



**Kabul**  
22 / 10



**Herat**  
30 / 13



**Nangarhar**  
28 / 15



**Balkh**  
26 / 15



# Heart of Asia

*Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region*

Monday, April 19, 2021

Issue No. 949

www.heartofasia.af

10 afs

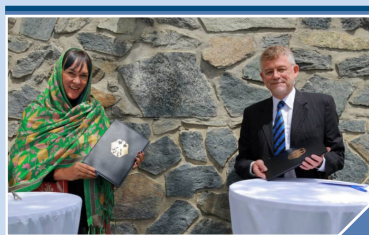


## Attend Istanbul Summit, EU Pleads with Taliban

The European Union has called for the Taliban to take part in the UN-led Istanbul summit on Afghanistan, scheduled to be hosted by Turkey later this month. EU Ambassador to Afghanistan Andreas von Brandt, speaking at an event here on Saturday, asked the insurgent movement to seize the historic opportunity. He believed the Taliban, if they were serious about winning the cooperation of the international community, should participate in the conference. The Afghan peace process had gained enormous momentum, moving up the global agenda considerably over the last few weeks, the diplomat remarked. Brandt remarked: "I still hope the Taliban will not miss this opportunity offered to them in Istanbul. I would say in the last five years Afghanistan has never been as high on the agenda as it has been in recent weeks."

So far, the Taliban have ...

**P2**



## German Embassy Donates €500,000 For Women Protection Center Trust Fund in Afghanistan

In a bid to end violence against women and girl and to enable women-led civil society organizations to provide critical services to women and girls, the Germany embassy in Afghanistan contributed €500,000 to the Women Protection Center Trust Fund. The UN Women Afghanistan in a series of tweets on Sunday quoted the German embassy as saying, "Women and girls in remote areas are not only at greater risk of experiencing violence, they are also less likely to receive assistance". Since the start of COVID19, women-led and women's rights organizations are first responders to the needs of women and girl survivors of violence. Availing resources to help them maintain and sustain critical services for women and girl survivors is essential. "Before COVID19, nearly 90% of women reported experiencing at least one form of intimate partner ...

**P2**

# Ghani Gives Pakistan Two Choices – Friendship or Enmity



President Ashraf Ghani said on Sunday morning that for the first time in decades, a real opportunity for peace has presented itself and that Afghanistan is well prepared for the withdrawal of foreign troops. This comes after US President Joe Biden and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced last week that all foreign troops will be

out of the country by September 11. On Sunday, Ghani said at a 6.30am security meeting at the Presidential Palace (ARG), that "for the first time in modern history, the best opportunity has been provided for Afghanistan. We have been fully prepared for this day for the past two years and for their withdrawal". "We are fully prepared to defend our

soil and it is time for Afghanistan's national sovereignty to be fully realized and for Afghanistan to prove its neutrality," Ghani said. "One is the republican ranks and the other is the enemy. Those who do not stand in the republican ranks have no place in the state," Ghani said. Ghani also said that the Taliban

have no religious legitimacy to continue the war, and that Islamic religious scholars from around the world have condemned the war in Afghanistan.

Referring to the review of regional relations with Afghanistan, the president said: "Today is a day of decision for Pakistan. If our country is in turmoil, their country will be in turmoil and if they want our welfare, they will also provide welfare."

"The choice of friendship and enmity is in their hands and in the case of friendship, Afghanistan is ready to cooperate with Pakistan in increasing cooperation between the countries of the region and the world," Ghani added.

He also stated that: "Our vision is national sovereignty, republicanism, democracy, prosperity, a free and independent Afghanistan. If the Taliban make peace within this framework, we are open to them and any choice other than that is the Taliban's pretext for continuing the war." "We are a people of determination, not fear," he added.

Ghani also awarded state ...

**P3**

## Afghan Special Forces Kill Local IS Leader in Eastern Nangarhar Province

A local Islamic State (IS) leader has been killed by Afghan Special Forces in eastern Nangarhar province on Saturday night, said National Directorate of Security (NDS), the country's national intelligence agency on Sunday.

"Acting on a tip-off, the NDS Special Operations Forces conducted an operation in Kuz Kunar district, Nangarhar province, to arrest Kamin, known as Hakimullah, one of the IS's newly designated local leaders," NDS said. ...

