



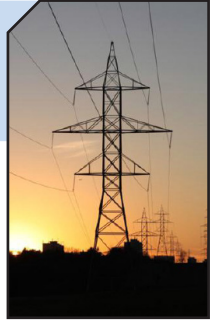
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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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Watchdog Calls for Thorough Probe into Khost Operation

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) on Sunday called for a thorough investigation into claims of civilian casualties resulting from a government-backed operation in Khost province.

The commission said that it too will probe the incident and the reports of civilian casualties.

Videos circulating on social media show that apparently women and children were among those killed in the operation in Sabri district in Khost province, 230 kilometers south of Kabul. "A team is assigned by the government, but the outcome of the probe is not shared with the people. We don't know what happens to the perpetrators--or why such incidents occurred," said the chairperson of the commission, Shahrzad Akbar.



Afghan Foreign Minister Held Talks with His French Counterpart

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammad Haeef Atmar, during a telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Jean-Yves Le Drian, spoke about strengthening bilateral relations, the Afghan peace negotiation process and France's support for this process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement said that the Foreign Minister praised the French initiative to name a road in Paris after the national hero, Ahmad Shah Massoud, and called it a great honor for France to achieve the aspirations of the people of two countries for peace and freedom.

Mr. Atmar also stressed the importance of the country's support for the Afghan peace process, the preservation of democratic values and human rights, especially for women, and stressed the importance of continued French support and cooperation with Afghanistan.

Abdullah: Turkey Conference 'Unique Opportunity' for Peace



Abdullah Abdullah, head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, said that the upcoming conference in Turkey is a unique opportunity for peace and that he hopes it will help form an agreement on ceasefire in the country.

Abdullah, who was in France this weekend, said in an interview with

France 24 that he hopes all sides will take advantage of the opportunity provided by the conference.

"My hope is, my desire is, that we make maximum use of every opportunity which is there. Turkey will be a unique opportunity after quite a while, but it depends on both sides. I cannot call all the shots," Abdullah said. "As far as

our delegation which will participate ... they will go with the firm resolve to contribute to the success of that process so the Turkey meeting will be considered a big step forward," Abdullah said in the interview.

Abdullah said that the US-proposed peace draft has been shared with Afghan leaders and that he has not

rejected the idea of a participatory setup.

"We have not rejected the idea of power-sharing arrangement. We are ready to talk about it. And the next proposal, whether it is acceptable to the Taliban or not, of course, that remains to be seen. And if Taliban agree for early elections, we're ready for that," Abdullah said.

This comes as US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has departed for Turkey--and the region--in a push to encourage Afghan parties to accelerate negotiations to end conflict in the country, the US State Department said on Saturday as quoted by Reuters.

"Khalilzad said that important decisions will be made and he has said that the decisions should be in favor of Afghanistan," said Haji Din Mohammad, the deputy head of the High Council for National Reconciliation.

"Khalilzad is busy on trips to make the Turkey conference fruitful for Afghanistan, the US and the World," said Wais Naseri, an international affairs analyst.

The Turkey conference is expected to be held in early April. So far, the Afghan government and the Taliban have not stated who will represent them at the summit.

Pres. Ghani Welcomes Initiative to Declare 2021 as Year of Nizami Ganjavi

Nizami Ganjavi is the common heritage of our geographical civilization and his message is a message of love fraternity to all mankind, President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani said, Trend reports.

"I welcome the initiative of President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to declare 2021 as the Year of Nizami Ganjavi, and all the related work Nizami Ganjavi International Center undertaken," Ghani said.

"From the scientific researches and studies of the works of this ... **B3**



Heart of Asia Conference Begins Today in Tajikistan

Tajikistan will host the ninth round of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) summit in the country's capital Dushanbe on Monday (today).

Foreign Ministers and representatives from around 50 countries are expected to attend the two-day summit, where ways to strengthen regional consensus for peace and development in Afghanistan will be discussed.

Mirwais Naab, Deputy Foreign Minister stated: "Afghanistan, will with strength and a clear message, attend the meeting. We will reiterate [calls for a] ceasefire and reduction in violence."

Meanwhile, Iran Ambassador to Tajikistan Mohammad Taghi Saberi said that he hoped the summit will pave the way to restoring peace in Afghanistan.

