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Spin Boldak Crossing Blocked as Afghan-Pakistan Border Forces Clash

The Spin Boldak crossing has been closed following a clash between Afghan and Pakistani border forces in the Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province, said Yahya Alavi, spokesperson for the 205th Atal Corps. The clash started at 9am on Monday in the Laghman area of Spin Boldak district and lasted for an hour. According to Alavi, the clash took place after Pakistani border guards tried to bring barbed wire to Afghanistan, but were prevented from doing so by Afghan border guards. He added that one civilian was injured in the clash and did not comment on the details of the casualties of Pakistani forces.



Rocket Hits Kunar Governor's Compound, 16 Wounded

At least 16 people have been wounded after a rocket hit the Kunar governor's office in the city of Asadabad on Monday morning, Iqbal Saeed, the provincial governor, said. The incident occurred where an event on the Holy Quran competition was underway, Saeed said. According to him, three of the injured were the governor's bodyguards and the rest were the reciters and organizers of the ceremony. Hospital officials in Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province, said 16 injured people are undergoing treatment and four of them are in critical condition. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pakistan Assure Afghan Govt of Taliban's Return to Talks



The Pakistani delegation led by special envoy Mohammad Sadiq during their two-day visit to Kabul has assured the Afghan government of the meaningful participation of the Taliban at the Istanbul summit, according to an Afghan official who met with the delegation. Umer Daudzai, President Ghani's special envoy for Pakistan, told TOLONews that his Pakistani counterpart also assured them that the Taliban will agree on a reduction in violence and ceasefire with their participation at the peace summits. The delegation pledged it will

address its promises right after the announcement of a new date for the Turkey conference. The delegation met with President Ghani's special envoy Umer Daudzai and National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib in separate meetings. "They brought the message that they will work with all their resources to convince the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire and that the Taliban should not miss the chance for talks. They were referring to the Istanbul conference," Daudzai said. But the delegation has not shared

details of the Taliban team's visit to Islamabad, said Daudzai. "The Taliban delegation apparently is not meeting with Pakistani officials and as they (Pakistani delegation) said, they (Taliban delegation) are meeting with its leadership. That is why they (Pakistani delegation) did not say anything about this," Daudzai added. Meanwhile, Pakistan Foreign Minister Qureshi in an interview with Turkey's Anadolu News Agency has underlined the fear for a civil war in Afghanistan, saying it is "the last thing anyone wants," if there is no agreement and political settlement.

"The stakes are very high. If there's progress, there can be peace, and the region collectively will benefit from the outcome of a peace process," Qureshi said in the interview. "The stakes are high, simply for the reason that God forbid, if there is no agreement, if there is no political settlement, the fear of going back into the 90s, the fear of Afghanistan going into a civil war is looming over our heads. And that is the last thing anyone of us wants. And that is the last thing Pakistan wants because Pakistan has paid a huge price because of the unstable environment in Afghanistan." So far, the details of Shaikh Abdul Hakim Haqqani's consultations with Taliban leadership in Pakistan are not clear but Pakistan's influence is seen as prominent in Kabul. "Pakistan has influence on the Taliban and can encourage the group to return to the talks," said Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad, former deputy head of the High Peace Council. This comes as the Istanbul conference on Afghanistan was expected to be held this month, but it was delayed over non-participation by the Taliban.

Karzai Calls for Regional Cooperation in Ensuring Afghan Peace

Former President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai in a meeting with Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kabul Bahador Aminian on Monday stressed regional cooperation in ensuring Afghan peace. The two sides discussed the Afghan peace process with the Taliban. They stressed regional cooperation for progress in the Afghan peace process. Earlier, Hamid Karzai said that his country has always been supported by Iran which has suggested some initiatives to solve the problems of Afghanistan.



Night Curfew, Ban on Indian Flights in Heal in Govt Plan to Curb COVID 3rd Wave

Stopping flights from India to Afghanistan, imposing travel restrictions on the Pakistan-Iran border, night curfews and preventing gatherings are likely to be the steps included in the Ministry of Public Health's plan to stop the third wave of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from spreading in the country. Acting Minister of Public Health Wahid Majrooh on Monday in a meeting with the director of public health of the provinces, representatives of the private sector and healthcare providers, said that there is proper coordination between all departments concerned and it will be useful in curbing the spread of the infection. Majrooh has instructed provincial public health directors to check production capacity of oxygen companies at the center and provinces, so that measures can



be taken accordingly, if needed. He also asked departments to COVID-19 diagnostic kits to private hospitals, pay health workers, use ART teams as clinical teams, and hire new staff in laboratories. As of Sunday, total number of positive cases now stand at 59,015 while the number of reported deaths is 2,592 and the total number of recoveries is 52,489.