**P3**



## 9,592 Troops From 36 Countries Serving in Afghanistan

In line with US President Joe Biden's announcement, all American troops will depart from Afghanistan by September later this year, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.

Deployment of foreign troops began in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001, when the US together with the UK launched Operation Enduring Freedom.

They were joined by some 43 NATO allies and partners after the UN-authorized International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on Dec. 20, 2001.

At its peak, there were an estimated 130,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan. This mission was declared completed on Dec. 28, 2014, with the size of foreign troops drastically reduced and combat operations by all members almost entirely ended, except for the US.



Top contributors Currently, under the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, there are a total of 9,592 troops from 36 nations stationed in the war-ravaged country, with the US topping the list with 2,500 soldiers.

The US is followed by Germany with 1,300 soldiers mainly stationed in the north of the country. The third-highest number of troops (895)

are from Italy and they are mainly stationed in western Afghanistan bordering Iran.

Georgia is in fourth place with 860 soldiers, the UK in fifth with 750 soldiers, Romania in sixth with 619 soldiers, and Turkey with 600 soldiers in seventh place.

Poland, Mongolia, Portugal, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, ...

**P3**

**Attend Istanbul...**

not confirmed their participation in The Turkey talks on Afghanistan, slated to commence from April 24.

A few days back, the rebel outfit said it would not be part of any conference before the complete withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan.

The EU ambassador, supporting the freedom of expression in Afghanistan, urged the warring sides to stop targeting journalists and media workers. He said: "These targeted attacks have not only deprived the victims of their future but they can also amount to war crimes."

**German...**

violence, and violence against women has further increased as a result of COVID19. This is why important initiatives like these are support," the embassy to Kabul said.

"I look forward to growing the Afghanistan Women Protection Center Trust Fund into an initiative to provide quality and critical services with the support of donor community, women-led CSOs and under the leadership of Ministry of Women's Affairs," said Aleta Miller, UN Women Representative, Afghanistan.

**Pakistan,...**

Relations between India and Pakistan plummeted to a new low after August 2019, when India scrapped the longstanding special status of Jammu and Kashmir, prompting Islamabad to downgrade diplomatic ties with New Delhi.

Islamabad said the normalization of ties is linked to a review of the Aug. 5 decision and ultimate resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

By Tom Bowman

# Can the Afghan Army Hold Off the Taliban Without the U.S.?

President Biden stood in the Roosevelt Room at the White House and declared the end of U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan. He spoke from the same spot where former President George W. Bush announced the beginning of the war 20 years ago with a bombing campaign.

"It's time to end America's longest war," Biden said. "It's time for American troops to come home."

The president said the U.S. will "keep providing assistance" to the Afghan security forces, and reposition counterterrorism forces "over the horizon," to make sure Afghanistan does not once again become a haven for terrorists planning to attack the U.S.

That was the reason for invading Afghanistan in the first place after the 9/11 attacks, when the Taliban government refused to turn over the mastermind of those attacks, al-Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, speaking this week from NATO headquarters in Brussels, pledged continued U.S. training and support for the Afghan security forces.

"Thanks to the efforts of coalition and ally training," Austin said, "the Afghan security forces are better and more capable of securing their borders and protecting their fellow citizens. We will continue to support them in those efforts. We will look to continue funding key capabilities, such as the Afghan Air Force."

**Contractors needed**

Still, both those goals — continued support for the Afghan military and a regional counterterrorism effort — raise more questions.

Right now, the U.S. military and its NATO allies train the Afghan army and police, pay them and repair the American-supplied equipment. Who will do this once the allied forces leave? The only realistic answer is civilian contractors.

"Now, it is well known that the Afghan security forces need these contractors to maintain their equipment, manage supply chains, and train their military and police to operate the advanced equipment that we have purchased for them," said John Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, during a presentation last month at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

And with roughly 3,500 U.S. troops and some 7,000 NATO forces leaving, will the Taliban accept the current 16,000 contractors, including 6,000 Americans, that are currently in the country?



"What I see is everyone focusing on the troops withdrawal and not the loss of the contractors," said one U.S. official who's involved in the financial efforts, but was not authorized to speak publicly. "Also, no one's focusing on the financial assistance."

