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22 People Killed in Herat Flash Floods

Local officials said that 22 people were killed in flash floods following heavy rainfalls in two districts of the western province of Herat on Monday. The incident happened in the Rokha village of Adraskan district and in Obe district in the province, Herat governor's spokesman Jailani Farhad said. He said that four children, a woman and five men are among the victims of the incident. He said that 12 people were killed in Adraskan and 10 more were killed in Obe district. The floods also destroyed dozens of hectares of land and have killed dozens of cattle, Farhad said. Local officials said that the Obe and Karokh districts of Herat also witnessed flash floods but there is no information about their possible damages. Most of Herat witnessed heavy rainfalls in the past two days.



Billions of Dollars Wasted In 5 Government Departments

Billions of dollars in government budgets are lying unused in five government departments, said President Ashraf Ghani on Tuesday at the Education Week meeting in Kabul, without naming the departments concerned. He added that "the blocking of billions of dollars" by these government offices was unacceptable and "only two departments have closed \$1.6 billion," he stressed. At the same time, Ghani reiterated that if a department has not been able to utilize or spend the budgets allocated to them in one year, then, the budget of these departments will be given to other departments. "We do not have the opportunity to waste money," the President added. The President also mentioned how the Taliban had damaged billions of dollars-worth infrastructures in Afghanistan, including in the education sector. ... **P3**

Ghani Outlines Afghanistan's Path to Peace



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani says President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw the remaining 2,500 U.S. troops from Afghanistan by September represents a turning point for the country and its neighbors. In an article written by Ghani for Foreign Affairs, he says the Afghan government respects the decision to withdraw troops "and views it as a moment of both opportunity and risk for itself, for Afghans, for the Taliban, and for the region." "For me, as the elected leader of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, it is another opportunity to reiterate and further my commitment to

peace. In February 2018, I made an unconditional offer of peace to the Taliban. That was followed by a three-day cease-fire in June of that year. "In 2019, a Loya Jirga (Supreme council) that I convened mandated negotiations with the Taliban, and since then, my government has worked to build a national consensus on the need for a political settlement that would comport with the values of the Afghan constitution and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My government remains ready to continue talks with the Taliban. And, if it meant peace would be secured, I am willing to end my term

early," he wrote. He says the announcement of the U.S. withdrawal is another phase in Afghanistan's long-term partnership with the United States. "Afghanistan has been through consequential withdrawals before. In 2014, the year I first took office, 130,000 U.S. and NATO forces withdrew, allowing Afghans full leadership of the security sector and of the institutions that our international partners had helped us build. "Since then, the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) have protected and upheld the

republic and made it possible for the country to carry out two national elections. Today, our government and our security forces are on a much stronger footing than we were seven years ago, and we are fully prepared to continue serving and defending our people after American troops depart," he wrote. He says the withdrawal also represents an opportunity for the Afghan people to achieve real sovereignty and that soon all decisions regarding military approaches to the Taliban and other terrorist groups will be made by the Afghan government. "Indeed, the Taliban's justification for war—jihad against a foreign power—will cease to apply," he wrote. Ghani says the U.S. decision to fully withdraw surprised not only the Taliban but also "their patrons in Pakistan". He says this has forced them to make a choice. "Will they become credible stakeholders, or will they foster more chaos and violence?" If the Taliban choose the latter path, the ANDSF will fight them. And if the Taliban still refuse to negotiate, they will be choosing the peace of the grave, he says. Ghani also stated that in order to avoid such a fate, the Taliban must answer critical questions about their vision for Afghanistan. ... **P3**

Human, Migrant Trafficking Reduces By 50%: Minister of Justice

Outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, closure of borders and arrest of heads of human and migrant trafficking networks have led to a 50 percent reduction in human and migrant trafficking, said Justice Minister Fazl Ahmad Manawi at a press conference on Tuesday. Over the past year, 70 people have been arrested on human trafficking charges in Afghanistan. Manawi added that one of the 34 identified networks of human trafficking and migrant trafficking are under the scrutiny of security agencies. He said that the Attorney General's Office had received and worked on the cases of 50 people ... **P2**