Meanwhile, India is grappling with a severe wave of the pandemic currently and the cases and mortality rate of coronavirus in Iran is also high. The Ministry of Public Health has not officially confirmed the outbreak of the third wave of the coronavirus. But it has confirmed the prevalence of a new type of the coronavirus in the country.

Iran Hopes...

Elsewhere in his remarks, he described the bilateral relations between Iran and Iraq as very strong and needed by both countries and the region, saying, "We are interested in expanding these relations"

"Today we talked about the various fields of economic relations, energy, transportation and the connection of roads and railways between the two countries," the FM said, adding, "Joint cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the fight against cross-border crimes, drugs, are very important areas for cooperation between the two countries."

"We are two countries that stood together against ISIL. Martyrs Ghasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, both of whom were heroes in the fight against ISIL and were unfortunately martyred in Iraq by an illegal US action, illustrates this point," he noted.

"This relationship that has been established between our two countries will not be broken by anyone, and this relationship between Iran and Iraq will always be expanding," Zarif underlined.

Fuad Hussein, for his part, said, "We discussed important issues in the region with the Iranian Foreign Minister. In the conversation with the Iranian side, we reached important points."

"We are following the talks between the American and Iranian sides in Vienna," he added.

"Foreign Minister Zarif will also travel to Najaf and the Kurdistan Region during his current trip to Iraq," Hussein said.

BY Khalid Bhatti

Will There Be Lasting Peace in Afghanistan?

The Afghan peace process suffered a setback when the peace talks scheduled for April 24 in Turkey were postponed. The Taliban refused to attend the peace conference. Now the conference might take place in May.

The US-backed peace talks hosted by Turkey, Qatar and the UN were planned so as to resume the peace process between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban.

The main purpose of the international conference was to kickstart the stalled peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban to bring the peace process on track. US President Joe Biden already announced the withdrawal of US troops from the country by mid-September.

The US administration is keen to install an interim government in Kabul including the Taliban before completing the military withdrawal from Afghanistan. But Afghan President Ashraf Ghani is opposing such a political settlement at the expense of his presidency and government.

The Afghan government does not seem to be happy with the way American officials are exerting pressure to concede to some of the Taliban's demands. It seems that a deadlock still persists between the different stakeholders. The postponement of the Istanbul conference has raised doubts about the peace process and the intra-Afghan dialogue.

The Afghan peace process and negotiated political settlement is a complex issue. The stakes are high and all sides are weighing their options carefully for maximum gains. There are many regional, International and local players involved in this long-drawn conflict. Lasting peace and stability depends on the big players of this conflict, especially Afghans. Afghan power players have the opportunity to work together for peace, stability and progress.

The Afghan people are going to pay a heavy price for their failure to overcome their differences and accommodate each other – as they did when Afghan factions failed to form a unity government after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1989.

The Afghan factions lost the opportunity to bring stability and lasting peace. And as a result, Afghan people faced destruction, war, violence and loss of human life. Millions of Afghan people were forced to leave their homeland. Hundreds of thousands



were killed and injured. Schools, irrigation systems, hospitals, homes, agriculture and roads were destroyed in the four decades long conflict, violence and wars. Afghan factions should avoid repeating the past mistakes.

The US and other Nato countries also lost the opportunity to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2005. The Taliban were defeated and demoralised. The US and Nato forces were not facing any real resistance at that time. But the US refused to resolve the conflict through dialogue and a power-sharing formula. The flawed US strategy and policy allowed the Taliban to make a comeback.

The US lost 15 years and billions of dollars in pursuing a misconceived policy. For three years, it faced little resistance – till 2005. The Taliban started to regroup in 2005-06 and launched attacks against occupied forces. The US lost three precious years to stabilize Afghanistan through development of infrastructure, education and health facilities and by reviving agriculture. But that time was lost. The US continues to focus on military operations instead of providing basic facilities and necessities of life to ordinary Afghan people.