"I hope the outcome of this summit could help Afghanistan in



maintaining peace and stability in the country," Saberi said. Viraj Singh, Indian Ambassador to Tajikistan said: "All countries demand security in Afghanistan. In this crucial summit, the countries will discuss topics and their concerns."

The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process was founded on November 2, 2011,

in Istanbul, Turkey.

The organization was established to address the shared challenges and interests of Afghanistan and its neighbors and regional partners.

The Heart of Asia is comprised of 15 participating countries, 17 supporting countries, and 12 supporting regional and international organizations.

Watchdog...

Residents of the province claimed that the operation was conducted by pro-government forces called "Campaign Forces," which are dependent on the National Directorate of Security.

One resident of the province, who was carrying the body of his child, said "many members" of his family had been killed in the operation, including women and children.

"One couple has been wounded. The mother of this child was martyred, and another person was wounded," the resident said, who claimed that no Taliban were killed in the operation. Official sources have not commented on an exact figure of civilian casualties in the operation, but some residents of the province claimed that at least 20 civilians were killed.

"The civilian casualties in Khost are a sad occurrence," said Hashim Alokozay, head of the defense committee of the Afghan Senate.

"Such incidents will provoke gatherings and protests by the people that could not be controlled by the government," said Jumaud-Din Giyanwal, a senator. The Taliban in a statement claimed that government forces conducted an operation in different places in Sabrai district and attacked many houses from both the air and on the ground. A market called Maktab was targeted, the Taliban said, where a large number of civilians were killed.

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

Ending Pakistan's Proxy War in Afghanistan

This month's talks with the Taliban have focused on preventing another "spring offensive." But after two decades of U.S. and NATO military operations, we should be asking a more basic question: Why is Afghanistan still at war?

The answer is deceptively simple: Afghanistan's conflict continues because, through the Taliban and other proxies, Pakistan's military is still waging covert war against its neighbor.

Let's look back. When Osama Bin Laden slipped over the border into Pakistan's Kurram Agency in late 2001, he joined thousands of al Qaeda and Taliban fighters already sheltering in madrassas, safe houses or training camps run by terrorist outfits across Pakistan. They received massive clandestine support from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

In 2003, with the U.S., United Kingdom and others distracted by the invasion of Iraq, ISI proxies attacked aid workers in Afghanistan. In 2005, they set out to subjugate Afghanistan's southern provinces.

Hardly a hunted man, Bin Laden lived in several Pakistani cities before settling into his comfortable compound at Abbottabad, on the doorstep of Pakistan's West Point.

U.S. forces eventually pushed back the Taliban's offensive around Kandahar. But Bin Laden's "hosts" went on to become prominent in Pakistan's "miltabishment." Even after the al Qaeda kingpin was killed in 2011 on Pakistani soil, ISI proxies moved aggressively to re-take territory lost in Afghanistan during the Obama surge. Pakistan's proxy war has been an open secret ever since.

Why, almost two decades after 9/11, is the ISI still waging this proxy war? For one, they are obsessed with India:

for Rawalpindi's zero-sum military planners, a Taliban-free Afghanistan would be a dangerous playground for their arch-rival.

Second, they are reprising a two-century-old drama: for U.S. cold warriors in the 1980s, as for pre-1947 British Raj strategists, interfering in Afghanistan was an old habit and an article of faith. By waging proxy war today, ISI is indulging colonial instincts and anti-Soviet reflexes.

But such deadly atavism is putting them on the wrong side of history. In Afghanistan alone, ISI's proxy war since 2001 has killed over 124,000 people.

In Pakistan, runaway military spending has undercut education and stunted growth: Per capita income has barely doubled since 2001, while in India it has more than quadrupled.

ISI's proxy war inertia is now hobbling South Asia's potential.

In any other country, tens of thousands of fighters, bomb-makers and assassins streaming across the border would trigger domestic outrage and international condemnation.

The real question is not why Pakistan's military continues down this self-destructive path, but rather why they were not stopped sooner.

By the time ISI resumed full-scale proxy war, Washington was bogged down in the Persian Gulf. Once the full intelligence picture of Pakistan's duplicity emerged, the will to act had vanished in the 2008-09 financial crisis, which turned the U.S. and NATO allies inward.