Fred Kagan, a defense analyst who advised the U.S. military in Afghanistan, said the American-led training effort will likely come to an end.

"I do not see how the U.S. can continue to support the Afghan military in any meaningful way, other than financial, once our forces departed the country," he said.

**Ongoing expenses****So how much money will the US continue to spend on Afghanistan?**

As of last December, the U.S. had spent \$88.3 billion to help the Afghan government provide security in Afghanistan. That's more than 60 percent of all U.S. reconstruction funding since 2002. Another \$3 billion will be spent this year.

Even with all that money spent and with ongoing training efforts, the Afghan forces are plagued by poor leadership, desertions and incompetence.

One U.S. general who spent years in Afghanistan said this about U.S. training of the Afghan forces:

"Sadly, that cake was not fully baked. We were impatient, we set arbitrary exit criteria, and our

withdrawal from many areas created vacuums for the Taliban return with an Afghan Army that was not ready, not getting paid regularly, poorly led, and suffering massive casualties, creating a demoralizing and unsustainable reality for the security forces."

Rep. Elissa Slotkin, a Michigan Democrat, and former Pentagon official, has questions of her own.

"The two critical things I'll be looking to hear come directly from the original goals of this war," Slotkin said. "First, what will the security architecture look like to ensure that terrorists don't reconstitute and prepare attacks against us or our allies?"

"Secondly, what is the diplomatic plan for maintaining some insight and leverage in Kabul?" she added. "If preventing international terrorist attacks is connected to the county living up to basic international norms and standards, we'll need a significant diplomatic plan to ensure Kabul isn't descending into chaos."

'Over the horizon'

The counterterrorism mission, according to Biden, will take place outside Afghanistan. "Over the horizon" means either other countries — perhaps Pakistan or Tajikistan — or on ships in the Persian Gulf. Will the U.S. Embassy in Kabul have any counter-terror officials to gather intelligence or work with Afghans?

The Taliban have yet to break with al-Qaida, a condition of the U.S.-Taliban agreement in ... **P3**

By DOYLE MCMANUS

## Afghanistan's war — and America's stakes in it — won't end when the troops leave

When President Biden announced last week that the United States would withdraw its last troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, he cast the decision as closing the book on a 20-year conflict. "It's time to end the forever war," he said.

But the battle for Afghanistan began long before American troops arrived in 2001, and won't end when the last U.S. soldier leaves. Taliban forces are almost certain to launch a military offensive to try to topple the government in Kabul. The result could be a military campaign that is bloody and short — or bloody and long.

And the United States will continue to have important stakes in the outcome, even if our troops are no longer there.

The most practical interest Americans have in Afghanistan is to ensure that it's not a base for terrorist attacks against the United States. That's the reason U.S. troops entered the country in the first place after Al Qaeda's attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Biden claimed that mission has been "accomplished" — and that's true, for now. But the withdrawal of

American troops will make it more difficult to keep track of Al Qaeda, as CIA Director William Burns acknowledged last week.

American intelligence agencies will continue to pay Afghan informants for years to come. If Al Qaeda appears to be regrouping there, American drones will attack it. U.S. forces will establish bases in nearby countries from which to conduct those strikes. And covert military units may even drop back into Afghanistan if a president deems it necessary, just as U.S. Navy SEALs landed in Pakistan to kill Osama bin Laden in 2011.

More broadly, the United States and other countries still have an interest in trying to stabilize Afghanistan.

That's partly for humanitarian reasons, of course. But there's also a practical reason: A continuing civil war could result in more extremism, more terrorism and more refugees flooding into neighboring countries. The United States, Pakistan, Russia, China and even Iran all have an interest in keeping the conflict limited.

So it's good news that Biden committed himself to a continued

diplomatic effort, along with those other governments, to push the Kabul government and the Taliban into peace talks.

After the withdrawal, U.S. leverage will be limited. But there's one bit of leverage the U.S. and other big powers may still have, even if the Taliban successfully fights its way back into power.