EU Provides EUR 2 Million for Food Security in Afghanistan

The European Union humanitarian aid agency and FAO will be partnering to anticipate the expected impacts of La Niña induced drought conditions on livestock production and food security in Afghanistan, according to a statement on Tuesday. This will mitigate the risks for some of the most vulnerable and food insecure people to slide into acute hunger and displacement. "Based on the weather forecast for the upcoming months and the already evident signs of drought conditions in many areas across the country, we need to protect the most vulnerable rural people to meet their most basic needs and safeguard their livelihoods," said Luigi Pandolfi, who oversees EU humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan. "Otherwise, there is a risk of people sliding into severe hunger and malnutrition, and resorting to



desperate measures, such as distress sale of their livestock and migration from rural areas, as was the case during the drought in 2017-2018," added Pandolfi. Thanks to the EUR 2 million provided by the European Union humanitarian aid, FAO will assist 88 200 food insecure people in the provinces of Badghis, Badakhshan, Faryab, and Nuristan. This new FAO emergency intervention reinforces similar ongoing efforts of the UN agency across the country to protect rural

livelihoods and food and nutrition security. "While we are already seeing the early effects of drought on herding communities, we will only be able to see the full and cascading impacts of the current drought conditions on agriculture livelihoods and food security during the lean season, from October onward. As usual, there is a seasonal time lag in the manifestation of the drought effects, but that's precisely why we must act now towards building the critical near-term resilience of ... **P3**

Human, Migrant...

arrested on charges of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, including five accused of human trafficking and another 45, accused of smuggling migrants.

He clarified that the Supreme Court had tried eight people on charges of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, four of whom had been sentenced to moderate imprisonment, and four others, including a woman and three men, had been acquitted.

The Minister of Justice said that currently 235 cases of human trafficking, migrant trafficking and child trafficking are pending in the courts of first instance, appellate courts and the Supreme Court, including 158 cases of human trafficking, 56 cases of migrant trafficking and 21 cases of child labor.

He added that a number of government officials are among those accused of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. "A senior Interior Ministry official and a former executive director of the National Unity Government are among those prosecuted for human trafficking and migrant smuggling," he added.

Manawi said that in the past year, 75 Afghan nationals smuggled into Iran had died and 64 others had been injured for various reasons.

The Minister of Justice called human trafficking and migrant trafficking a global threat and expressed hope that the international community would cooperate with the Government of Afghanistan in this regard.

"There is a concern that the withdrawal of foreign forces will not increase the activity of human trafficking networks," he said. "But we make sure that we prevent any activity of these networks."

By Bruce Riedel

Biden's Afghan gamble

I have been involved in U.S. policy vis-à-vis the wars in Afghanistan since Christmas Eve 1979, when I was in the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) operations center as the Russians invaded the country. The National Security Agency reported detecting 300 Russian flights that day from Soviet bases in Central Asia to Kabul, air-lifting an elite airborne division to the capital.

Washington was taken by surprise, but in less than a month President Jimmy Carter put together a strategy and an alliance with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to fight the Soviets that went on to win the final and decisive battle of the Cold War. Two weeks after the invasion, the CIA shipped the first weapons to Karachi for the mujaheddin.

We have made many mistakes in Afghanistan. We paid almost no attention to the country after the Soviets left, and it descended into a failed state that was misruled by the Taliban and hosted al-Qaida. President George W. Bush took his eye off the ball after the invasion in 2001 and let Osama bin Laden escape into Pakistan. By 2005, he was encased in his hideout in Abbottabad. With America bogged down in Iraq, al-Qaida regenerated.

By 2006, it was more dangerous than ever. The British foiled an al-Qaida plot that summer to simultaneously blow up a half-dozen airplanes en route from the United Kingdom to America and Canada over the Atlantic Ocean. Bin Laden had directed the plot from his hideout and used Pakistanis living in England as suicide bombers. It would have been worse than 9/11. President Barack Obama's so-called AfPak report in March 2009 identified the principal goal of America's policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan to be "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida." It recognized that it was Pakistan where al-Qaida was most entrenched. Obama ordered the CIA to ruthlessly destroy the organization with drones based in Afghanistan, operating across the border.

He also ordered a full-scale hunt for bin Laden. In 2009, the search was stone-cold: The CIA had no idea where he was. After brilliant analysis, he was located less than a mile from Pakistan's top military academy. Ten years ago — on May 2, 2011 — the Navy SEALs delivered justice. Al-Qaida has never recovered. It is still present in the region but it has been decimated and defeated. Last September, Ayman al-Zawahri — bin Laden's successor — issued a statement on the anniversary of 9/11. No one noticed. It was a sign of how marginalized the group has become.

AL-QAIDA, THE TALIBAN, AND CIVIL WAR

Of course, the United States is also fighting in the Afghan civil war that escalated when the Russians left Kabul in 1989. The war against the Taliban is impossible to win as long as Pakistan provides sanctuary and safety, training, equipment, and funds for the Taliban. We cannot defeat Pakistan, which is a nuclear-armed state and has the fifth largest population in the world. As Obama wrote in his memoir "A Promised Land": "The Riedel report made one thing clear: Unless Pakistan stopped sheltering the Taliban, our efforts at long term stability in Afghanistan were bound to fail."