This drift continued even after SEAL Team Six found Bin Laden in 2011.

A reckoning is overdue. What is needed? For starters, consistency. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his cronies face sanctions for invading Ukraine and



murdering rivals. Iran and Syria are under embargo for a toxic mix of proxy wars, genocide and banned weapons. Boycotts are hitting China's ruling party, as genocide and repression deepen there. Those directing Pakistan's proxy war belong on this list.

It has cost 2,300 American and 1,200 other NATO lives, undoing years of progress on education, health and women's rights.

By avoiding this issue, we have prolonged Afghanistan's agony and emboldened the delusive few eager to notch another superpower defeat on their belts.

We have also given false comfort to Putin, Iran's Khamenei, Turkey's Erdogan and other dictators now pursuing destructive military adventures.

The facts of this proxy war are no longer in dispute, as my recent report notes. Action to end it would yield benefits well beyond South Asia, while restoring U.S. credibility and strengthening the alliances Washington is once again championing.

The quickest, most cost-effective way to bring peace to Afghanistan would

not take more fighting or more troops: it requires only the political will to sanction this proxy war's sponsors.

After all, armed interference in a neighboring country should be a relic of the colonial and totalitarian past; for Afghans, such meddling has been a 43-year nightmare.

The U.S. and NATO should pledge joint political action to end this proxy war, which has killed our soldiers: all democracies should be making a strong, unified push for accountability.

Those in Pakistan still supporting proxy war in Afghanistan should face tough sanctions.

Pakistan should be on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) black list. Afghanistan can only be portrayed as an "endless war" – a Vietnam-like sinkhole for lives and billions – by those who ignore this last major obstacle to peace. The only "forever war" has been ISI's decades of aggression in Afghanistan. After 20 years of hard effort, the path to a ceasefire and enduring peace in Afghanistan requires collective action, by the U.S. and its allies, to end Pakistan's proxy war.

By Moonis Ahmar

Afghanistan: What Next?

"It is going to be hard to meet the May 1 deadline in terms of tactical reasons. It's hard to get those troops out. We will leave, the question is when we leave." — US President Joseph Biden. If the Biden administration wants to review Doha agreement, the Taliban are vehemently against revising the timeline of May 1 for the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan and have warned of serious consequences if Washington reneges on its commitment. As a result, one can anticipate a standoff as far as the US and Taliban are concerned. There is no other country in the modern history which is a cause for enormous regional and international concern as Afghanistan. A chain of events in the last two weeks or so tend to trigger multilateral efforts to save Afghanistan from an impending disaster if a comprehensive agreement is not reached over the inter and intra-Afghan peace process before the deadline of final withdrawal of American forces

from that war-torn country. If a new version of peace plan mentioned in a letter written to the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the recent visit of American Defense Secretary Lyold Austin to Kabul reflect impatience on the part of the Biden administration to wrap up his country's longest war, but on its own terms, the Taliban and the Kabul regime are in an opposite direction as far as giving a new shape to the Doha agreement is concerned. Will the Kabul regime agree on an inclusive interim government in Afghanistan; and if not, will it be in a position to oppose such an American move? Will Taliban agree to power sharing for 90 days leading to a comprehensive peace accord? To what extent a multi-stakeholder approach will give an impetus to the Afghan peace process and how can one expect Afghans to manage conflicts on their own particularly in the absence of foreign forces? Getting out from a devil and

deep blue sea like situation in Afghanistan is the need of the hour. More than 40 years of armed conflicts, wars and civil war in Afghanistan destroyed three generations of that country and even now, there seems to be a lack of political will, trust and seriousness on the part of Afghan stakeholders to establish peace in their country. Failure of the Afghans to put their own house in order since the overthrow of monarchy in July 1973 led to the foreign intervention and occupation of Soviet and American forces. If Afghanistan became a hub of terrorism and Taliban-Al Qaeda nexus culminated into attacks on twin towers in New York and Pentagon in Washington DC, the fault not only lay inside Afghanistan, but the international community was also to blame as it abandoned the country after the Soviet military withdrawal in February 1989. Now, it is quite clear to the United States, the West and all the neighbours of Afghanistan ...