"The Taliban want legitimacy," Laurel Miller, a former U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan, told me. "They don't want to govern as pariahs again, the way they did from 1996 to 2001." If the Taliban wants international recognition and foreign aid, the diplomats argue, it may agree to deprive Al Qaeda of bases and to negotiate with other political factions — even, perhaps, to soften its earlier oppression of women and girls.

And that brings us to a third American interest, which, like the first two, is both humanitarian and practical. Four U.S. presidents spent 20 years pursuing the unrealistic goal of transforming Afghan society and politics — and got part of the way there. Thousands of Afghans put

their lives and families at risk by helping the U.S. military or other foreign institutions.

In 2009, Congress set up a special immigration channel for Afghans who had worked for the U.S. government. But the program was understaffed and underfunded, and admitted a relative trickle of applicants. In its first 10 years, only about 18,000 Afghans were allowed in — leaving a backlog of almost 19,000 applicants out of luck. If the Taliban enters Kabul, thousands of former military interpreters and embassy aides could be stranded. Now add a second group: Afghans who didn't work for the U.S. government, but whose lives could be in danger under a Taliban regime. This could include government officials, human rights activists and professional women. Many may ask to enter the United States as refugees.

On that score, Biden appears to be going in the wrong direction. Last week, White House officials suddenly announced that they were backing off from the president's campaign promise to quickly increase the number of refugees allowed into the United States each year. They said Biden had decided to maintain the ceiling of 15,000 set by Donald Trump.

After a storm of protest from Democrats in Congress, the White House reversed course again and said a new limit would be announced next month — but didn't say what the number would be.

A too-stringent cap on refugees will only create a new problem if Kabul falls. At that point, Biden is likely to feel pressure to open a special refugee quota for Afghans, just as the United States did for Vietnamese refugees after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

That wasn't universally popular.

"I do not believe the United States has an obligation, moral or otherwise, to evacuate foreign nationals," then-Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware argued at the time.

He was wrong then — and he would be wrong now.

Strictly speaking, we don't "owe" anything to them, not even those who put their lives at risk by collaborating with the U.S. military. But as we learned after Vietnam, we will feel better if we help save lives.

There's self-interest even in that. Honor and compassion, when we remember to apply them, are good for the U.S. reputation. For a country that seeks allies, better to be a trustworthy partner than an untrustworthy one.

# Strawberries Hit Record Yield of Almost 300 Tons In 1399

Statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture show that in the 1399 solar year, 299 metric tons of strawberries were produced across the country.

The ministry said Herat, with 31 hectares of cultivated land, produced 155 metric tons of berries alone.

After Herat, Kunduz and Balkh provinces also recorded the second and third highest yield respectively. According to the ministry strawberries are also grown in Faryab, Daikundi, Sar-e-Pul and

Maidan Wardak provinces as well as a number of other provinces.

In total, last year, 62 hectares of land was used to cultivate this sweet, popular fruit.

The ministry has said that Afghanistan's climate is conducive to the cultivation of strawberries, and that the cultivation of this fruit has been gradually promoted among the people for several years. Strawberries are fruits rich in vitamins and nutrients and are sold on the local market for up to 200 AFN per kilogram.



### Afghan Special...

"A gunfight occurred when the targeted man tried to flee from the area. As a result, Kamin, who served as IS military chief for Pachir Wa Agam and Haska Mina districts of Nangarhar was killed," the statement read. Meanwhile, Afghan army personnel discovered and destroyed an attack tunnel of Taliban terrorists and arrested four terrorists in Sharsharak village of northern Balkh province on Friday night, the army's 209 Shaheen Corps confirmed on Sunday. The arrested militants tried to target an army operating base in the area by digging the tunnel, according to the source.

### Saudi, Iranian...

this time it addresses Iran's missiles programme and its support for regional proxies. The US has also pressed for an end to the Yemen conflict, seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The report added that Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi visited Saudi Arabia late last month and has been facilitating the "process".

Citing an Iraqi official, FT reported that Baghdad also facilitated "communication channels" for Iran with Egypt and Jordan.

"The [Iraqi] prime minister is very keen to personally play a role in turning Iraq into a bridge between these antagonistic powers in the region," the official said. "It's in Iraq's interest that it can play this role. The more confrontation you have in the region, the more they play out here... and these talks have been taking place."