Our troops accomplished the top priority in 2011 by killing bin Laden. They cannot defeat the proxy army of the Rawalpindi generals. It is that reality that underscores Biden's decision.

Unfortunately, our intelligence capabilities will be hurt without a military presence in the country; that is part of the gamble Biden has chosen. If al-Qaida does regenerate and plots an attack on the U.S., the intelligence community will have less capacity to uncover the plot and to block it. It's a big gamble.

Moreover, Biden inherited a terrible deal from Trump's feckless negotiators: a May 1, 2021 deadline to get out of Afghanistan or face renewed attacks on the more than 10,000 American and NATO troops. In return, the Taliban was to renounce al-Qaida and sever ties to the group. It did neither, but it has largely refrained from attacking American troops for the last year. Biden knew that if he ignored the May deadline, the Taliban would resume attacks on foreign forces. Indeed, they would be prime targets. He is gambling that the Taliban will accept his new timeline to withdraw by this September. What happens next is unclear. The civil war will certainly escalate further. The Taliban will have little or no interest in the political process with the government in Kabul, but they have never been interested in it nor have they ever lived up to the obligations in the agreement with Trump. Whether the Taliban will keep from disrupting the NATO withdrawal is unclear.

The victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan is not inevitable. The Communist government in Kabul survived for three years after the Red Army left. It only collapsed when its top military commander, Abdul Rashid Dostam, defected to the side of the mujaheddin. He still runs his home province Jowzjan in the north. I have a lovely carpet from Dostam, when we met in the Pentagon; he is also a unrepentant gangster. The Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazari groups do not want to be governed by the Pashtun Taliban. Urban Afghans

don't want the medieval Islamic Emirate. Nearly three-quarters of Afghans are under 30 years old and have lived their lives in a relatively open society. The civil war will go on, most likely, with the Taliban seizing some cities in the south. We should continue to fund the Afghan army, as Biden has promised.

We should be proud of the very significant changes the last 20 years have brought to Afghanistan, especially for its women. They go to school now; they have jobs and opportunities that had been denied by the Taliban. The notion that the Taliban have mellowed in the last 20 years, or that they crave international recognition, is delusional.

THE PAKISTAN PIECE

Pakistan is a winner again in Afghanistan. It has now outlasted two superpowers. The Pakistani army generals will be more hubristic and dangerous than ever. The army intelligence service known as the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) will be the one of the most dangerous patrons of terror in the world, especially with the Haqqani network.

Pakistan does not control the Taliban and it will suffer negative as well as positive consequences from their improved position. The Pakistan Taliban will be stronger and more inclined to strike inside Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban will become more independent. We will need a coherent strategy to deal with Pakistan. Biden has so far failed to engage with Prime Minister Imran Khan, as my colleague Madiha Afzal has written. Only belatedly was Pakistan invited to the virtual climate change conference. Ignoring Pakistan is a mistake. It is not too late to repair. There is no simple way to change Pakistani behavior especially given its strong alliance with China. But engagement is better than isolation and sanctions.

The president should follow up the Afghan decision with the withdrawal of American combat troops from Saudi Arabia and a modest drawdown of forces elsewhere in the Gulf. The current force dispositions in Kuwait and other Gulf states are relics of our previous wars in Iraq and are no longer necessary. The militarization of American policy in the region needs to be reversed.

The NATO alliance will also need attention. Afghanistan is the alliance's first significant out-of-area operation. Allies labored hard to support expeditionary forces in Central Asia. Some, like Canada, sustained heavy casualties. The perception of failure in Afghanistan will weigh heavily on future challenges and opportunities for the alliance.

By MK BHADRAKUMAR

Afghanistan's Past Foretells Its Post-US Withdrawal Future

Ex-CIA officer Bruce Riedel at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, whose familiarity with Afghanistan is never in doubt, has made an attempt to figure out the future course of events as the US troop withdrawal commences. History doesn't repeat, but it rhymes.

Riedel sees in the haziness old familiar shapes appearing: the erstwhile Northern Alliance warlords. And he invokes the fate of the communist regime led by Mohammad Najibullah — called Najib by everyone — after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

Can the two strands supplement each other?

Riedel's bottom line is that after the US withdrawal, although the civil war will escalate further, "victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan is not inevitable." Riedel recommends continued American backing for the Afghan army and synergy with former Northern Alliance leaders to create a revamped agenda to defeat the Taliban militarily.