P3

Ghani: Youth Have Power to Resist Imposed System



President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday said that no one can impose another government system on the Afghan youth, referring to plans for a transitional or interim setup to move the peace process forward. Ghani, speaking at an event to inaugurate the High Council for Youth, indirectly referred to the low vocational capacity of Afghan youth, and criticized the Ministry of Finance and the administrative reform commission for investing in areas that have not been fruitful. "Your opportunity is that you strengthen the pillars of a just system, give it direction. Can anyone, except you, impose a system that is not acceptable for you?" he said. Ghani said that at least 50% of the Finance Ministry income is "embezzled." "Ask Mr. (Khalid) Payenda, at least 50 percent of your income is embezzled. The youth should create a national forum with Mr. Payenda (acting finance minister) and directly do the

monitoring," Ghani said. He stated that youth have been divided in different types in recent years. "Afghanistan's administration, including the Presidential Palace, the administrative reforms commission, have failed in this respect. We have not been successful (in fighting corruption). We have paid higher salaries, but they were not fruitful. One of the evident examples is the NTA (salaries)," Ghani said, referring to high scale salaries paid to government employees. "The motive behind the establishment of the high council for youth is to have a clear definition of who is an Afghan youth and how they can realize Afghanistan," said Ahmad Suhrah, a member of the council. The council has four parts and 45 members who are elected and appointed and will provide consultation to the government in different areas.

Afghan Part of CASA-1000 Project 30% Completed

In the last solar year, only 30% of the construction on the CASA-1000 power transmission project was completed, falling short of a more optimistic pledge that the project would be completed. Officials in Kunduz province say that at least 140 power transmission columns were constructed in the province and the next step is to begin column construction in Baghlan province. The CASA-1000 project was delayed for more than two years but officials say the construction on the project has been expedited since the beginning of the last solar year.

"This project is being carried out in Kunduz without any problems; we solved the social problems and other obstacles that were challenging the project," said Abdul Satar Mirzkawal, Kunduz governor. The CASA-1000 is one of the biggest energy projects in the region and will transmit 1300 megawatts of Kyrgyzstan electricity to Afghanistan through Tajikistan. CASA-1000 will span 1250 kilometers, and includes the construction of 560 power cable columns. In Afghanistan, cables will cross more than five provinces.



Officials at Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) said Afghanistan will gain \$45 million annually from the power transmission across its land. "The detailed survey routes assessment and the construction of the foundations of the project have been completed 100%, but there

are some exceptions in impassable and water-containing areas where the work has not been completed yet," said Wahidullah Tawhidi, DABS spokesperson. The CASA-1000 project was expected to be completed last year, but fell short due to challenges.

Pres. Ghani Welcomes...

renowned scholar, it is inferred that paying attention to self-knowledge and pondering in the infinite depths of human existence is a path to throw away shackles that disturbs the peace of mind and spirit of humanity. Emphasizing the importance of the high position and dignity of human beings in the cycle of existence, denial of violence, and call for tranquility and peace, are the main themes of his message and his view of the World with a trans-regional and trans-temporal approach is an indicative of the universality of his messages," he said. "This pious music, Nizami Ganjavi has also a high profile among the people of Afghanistan, the textbooks and curriculum of our education system are enriched with his poems. His works are the subject of discuss and research of many our researchers. For honoring the great position of this great mystic, I have ordered the relevant authority and institutions of my country to hold international seminars and symposiums. I ask God Almighty for Nizami Ganjavi International Center further success," Ghani said.

Brazil Reports...

The number of daily active cases has been on the rise over the past several days, even as another wave of COVID-19 looms large in India. In January the number of daily cases in the country had come down to below-10,000, as 9,102 new cases were reported between Jan. 25-26, the lowest in over 200 days. India kicked off a nationwide vaccination drive in January, and so far over 60 million people have been vaccinated across the country. Meanwhile, the federal government has ramped up testing facilities across the country, as nearly 241 million tests have been conducted so far. As many as 240,950,842 tests were conducted till Saturday, out of which 1,181,289 tests were conducted on Saturday alone, said the latest data issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research on Sunday. The national capital Delhi, one of the most affected places in the country, witnessed as many as 1,558 new cases and 10 deaths through Saturday. So far as many as 10,997 people have died in the national capital due to COVID-19, confirmed Delhi's health department.