The American strategy in Afghanistan has failed and

the American taxpayers have paid a heavy financial price of this misconceived war and political strategy. The US negotiated a peace deal with the Taliban at a time when they are much stronger than they were in 2003-05; the Taliban now control nearly 50 percent of Afghanistan.

Regional and international powers must help the battling Afghan factions to build a consensus on contentious issues. The legitimate concerns and interests of the regional powers must also be addressed. All stakeholders and groups must be included in the interim government. It is not an easy thing to do but there is no other option if the Afghans want peace, progress and stability. No group should be allowed to dominate the interim setup.

Little progress has been made since the US and Taliban signed a peace deal in February 2020. The experience of the last one year shows that there are many hurdles that need to be removed to make real progress in the peace process.

When the Trump administration decided to hold direct negotiations with the Taliban to end the longest American war in Afghanistan, it deliberately focused just on the security concerns and issues related to American interests in the region. In an attempt ... **P3**

By Ni Haining

US Just Walks Away, Leaving A Heavily Damaged Afghanistan

Both US President Joe Biden and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced recently that their troops stationed in Afghanistan would start returning home from May 1, and all troops will be pulled out by September 11.

Biden and some American politicians are racking their brains to deliver the message that American troops in Afghanistan have completed their mission; and they chose to complete the withdrawal by the special and symbolic date of September 11 as a solace for the American people. Yet the indisputable fact is that the nearly-20-year-long Afghan war is the longest that America has waged and fought overseas. It has dragged the US and its allies deep into the "Graveyard of Empires" and thrown the Afghans into excruciating misery and suffering.

The American troops, having paid a heavy price in Afghanistan, cannot wait to

leave this land. The protracted war has claimed the lives of more than 2,000 soldiers and injured about 20,000, and cost more than USD1 trillion, including over USD 170 billion in medical and nursing bills for veterans fighting in Afghanistan. Biden admitted in his speech that "no amount of US forces on the ground can deter the Taliban or end the war."

America's plan for duplicating democracy in Afghanistan also proves a total failure. Ever since the presidential election in 2014, the country has been hanging on the brink of ethnic turmoil. To make things worse, the US slashed a USD 1 billion aid to it in 2020 on the grounds that Kabul failed to form an inclusive government. How sarcastic for the "human rights preacher"!

The US opened the "Pandora's box" in Afghanistan and let it run amuck for about 20 years, bringing an inestimable humanitarian disaster for the

Afghan people. It is reported that more than 30,000 Afghan civilians have been killed by American troops or died from the chaos and battles they caused, with another 60,000 injured and 11 million or so left homeless.

Now the US is eager to pack up and pull out, leaving nothing but ruins and messes for the Afghan people, who have paid an unbearable price for a war imposed upon them by the unscrupulous hegemony. Despite all its big talk about counterterrorism, America has seen terrorism on the rise in Afghanistan. The American-style democracy is unable to give birth to a powerful government there because it is out of place in a country where family and tribal cohesion is just too strong. In recent years, the Taliban has made a comeback, controlled about half of the national land, and grown into an important force that can sway the future political ... **P3**

By Thomas L. Knapp

Washington's Message: Never, Ever Trust Us

In February 2020, United States president Donald Trump announced a peace deal with the Taliban, giving American forces 15 months to get out of Afghanistan. Nearly a year later, with the withdrawal nearly complete and only 2,500 US Armed Forces members remaining on Afghan soil, Joe Biden took the oath of inauguration and instantly began complaining that the May 1 deadline would be "hard to meet".

The claim is silly on its face. The US military is great at moving people. Eight months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, US Marines waded on shore at Guadalcanal. Five months after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, the US had moved 697,000 troops to the theatre of operations for what became Operation Desert Storm. For any competent commander, moving 2,500 troops from point A to B is a weekend hobby project, not a major undertaking. All Biden had to do was give the order.

On February 13, the White House leaked a new date: September 11, 20th anniversary of the attacks that President George W. Bush cited as casus belli for what was supposed to be a short, sharp war to liquidate al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, but quickly turned into a 20-year failed (and deadly) "nation-building" project. Should we be surprised? Well, no. Biden is just following in the footsteps of his predecessors.

Given the long, sorry record of US perfidy, the Taliban shouldn't be surprised, either.

"The United States acknowledge the lands reserved to the Oneida, Onondaga and Cayuga Nations," reads Article II of the Treaty of Canandaigua, ratified by the US Senate in 1795. "The United States will never claim the same nor disturb them."

