Delhi has played its role in pressuring the FATF member states to ensure that Pakistan stayed on the gray list.

The Brussels-based EU DisinfoLab has uncovered a network of 265 coordinated fake local media outlets in 65 countries "serving Indian interests" and "undermining ... **P2**

A look at the world

Japan's PM seeks to continue talks with Russia based on Singapore agreements

Japan plans to continue talks on a peace treaty with Russia on the basis of the high-level agreements reached in Singapore back in 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said on Sunday.

"The government led by me firmly relies on the outcome of the meeting between our countries' leaders reached in 2018 in Singapore and we will continue talks on the basis of the agreements between our countries," Suga told the National Rally to Demand the Return of the Northern Territories (Japan's term for the Southern Kuril Islands). The Japanese prime minister also described as regrettable the fact that 75 years after the end of World War II Japan and Russia haven't signed a peace treaty yet.



According to the Japanese government's decision, the National Rallies to Demand the Return of the Northern Territories are held annually on February 7 in memory of the first Russian-Japanese treaty signed that day in 1855.

These rallies are traditionally attended by the ministers, MPs from the ruling and opposition parties and former residents of the Southern Kuril Islands. This year the scale of the event was reduced and it was held online without the audience.

Moscow and Tokyo have been in talks to sign a peace treaty since the mid-20th century. The main stumbling block to achieving this is the ownership issue over the Southern Kuril Islands, called the Northern Territories in Japan. After the end of World War II, the Kuril Islands were incorporated into the Soviet Union. However, the ownership of Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan Islands and uninhabited islands called Habomai has been challenged by Japan. The Russian Foreign Ministry has repeatedly said that Russia's sovereignty over these islands, which is committed to paper in international documents, cannot be called in question.

Iran's Top Diplomat Urges Biden to Return to Nuclear Deal



Iran's foreign minister urged Washington to act fast to return to the 2015 nuclear accord, pointing out that legislation passed by parliament forces the government to harden its nuclear stance if US sanctions are not eased by Feb. 21.

Mohammad Javad Zarif also referred to elections in Iran in June. If a hardline president is elected, this could further jeopardize the deal.

"Time is running out for the Americans, both because of the parliament bill and the election atmosphere that will follow the Iranian New Year," Zarif said in an interview with Hamshahri newspaper published on Saturday. Iran's new year begins on March 21. The parliament, dominated by hardliners, passed the legislation in December that set a two-month deadline for an easing of sanctions.

President Joe Biden's administration is exploring ways to restore the nuclear deal that Iran signed with world powers but was abandoned in 2018 by former President Donald Trump, who restored sanctions. Iran retaliated by breaching the terms of the accord in a step-by-step response. Last month, it resumed enriching uranium to 20% - a level it achieved before the accord.

Biden has said that if Tehran returned to strict compliance with the pact, Washington would follow suit and use that as a springboard to a broader agreement that might restrict Iran's missile development and regional activities. Tehran has said Washington must ease sanctions before it resumes nuclear compliance, and ruled out negotiations on wider security issues such as Iran's missile programme.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed Iran on Friday in a virtual meeting with his British, French and German counterparts as the group weighed how to revive the deal. "The more America procrastinates, the more it will lose ... it will appear that Mr Biden's administration doesn't want to rid itself of Trump's failed legacy," Zarif said ... **P2**

UN envoy visits Iran for talks on Yemeni conflict

UN envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths arrived in Tehran on Sunday for talks with Iranian officials on a resolution of the 7-year Yemeni conflict.

A statement released by his office said that Griffiths will meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and other senior officials during his two-day visit.

"The visit is part of the Special Envoy's diplomatic efforts to support a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Yemen that meets the aspirations of the Yemeni people," the statement said.



According to the statement, Griffiths' immediate priority is "to support agreement between the parties to the conflict on a nationwide cease-fire, urgent humanitarian measures and the resumption of the political process".

On Saturday, Yemeni Prime Minister Maen Abdulmalik said during a meeting with European representatives that there will not be peace with Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen without international pressure on Tehran.

Yemen has been wracked by violence and instability since 2014, when Houthi rebels captured much of the country, including the capital Sanaa.

A Saudi-led coalition aimed at reinstating the Yemeni government has worsened the situation, causing one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian crisis with nearly 80% or about 30 million of its people needing humanitarian assistance and protection and more than 13 million in danger of starving to death.



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