Afghanistan: What...

that without ensuring a smooth power structure and a stable political system, the vacuum from an American/NATO withdrawal may result into fresh outbreak of violence. Currently, there are around 2,500 US forces in Afghanistan down from 100,000 in 2009. Furthermore, in order to exert pressure on Taliban and other violent groups in Afghanistan, it was decided on January 1, 2015 to establish the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) following the completion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) which was established after the Taliban regime had been toppled in December 2001. After reaching an agreement with the Kabul regime, the RSM was given the mandate to operate in Kabul, Bagram, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Laghman areas of Afghanistan. The 10,000-strong RSM — comprising personnel from 36 NATO member countries and their allies — cannot be an alternate to the US combat troops but can certainly provide a cushion to the Kabul regime provided the warning given by Antony Blinken — that in the event of American withdrawal Taliban may take over large parts of Afghanistan — doesn't come true. In order to prevent a nightmarish scenario in the event of a total American military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Biden administration came up with an innovative idea to take on board the United Nations, Turkey, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and India as a multi-stakeholder approach for peace in Afghanistan. The US supported Moscow conference on Afghanistan and urged Turkey

to take a similar move by inviting different Afghan and foreign stakeholders for an effective brainstorming session to help prevent the surge of violence and armed conflicts in the event of the pullout of the American forces by May 1. Yet, the Biden administration does subscribe to concerns and alarms raised by the Department of Defense and some circles in the Congress that the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan by following the deadline mentioned in Doha accord may create a dangerous void which may be filled in by Taliban and other Islamist extremist groups including Al Qaeda. But is it not too late to seek the involvement of the UN for peace in Afghanistan? Unfortunately, after ditching Afghanistan following the Soviet military withdrawal, the US didn't either encourage the UN to play a vibrant role for preventing the surge of conflict among different Mujahedeen groups. The ramifications of such an imprudent policy still haunt Afghanistan and the world. What next in Afghanistan needs to be analysed by examining three major realities. First, ambivalence, mistrust, suspicion and lack of political will on the part of Afghan stakeholders, particularly Taliban and their political opponents. Taliban signed an accord with the US in Doha in February 2020 but failed to reach an agreement with their Afghan counterparts. Now, with hardly six weeks left for the expiry of the pullout deadline, the Biden administration is coming up with two different alternates. On the one hand, as stated by Lyold Austin, American

Defense Secretary in Kabul, the possibility of reviewing the May 1 withdrawal deadline exists while on the other hand, it still wants to adhere to that deadline but without assuring the Kabul regime and its allies how to handle the situation in case violence surges and Taliban occupy vast territories. Taliban have rejected the proposal of President Ghani to hold early presidential elections because such an arrangement will further complicate the crisis. Second, there is more talk and rhetoric than the pursuance of practical measures for what the US calls taking 'responsible measures' for peace in Afghanistan. The Moscow conference, the 'Heart of Asia' conference in Dushanbe under the 'Istanbul process' on Afghanistan and subsequent events related to inter and intra-Afghan dialogue may not yield positive results unless a multi-stakeholder approach is applied by the parties concerned. Unless effective ceasefire is agreed upon by the Afghan government, the Taliban and other warring groups, efforts made outside and inside Afghanistan for a responsible peace process cannot yield positive results. Third, Afghanistan would have been better off and resolved its contentious issues had its leadership, whether in the government or in the opposition, been visionary and focused on ameliorating socio-economic conditions of the people. What next in Afghanistan depends on how local and external stakeholders express their readiness and seriousness in taking the Afghan peace process to its logical conclusion.