Between then and 1868, the United States continuously negotiated, then sooner or later violated, hundreds of treaties with the continent's native tribes. By 1920, the extent of Oneida land "acknowledged" in the Treaty of Canandaigua had been reduced from six million acres to 32.

Abroad, the US Government takes a similar tack, always treating other parties' agreed obligations as non-negotiable and its own such obligations as optional.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty requires the US to work towards getting rid of its nuclear arsenal. Instead, recent administrations have gone in the other direction with a focus on "modernising" that arsenal, while demanding that the Iranian regime go beyond its NPT obligations ... then defaulting on its end of that deal, too.

As David A. Koplow, of the Georgetown University Law Centre, points out, the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention required the US to destroy its chemical weapons ... **P3**

Significant Increase in Nangarhar's Strawberry Yield

Strawberry farms in eastern Nangarhar province have produced much more than in previous years, said the provincial agriculture and irrigation department.

Officials in Nangarhar's Agriculture and Irrigation Department expect that the province will grow about 150 metric tons of the berries by the end of the solar year.

A farmer in the Khogyani district, AbdulRahman, said: "I have been busy with this work for 15-16 years. Day by day our crops are increasing, cultivation of the fruit is expanding. We cultivate this fruit as an alternative to cannabis and poppy." Meanwhile, farmers in Nangarhar province demand the government provide them with better and more effective methods of cultivation, yielding, and packing of strawberries, to increase their

profits.

"There is a high demand for the fruit in the markets, farmers continue to cultivate it, and it produces considerable profits," said Omran Gul, a farmer in the Khogyani district. Farmers in the Khogyani district call the government to provide them with the equipment necessary to process the strawberries in a standard way.

Shokrullah, an agriculture expert in Nangarhar province, said: "Strawberries have a big market in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul. They are also a great alternative for the cultivation of narcotics. It produces Hallal (permissible according to Islam) profits and creates jobs for villagers."

Officials in Nangarhar's agriculture and irrigation department said they are striving to change methods for



strawberry farming from traditional to commercial.

"We expect to grow strawberry farms in over 400 hectares of the land across the province because the province's weather condition is suitable for the cultivation of strawberries, and strawberries are in high demand at the markets,"

said Anamullah Sapai, Head of Nangarhar Agriculture and Irrigation Department.

Khogyani, Spinghar, Achin, and Surkhrod, are the districts with the most strawberry farming in the province, according to information provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock.

Washington's...

stockpiles by 2012. At last check, the US Army promises to get that done ... in 2023.

Also per Koplou, the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations requires governments to inform foreign arrestees of their right to communicate with their countries' consuls and seek assistance. The US demands that of other governments when Americans are arrested abroad, and routinely "forgets" its own such duty when foreigners are arrested in the US.

At this point, no one should be surprised when the US Government lies. It would be far more surprising if Joe Biden told the truth for once.

Libya: Armed ...

(GNU) through a UN-facilitated process aimed at bringing peace and stability to Libya with the reunification of state institutions and an election in December.

The GNU was approved by the eastern-based parliament and the Tripoli and Benghazi administrations, which peacefully handed over their powers. Until Sunday's incident, Tripoli-based GNU ministers and other officials were able to visit Benghazi freely.

The war-torn North African country faces a myriad of challenges.

Armed groups remain entrenched around the country, disputes continue over the flow and distribution of Libya's substantial oil revenues, parliament has opposed Dbeibeh's budget plans and the main highway across front lines remains closed.

Last week, Dbeibeh met displaced people in Tripoli who fled Benghazi and his comments to them reportedly angered factions in the east. Some protesters rallied against Dbeibeh there on Sunday.

Dbeibeh's visit to Benghazi on Monday was to have been the first by a Tripoli-based prime minister in years, a moment intended to encapsulate a rare opportunity to end its conflict.

Will There...

to sign a peace deal with the Taliban, the Trump administration excluded Afghan government from the peace talks.

Not a single contentious issue was addressed - including the complex power sharing, and the political, legal and constitutional framework for future governance, the transitional government and inclusion of the Taliban in the power structure. The issues of women's rights, education, democratic and political rights and media freedom were also excluded.

The experience of the last one year clearly demonstrated that it is easy to make a peace plan on paper. But the real issue is to implement it on the ground. And that is especially the case in a country like Afghanistan, ravaged by continuous violence and war for decades.