Iraq is also home to powerful Iranian-backed militia groups, as well as US troops, and has often been used as a battleground.

In January 2020, a US drone strike killed Iran's revered general Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia commander, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, pushing Washington and Tehran to the brink of war.

Iran retaliated by targeting an Iraqi military airbase where US troops were stationed.

Another official briefed on the latest talks said Kadhimi has "good links into the Iranian system", FT reported.

"The new thing is Kadhimi playing this role with Saudi Arabia... It's a good thing Iraq is playing this role, but it's very early days."

### 9,592 Troops...

and Denmark are among NATO Allies and Partners with at least over 100 soldiers as part of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. In January this year, the Turkish army took the lead of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force placing thousands of soldiers on standby, ready to deploy within days. Units from Albania, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, the UK, and the US will also serve on the force, which is part of the alliance's larger NATO Response Force. Regional Command Structure Turkey's Brig. Gen. Selcuk Yurtsizoglu heads the Train, Advise, Assist Command (TAAC) that conducts functionally-based security force

assistance to the 111th Capital Division in the Afghan capital Kabul. Albania, Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, the Republic of North Macedonia, Turkey, and the US are the contributing nations.

Germany's Brig. Gen. Ansgar Meyer heads the TAAC-North in the northern Balkh province of Uzbekistan. It conducts the mission with the 209th Corps in Mazar-e Sharif and 217th in Kunduz of the Afghan National Army Corps, 707th Afghan National Police (ANP) Zone, and the 808th ANP Zone. Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, the UK, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Mongolia,

Montenegro, the Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, and the US contribute to the command.

The US' Col. Scott T. Yeatman heads the crucial TAAC-Air. Its mission is to train, advise, and assist Afghan partners to develop a professional, capable, and sustainable air force in Afghanistan. Among the contributing nations are Australia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, and the US.

The US also heads the TAAC-East in the Laghman province and the TAAC-South in Kandahar province. Meanwhile, Italy's Brig. Gen. Alberto Vezzoli heads the TAAC-West in the Herat province bordering Iran.

### Can the Afghan...

February 2020. U.S. officials in the Afghan city of Jalalabad told NPR two years ago that the Taliban continue to work with al-Qaida in eastern Afghanistan, while both U.S. and Afghan airstrikes have targeted al-Qaida militants in southeastern Helmand Province. An expansion of such terrorist activity worries retired Gen. David Petraeus, who commanded U.S. forces in Afghanistan and later ran the CIA. Petraeus said he worries the Taliban will continue to gain ground militarily and allow terrorist groups to operate.

"Frankly, we're also going to lose that platform that Afghanistan provides for the kind of regional counterterrorism campaign," he said. "I'm really afraid that we're going to look back two years from now and regret the decision and just wonder if whether we might not have sought to manage it with a modest, sustainable, sustained

commitment that could have ensured that al-Qaida and the Islamic State would not re-establish sanctuaries."

Fred Kagan, the defense analyst, said it's not sufficient for U.S. personnel to be based outside Afghanistan and looking for threats inside the country.

"We will not have the intelligence we need or the ability to act in a timely fashion on intelligence we do get to conduct periodic and very limited strikes on individual targets," Kagan said.

"Few theories of war or counterterrorism have been more thoroughly discredited over the past three decades than the idea that such strikes can disrupt, let alone defeat, a major terrorist organization," he added. "Our withdrawal of forces therefore means the de facto end of serious counter-terror operations."

Carter Malkasian, who spent years in Afghanistan working with Marines as a civilian

adviser, said there should be more emphasis on working with neighboring countries — Pakistan, Iran, Russia and China — to prevent a rise in terrorist activity in Afghanistan.

"It would be useful," Malkasian said, "if the United States can get a diplomatic agreement for continued statements by the region, to the Taliban, that terrorist activity is unacceptable, and that they commonly endorse military action and other sanctions if it occurs. The region has interests in Afghanistan that are much deeper than U.S. interests."

In an interview with NPR, Roya Rahmani, the Afghan ambassador to the U.S., said of the White House decision, "So as they have decided to withdraw the troops, regardless of the conditions on the ground, we respect their decision. But then we are hoping that with their support, we would be able to continue to protect and defend ourselves."