Clearly, there is an influential body of opinion within the US military and intelligence establishment rooted in the belief that any hope of

mainstreaming the Taliban is futile, since the movement is wedded to the extremist ideology of an Islamic Emirate.

However, on reflection, Riedel's conclusions rest on shaky ground. Yet his is a prestigious voice. Consider the following.

Anyone who knew Najib would agree that he was an extraordinary personality, immersed in Afghan Pashtun tribal culture and folklore but with the professionalism of an intelligence officer trained by the KGB. After the mujahideen takeover in 1992, when I went to Kabul to meet Najib in the UN compound, he was still phenomenally well-informed.

The late Abdul Rahman, Ahmed Shah Massoud's ace negotiator (who was murdered in Kabul in 2002 in mysterious circumstances), once told me he used to consult Najib regularly. I have absolutely no doubt that Massoud and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) were determined that Najib would never find his way to Delhi.

This is important, as Afghanistan's current president, Ashraf Ghani, is not a patch on Najib — not by a long

shot. Najib was fighting an insurgency but also had a solid power base and a fully functioning state apparatus and cadre-based party. That is not the case with Ghani or his cabal. This is one thing.

Once Mikhail Gorbachev took over as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, Najib anticipated a potential shift in Soviet policies. When the Geneva talks got under way in 1988, Najib revved up his National Reconciliation policy, while also keeping lines open to Pakistan.

In the famous Battle of Jalalabad (1989), the ISI tested his mettle but Najib won because the Afghan army trained and equipped by the Soviets was of high caliber and rooted in institutional traditions and structure that dated back to the 1800s, drawing sustenance from a healthy society and a government with functioning institutions and state ideology.

By contrast, a majority of today's Afghan army units consists of soldiers who enrolled for economic reasons, serving under an officer corps mostly composed of illiterate former militia members who are neither fighting

for a core set of common beliefs and goals nor inspired by patriotism and commitment to the ideals of a unitary, democratic, and multi-ethnic Afghanistan.

If the mujahideen were decisively defeated in the Battle of Jalalabad because of a lack of unified command, inexperience in large-scale offensive operations, and an over-reliance on the ISI, the Taliban operate in vastly different conditions. Put differently, any support for the Ghani government will not make sense except as a stopgap arrangement. Enduring peace is not achievable without reconciliation with the Taliban. This is the second point.

True, Najib held on for three years after the Soviets pulled the plug, but he had a harrowing time. The last columns of the Red Army left Afghanistan in February 1989. It took less than a year after that for the ISI to plot a major coup to murder Najib and seize power in Kabul. The ISI lured none other than Najib's defense minister Shahnawaz Tanai, a former general and friend of Najib.

The coup attempt failed and Tanai fled to Pakistan in March 1990. When I reached Kabul within a few weeks to hold charge of the Indian mission, I saw a regime that was losing steam. Kabul city was under siege and the

mujahideen were pounding the valley with rockets from the surrounding hilltops. A daily curfew from 6pm was enforced, lest the mujahideen cadres and ISI agents infiltrated the city under cover of darkness.

One day Najib's office summoned me for a sensitive message. It was an SOS that Najib had run out of money to pay the salaries of the militia under Rashid Dostum, who were threatening to mutiny. (Najib never allowed the unruly, violent Uzbek militia to enter the city.)

Simply put, any scenario today should factor in that the US and its allies, while preoccupied with their post-pandemic recovery, will also be called upon to bankroll the Afghan economy and state. This is the third point. Finally, by 1990, once the Soviet forces withdrew, Dostum began searching for a Faustian deal with the mujahideen. In fact, Dostum, whom Riedel remembers warmly, has been a rank opportunist. He collaborated with the ISI to facilitate the Taliban victory over Ismail Khan and the conquest of Herat in 1995.

At least on one occasion, I know for a fact that Dostum was talking simultaneously with India and the ISI. Dostum himself admitted in a conversation in Sheberghan once that then-Pakistani interior minister Major-General Naseerullah ... **P3**

One-Third of Afghans Facing Lack of Food Insecurity

One-in-three Afghans are acutely food insecure, according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) assessment report released by the Afghan government and its partners on Tuesday.

According to the IPC report, food insecurity in Afghanistan is attributed to the lingering impact of COVID-19, armed conflict, a rise in food prices, high unemployment rates and income loss, and the start of the complex and recurrent La Niña weather event.

“With doubling of our focus on mitigating adverse effects of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable, we have managed to bring the numbers down from a projected 42 to 35 percent, which is an achievement, however this is still far from our vision of a hunger-free Afghanistan,” said the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Anwarul Haq Ahady.