In the last one year, violence in Afghanistan has continued unabated, with the killing of politicians, journalists, social workers, and university students. The Ashraf Ghani government seems unable, or

unwilling, to stop this carnage as his government faces increasing pressure to form an interim government.

The US failed to bring stability, peace and democracy in Afghanistan after 20 years of war and occupation. As the US announced to pull out combative troops from Afghanistan in the next six months, fears are growing that there will be more violence in the coming period without a negotiated settlement and peace agreement.

The fears are growing that the Taliban might be back in power and curtail the rights of women, media freedom, and other democratic and political rights. The people fear that full-scale civil war might return after the US pull-out. These fears and concerns are not unjustified and are based on past experiences. Afghanistan needs democracy, constitutional rule, inclusive economic development and lasting peace to improve the lives of ordinary people. A weak, corrupt and handpicked government or reactionary regime will not be able solve the basic problems faced by

the Afghan people or provide them basic necessities of life and services. Afghanistan needs a real representative government to move forward. The country has seen wars, violence, and destruction of both human life and physical infrastructure for nearly 40 years. And now the Afghan people want peace, economic development, stability and a better future. Afghan people have been looking for peace and stability for nearly four decades. They were promised peace, stability and a better future when Soviet troops left Afghanistan in 1989 after the Geneva Accord in 1988. But the communist government led by Najeebullah fell in 1992. Instead of getting stability and peace Afghanistan's people got destruction, hunger, impoverished and miserable life, civil war, never-ending violence and killings. Afghanistan finds itself in a similar situation as the one that existed when Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan and different Afghan war lords and militant groups failed to agree to form a coalition government. This failure led to a bloody civil war.

US Just Walks...

situation in the country - topped by the booming morale that it now has the initiative to fight for a legitimate position. The current Afghan government, which has got used to relying on the US troops when fighting and on tariffs for finance, will be left helpless in front of the Taliban and strong local factions once external military support is gone. People in Afghanistan are worried that the country, troubled by poor, if any, governance and various vying forces, may once again become the hotbed for terrorist organizations, or worse, fall into the abyss of aggravated civil war and national secession.

The US has always been half-hearted about boosting the economic and social development in Afghanistan.

Washington Post reported in December 2019 that of the USD 133 billion that Washington had spent on Afghanistan's "reconstruction" - more than what was spent on Europe's post-WWII reconstruction under the Marshall Plan - USD 87 billion went to training local security troops and police force rather than developing production and normalizing the society. Due to constant battles and turbulence, the country's industrial foundation remains weak, with the output value accounting for only 1/3 of GDP, and agriculture and animal husbandry make up the main part of the national economy. Not much is left of the education system, with a general illiteracy rate of 65% and up to 96% among females, leaving the uneducated young

generation more vulnerable to terrorist indoctrination.

Since American troops set foot on its territory 20 years ago under the pretext of "counterterrorism", Afghanistan has been going down a path to hell. Now the country that has created all this chaos is turning its back because it finds it more important to deal with other overseas priorities and dedicate all resources to responding to more pressing threats and challenges. Seeing Afghanistan as a burden now, Washington feels no qualms about leaving it high and dry in an embattled environment and asking the international community to pay for what it has done.

The question is, having ravaged and abandoned one country after another, who is the US going to devastate next?

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Global Military Spending Hits Highest Level Since 1988

The global military expenditure has hit its highest level since 1988 with nearly \$2 trillion in 2020, according to an international survey on Monday. Total military spending rose 2.6% from the previous year, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said. Military spending as a share of GDP – the military burden – reached a global average of 2.4% in 2020, up from 2.2% in 2019. This was the biggest year-on-year rise in the military burden since the global financial and economic crisis in 2009. Diego Lopes da Silva, a researcher with SIPRI's Arms and Military Expenditure Program, pointed out that the pandemic did not have a significant impact on global military spending in 2020. The US, China, India, Russia, and the UK were the top five spenders in 2020, with 62% of the global military expenditure, the survey said. The US military spending rose 4.4% to \$778

billion, making 39% of the total military expenditure last year. Alexandra Marksteiner, another researcher at SIPRI, stressed the US spent mostly on research and development (R&D), and several long-term projects such as modernizing the US nuclear arsenal and large-scale arms procurement. "This reflects growing concerns over perceived threats from strategic competitors such as China and Russia, as well as the [Donald] Trump administration's drive to bolster what it saw as a depleted US military," Marksteiner. China increased its military expenditure by 1.9%, India 2.1%, Russia 2.5%, and the UK 2.9%. "China stands out as the only major spender in the world not to increase its military burden in 2020 despite increasing its military expenditure, because of its positive GDP growth last year," said Nan Tian, a senior SIPRI researcher.