UN Rights Chief,...

committed," they said. "The failure to address the atrocity crimes the Tatmadaw has committed in the past, including against Rohingya and other minorities, has brought Myanmar to this terrible pass." Bachelet and Nderitu said there is no way forward in Myanmar without accountability and the military's fundamental reform. The senior officials urged all parties — including defecting officials, police, and military officers — to cooperate with international mechanisms. These include the International

Criminal Court and the UN Human Rights Council's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar in fighting impunity in the country. The special adviser and the rights chief called on the UN Security Council to take further steps, building on its statement of March 10, and also the ASEAN and the wider international community to act promptly to uphold the responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar from atrocity crimes. They stressed that the Myanmar state has the primary responsibility to


protect its population, but the international community shares that responsibility. "We are deeply concerned about the impact that the current situation may have on these populations and are closely monitoring developments," said Bachelet and Nderitu. They noted the diversity of the protest movement and encouraged the newfound sense of unity across ethnic and religious divides, as well as the growing recognition of past crimes against minorities, including the Muslim Rohingya.

Exchange Rates


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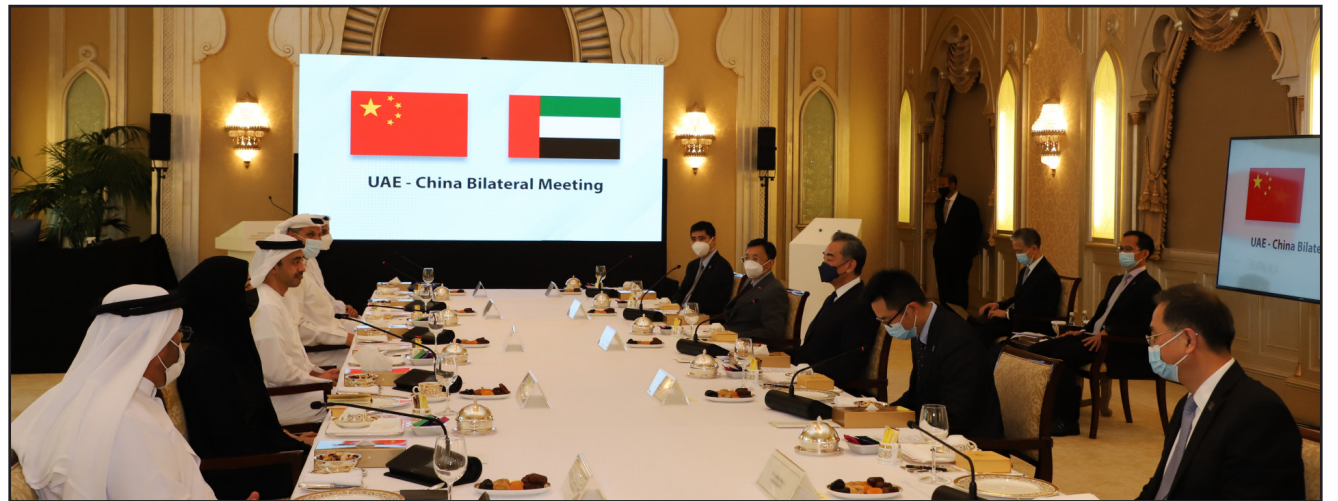
Chinese FM Wang Yi Meets UAE Counterpart

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

The same day, the two diplomats also attended the China-UAE cloud launching ceremony of the project to package active vaccine ingredients.

The UAE is Wang's fourth stop on a six-state tour that started on March 24. He visited Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey earlier this week. His next stops are Oman and Bahrain.

On Saturday, Wang met with the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, crown prince of Abu Dhabi, to discuss topics including China-UAE bilateral ties and the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



A look at the world

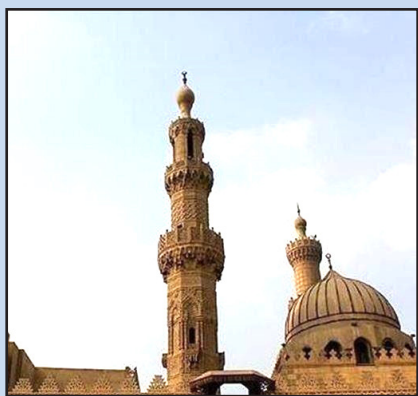
Al-Azhar Condemns Cartoons Offending Prophet in Britain

Al-Azhar, the highest seat of learning in the Sunni Muslim world, has condemned the display of cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad in Britain.

In a statement, the Cairo-based institution's Observatory for Combating Extremism described the caricatures as a "disgraceful act" which amounts to "hate speech".