### Ghani Gives...

medals to 16 members of Kabul's PD1 security district at Sunday's meeting. After presenting the medals to the officials, First Vice President Amrullah Saleh briefed those in attendance on the achievements of the 6.30

am security meetings.

"Promise keeping has become a principle and as a result of continuous efforts, the crime graph in Kabul has dropped dramatically and public satisfaction with government services has increased," Saleh said.

Ghani lauded officials for their achievements around the 6.30am initiative and said: "You have brought about positive change as a result of group management, you have the capacity, and perseverance and I am your full supporter."

### Exchange Rates

77.55	\$	77.65
92.1	€	92.2
105.6	£	105.7
499	Rp.	500
21	درهم	21.1
1050	₹	1060

### Contact Numbers

Kabul Police - 119

Kabul Ambulance - 112

Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital

0202301360

Ata Turk Hospital

0202500312

Corona call center - 166



Aksos  
اکسوس کتابپلورنژی  
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 3<sup>rd</sup> District,

Kabul - Afghanistan

Print: Waygal Printing .Co - +93 - 202512626

# Saudi, Iranian Officials Held Direct Talks in Iraq

Senior Saudi and Iranian officials held direct talks in a bid to repair relations between the two regional rivals, according to a report in the Financial Times which quoted officials briefed on the discussions.

The first round of the reported talks, held four years after both sides cut off diplomatic ties, took place in Baghdad on April 9 and included discussions about attacks on Saudi Arabia by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi group.

The unnamed official quoted in the report said the Saudi delegation was led by Khalid bin Ali al-Humaidan, the kingdom's intelligence chief, and another round of talks was also scheduled. There has been no comment from either side following the publishing of the report.

The FT also said that a senior Saudi official denied there had been any talks with Iran.

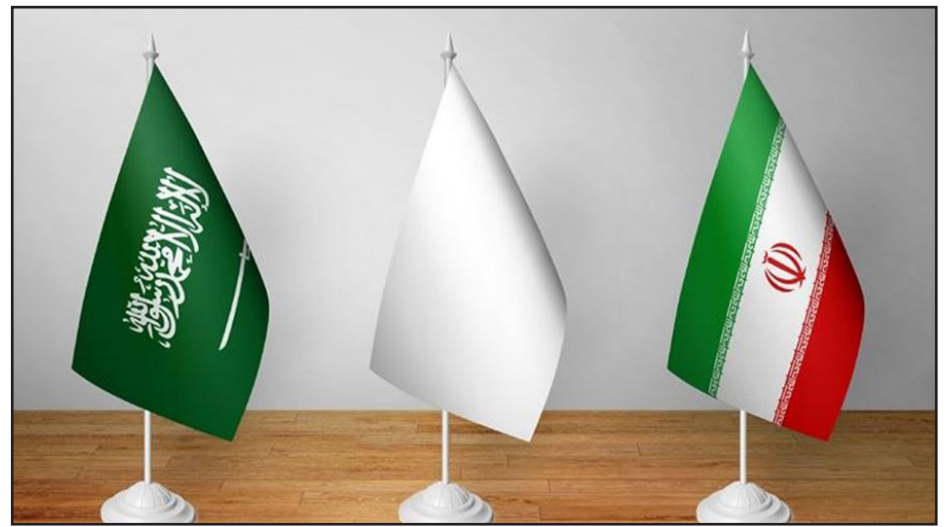
Lebanon's pro-Iran Al Mayadeen television channel and Unews news agency on Sunday both cited an Iranian source denying talks with Saudi Arabia.

In recent weeks, Houthi fighters have stepped up missile and drone attacks, often targeting Saudi oil facilities and military points across the kingdom, saying they are in response to deadly Saudi air raids in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of smuggling weapons to the Houthis, who have controlled the Yemeni capital Sanaa since 2015.

The news comes as US and Iran try to revive a 2015 nuclear deal which Saudi Arabia has opposed.

Riyadh has called for a nuclear deal with stronger parameters and said Gulf states should join any negotiations on the accord to ensure that ... **P3**



### A look at the world

#### Libya's State Council Welcomes UNSC Resolution on Polls

Libya's High Council of State on Saturday welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 2570, which calls for timely presidential and parliamentary elections in Libya scheduled for Dec. 24 this year.