A look at the world

Putin, Assad Discuss Supplies of Russian Covid Vaccines to Syria

Russian President Vladimir Putin has discussed the issue of supplying Russian coronavirus vaccines to Syria in a phone call with his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad, the Kremlin reported Monday following the conversation initiated by the Syrian leader. "Current issues on the bilateral agenda were discussed, primarily the prospects for further development of trade, economic and humanitarian ties as well as cooperation in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus infection, including supplies of Russian vaccines," the Kremlin noted in a statement.



Assad also expressed gratitude to Russia for support and assistance for the Syrian people. On February 22, Damascus authorized Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine to be used in the country. However, the summit between Russian and US Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden is planned for summer but its precise date and location will still have to be agreed, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Monday. "Indeed, certain proposals have been voiced, I cannot confirm the date yet. There have been no agreements on date yet. We are indeed talking about summer months, <...> many factors will still have to be analyzed to reach any final agreements," he said. "No particular country [where the summit can be held] has been named," Peskov clarified. Putin and Biden had a phone call on April 13. The White House reported that Biden suggested a Russian-American summit in a third country in the coming months. The US leader later pointed out that he proposed a summer meeting in Europe to his Russian counterpart.

Libya: Armed Haftar Supporters Prevent PM's First Meeting in East



A Libyan cabinet meeting in the city of Benghazi was postponed after gunmen loyal to renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar prevented a government delegation from entering the city. Armed men and civilians loyal to Haftar stopped the security detail of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh after their plane landed at Benina Airport on Sunday, sources told Al Jazeera. The delegation – which was forced to fly back to the capital Tripoli – was planning to prepare for the first visit to Benghazi by Dbeibeh since he assumed office in March. The meeting planned for Monday aimed to demonstrate the unity government's progress in ending years of division between warring factions. One source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Al Jazeera the delegation included a number of security officials, the prime minister's bodyguards and other government staff. Mohamed Hamouda, a spokesman for Dbeibeh's interim government, said in a social media post on Sunday the planned visit to the country's east had been postponed, but he provided no details. Preparations were under way to reschedule the trip, Hamouda said. Dbeibeh had previously announced his intention to hold cabinet meetings in different cities across the country, most notably in Benghazi – Libya's second-largest city and one of Haftar's strongholds. Continued friction The incident underscores the continued friction between rival camps in Tripoli in the west and Benghazi in the east – the stronghold of Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). Rival administrations were formed in the west and east in 2014, further dividing a country already beset by chaos and violence that followed the 2011 NATO-backed uprising against leader Muammar Gaddafi. Dbeibeh was appointed in March to lead the new Government of National Unity ... **P3**

Iran Hopes US Will Return to JCPOA With Sensible Policy

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed hope that the new US administration, with a sensible policy and the fulfillment of commitments, will be able to return to the JCPOA more quickly. In a joint press conference held on Monday in Baghdad after his meeting with his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "We had very good talks with Mr. Fuad Hussein, and I thank him for his warm hospitality." "We welcome the pivotal and powerful role of Iraq in the region, and we hope that the role of Iraq in the region will be stronger every



day and a role for stability and peace in the region," the Iranian foreign minister added. "We thank the Iraqi government for its efforts to establish dialogue in the region, and we hope that these efforts will lead to more serious dialogues in the region," Zarif highlighted. "All of us will always be together in this region and we must build our relations based on friendship, brotherhood and good neighborliness, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs and this is the policy of the Islamic Republic in this region," he added. The Iranian foreign minister went on to say, "Today we had the opportunity to talk about the nuclear talks between Iran and the P4+1. Of course, the Americans are in Vienna and we do not have a dialogue with the United States. But we had very good talks on the implementation of the JCPOA, and we hope that the new US administration, with a sensible policy and the fulfillment of commitments, will be able to return to the deal more quickly and all parties fulfill their obligations." "We are ready to fulfill our commitments completely after verification of the US return to its commitments," Zarif added. ... **P2**



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