"This is an unjustified provocation of the feelings of nearly two billion Muslims around the world," it said.

On March 22, a teacher at the Betley Grammar School in West Yorkshire, England, displayed offensive cartoons of Prophet Muhammad during a class. The caricatures are believed to be one of those published by French magazine



Charlie Hebdo.

Tens of people gathered in front of the school on Thursday and Friday to protest the drawings under police presence and called for the teacher involved in the incident to be sacked.

The school has since suspended the teacher and preferred to switch back to online teaching for the day, local media reported. Its director, Gary Keppel, "categorically" apologized for the incident, adding that "the teacher also apologized".

Al-Azhar said it is "saddened" by the incident, stressing its "total rejection" of such behavior. "They [blasphemous caricatures] have become a clear embodiment of a serious defect in those societies," the statement added.

In October 2020, cartoons insulting Prophet Muhammad were published by French magazine Charlie Hebdo, sparking protests across the Muslim world. Campaigns calling for a boycott of French products were launched on social media platforms.

The caricatures were also projected on buildings in a few cities in France.

Several Arab countries as well as Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan have condemned the caricatures and French President Emmanuel Macron's attitude regarding the drawings.

UN Rights Chief, Genocide Aide Warn Myanmar on Killings



The UN human rights chief and the UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide on Sunday issued a clear warning of a heightened risk of atrocity crimes in Myanmar, following another day of widespread bloodshed by the Myanmar military.

Michelle Bachelet, the high commissioner for human rights, and Alice Wairimu Nderitu, the UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide, issued a joint statement as the death toll in Myanmar's bloodiest day on Saturday rose to 141, including at least seven children.

"The shameful, cowardly, brutal actions of the military and police - who have been filmed shooting at protesters as they flee, and who have not even spared young children - must be halted immediately," said Bachelet and Nderitu.

"The international community has a responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar from atrocity crimes."

Bachelet and Nderitu called on the military to immediately stop killing the very people it must serve and protect. The two senior UN officials strongly condemned the Myanmar military's widespread, lethal, increasingly systematic attacks against peaceful protesters, as well as other severe violations of human rights since the Feb. 1 putsch.

They said thousands of people have also been arbitrarily arrested - many subjected to enforced disappearance.

Above those killed, hundreds more were wounded and detained during these seemingly coordinated attacks in over 40 locations throughout the country.

Bachelet and Nderitu called on the military to immediately stop killing the very people it has the duty to serve and protect. "We are deeply concerned about the impact that the current situation may have on these populations and are closely monitoring developments.

"The rights of minority groups, including the Rohingya population, must be fully respected," the two UN officials said.

Nderitu and Bachelet also called for an end to systemic impunity in Myanmar.

"We must ensure accountability for past crimes and deter the most serious international crimes from being ... P3

Brazil Reports over 3,000 COVID-19 Deaths for 2 Days Straight

Brazil recorded 3,438 deaths from COVID-19 on Saturday, said the country's Ministry of Health.

It is the second consecutive day that Brazil has reported more than 3,000 daily deaths, and the third since the disease was first detected in the country in February last year.

Brazil recorded 3,650 deaths on Friday, the highest daily count since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The death toll from COVID-19 in the country now stands at 310,550, according to ministry data.

Meanwhile, the ministry reported 85,948



new cases in the last 24 hours, bringing the national caseload to 12,490,362.

Brazil is currently one of the global epicenters of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the world's second-worst outbreak in terms of both deaths and infections, only after the United States.

Brazil had vaccinated 19.5 million people against COVID-19 as of Friday, of which 14.88 million had received the first dose and 4.64 million had got both jabs, according to local media.

However, India's COVID-19 tally reached 11,971,624 on Sunday as 62,714 new cases were reported from across the country, according to the latest figures released by the federal health ministry.

Besides, 312 deaths since Saturday morning took the death toll to 161,552. The number of new cases and deaths recorded in the past 24 hours is the highest this year so far.

There are still 486,310 active cases in the country, while 11,323,762 people have been discharged so far from hospitals after medical treatment.

There was an increase of 33,663 active cases during the previous 24 hours, out of which the maximum cases were reported from the southwestern state of Maharashtra. ... P3



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