On Friday, the UN Security Council unanimously called on the interim Libyan government to undertake the necessary preparatory work for holding free presidential and parliamentary elections on Dec. 24 as approved by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum.

The High Council of State also urged the House of Representatives (parliament) to "commit to working together to complete the necessary legal entitlements to hold the



electoral process on time".

The statement called on all UN member states to support the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, including the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya, and support the work of the 5 + 5 Joint Military Committee. A cease-fire between the UN-recognized government and forces loyal to warlord Khalifa Haftar has largely held since it was brokered last October, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had called for international monitors to be deployed to monitor the situation.

The UNSC unanimously approved on Friday the deployment of 60 cease-fire monitors to Libya. It also adopted a second resolution extending the ban on illicit oil exports from Libya.

Libya has been beset by conflict since former longtime strongman Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown in 2011. Civil war ensued in the aftermath it has persisted for nearly a decade.

The oil-rich country has recently witnessed positive developments following a breakthrough in which rival parties agreed on Feb. 5 on a unified new executive authority that will govern Libya in the lead-up to national elections on Dec. 24.

#### Pakistan, India Say Talks Not Scheduled In UAE



There are no scheduled meetings between Pakistani and Indian foreign ministers during their visits to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), officials from both countries confirmed on Saturday.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi arrived in Abu Dhabi for a three-day visit on Saturday and his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar, will visit the Gulf state on Sunday.

The visits coincide with recent UAE-brokered backdoor diplomacy that brought a thaw in otherwise mounting tensions between the two nuclear-armed rivals.

"No such meeting is scheduled during Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's ongoing visit to the UAE," Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said in a statement.

India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Arindam Bagchi said in a tweet: "At the invitation of his counterpart, EAM @DrSJaishankar will be visiting Abu Dhabi on 18th April 2021. His discussions will focus on economic cooperation and community welfare."

Senior Pakistani and Indian intelligence officials held a series of secret meetings in Dubai in January in an attempt to stem escalating tensions along the Line of Control (LoC), a de facto border that divides the disputed Kashmir valley between the two neighbors.

Last month, the two militaries agreed to honor a 2003 cease-fire along the LoC, followed by an exchange of letters between the two premiers, which was widely viewed as an outcome of backdoor diplomacy.

UAE's Ambassador to the US Yousef Al Otaiba confirmed on Wednesday that the Gulf state is mediating between New Delhi and Islamabad to help reach a "healthy and functional" relationship.

Addressing a virtual session with Stanford University's Hoover Institution, Otaiba said his country had a role behind the cease-fire on the Kashmir border, which hopefully would get relations back to a "healthy level." ... **P2**

#### Russia Says It Prevented Belarusian President's Murder

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) arrested two people on Saturday on charges of preparing the assassination of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and of planning a coup in Belarus.

The arrest was carried out jointly with the Belarusian KGB (the Committee for State Security), the FSB said in a statement.

Yury Zyankovich and Alexander Feduta, organized a meeting in Moscow, where they described in detail the plan of the military coup, suggesting "physical elimination" of Lukashenko, seizure of radio and television centers, blocking law enforcement loyal to the current government in the capital of the republic Minsk, and organizing a complete shutdown of the Belarusian power system to complicate the actions of law enforcement,



the statement said.

The coup was scheduled for May 9, and had to start from an assault by armed formations, "partisans," located "on the hidden bases," it noted.

In a separate statement, Lukashenko said a group planned to assassinate him and his children.

"We found the work of clearly foreign intelligence agencies. Most likely, the Central Intelligence Agency, the FBI, I don't know which of the Americans worked there," he said.

According to Lukashenko, the group included lawyer Zyankovich, who has double US-Belarusian citizenship, and political analyst Feduta.

Lukashenko said Zyankovich and Feduta were arrested at his request.

He said he believes that his assassination attempt was authorized by the highest US political leadership.

Lukashenko also noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin raised the issue of an attempt by US special services on the president of Belarus in a conversation with his American counterpart Joe Biden but did not receive an answer.

After the 2020 presidential election, Belarus faced an attempt to implement a scenario of a color revolution. The attempt failed, while disturbances and demonstrations have continued.



# 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