“A third of our people are struggling to feed their families. We must not

let our guard down in light of the challenges ahead, specifically the drought-like effects La Niña is already triggering across the country, and the Government is preparing to respond to the impending drought”, he said.

While the Government prepares its response to an impending drought, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warn that current resourcing is inadequate to protect lives and livelihoods at risk.

“Millions of Afghan families already struggle to survive, and now they face the second drought in three years. A bag of wheat is 30 percent more expensive than the four-year average. Jobs are few and far between,” Mary-Ellen McGroarty, WFP Representative in Afghanistan said.

“The lean season is expected to arrive earlier and bite harder. We need to act now, bring food closer to people’s homes, and prevent irreversible malnutrition in mothers and children

who will be impacted the most. We simply cannot wait and see.”

However, significant funding gaps for humanitarian agencies pose a challenge in meeting even the most basic humanitarian needs in the coming months, the report stated.

While the onset of the summer harvest may bring employment and improve access to food, the report warns the harvest is expected to be “below average” and the “food security situation is expected to deteriorate further during the 2021-2022 lean season”.

A further deterioration of the food security context will push more people to join one third of the population already food insecure.

“In order to understand the IPC report figures, we need to take into account two things. First, this analysis was conducted before any of the drought-like effects could be felt. Second, the projection period coincides with the harvest season, but the most serious effects of the lower rain and

snowfall are affecting agriculture and livestock production with cascading food security impacts during the subsequent lean season.

“These figures actually call for immediate action that mitigates the impacts on agriculture and livestock production and prevents rural people from abandoning their agriculture-based livelihoods and displacing to urban areas,” said Rajendra Aryal, FAO Representative in Afghanistan.

La Niña drought-like effects are already evident in Afghanistan, according to FAO. Early evidence of agricultural drought has been found in 25 hotspots across the country. This weather event is expected to severely affect both agricultural and livestock production in 2021.

According to FAO estimates, wheat production decreased by 16 to 27 percent in the last five drought events induced by La Niña; the potential impact on livestock production of this year’s event is expected to affect 30 percent of ruminants in 18 provinces.

Ghani Outlines...

“Will they accept elections, and will they will commit to uphold the rights of all Afghans, including girls, women, and minorities?”

“Negative answers to those questions were suggested by the Taliban’s recent decision to pull out of a peace conference that was supposed to begin in Istanbul at the end of April.” He said the Taliban, it seems, remain more interested in power than in peace. A political settlement and the integration of the Taliban into society and government is the only way forward. But the ball is in their court.

Ghani wrote that Afghans cannot and absolutely will not go back to the horrors of the 1990s and are “not idly waiting for peace to chance upon us but continue to take steps to create the environment and platform for it to take hold.” He says that while all Afghans want peace, it is far less clear what the Taliban want.

Billions of Dollars...

“Taliban has damaged infrastructure worth \$1 billion,” he told the 31st Government’s Governance and Human Resources Week, while asking the Taliban why they resort to violence and appealed to them to take the path of peace. He also asked the group to plant flowers and wheat instead of planting mines and take part in the development of the country.

Bill and Melinda...

to its website. The foundation provided \$5.1bn to grantees in 135 countries in 2019 and employs 1,602 people. In 2020, the foundation announced it was committing more than \$1.75bn to support the global response to COVID-19. Since its inception, the foundation said it has awarded more than \$54.8bn in direct payments, focusing its activities on health, development and climate.

EU Provides...

vulnerable rural people for them to be in a better position to withstand the negative impacts,” said Rajendra Aryal, FAO Representative in Afghanistan.

Cash+ assistance: Protecting instead of rebuilding

This humanitarian intervention will protect the livestock livelihoods of 6 300 vulnerable families (44 100 people) with Cash+ assistance. Each household will receive a livestock protection package, consisting of 200 kg of concentrate animal feed, deworming medicine and veterinary assistance. The distribution of inputs is scheduled to be provided during May and June, as the initial effects of drought are already

evident on animals.

This assistance will be coupled with a one-off unconditional cash transfer (USD 50 per family) and technical training on livestock management related issues. The combination of livestock related inputs and cash assistance is aimed to enable people to safeguard livestock health, protect their productive livelihood assets, help them buy inputs, tools or paying debts, and covering their most immediate food needs as well as avoiding distress sale of animals.

Under this EU humanitarian funding, FAO will also provide cash assistance to another 6 300 vulnerable landless households (44 100 people). Families headed by women, elderly

and people with disabilities will be prioritized. All these 6 300 families will receive a total of three unconditional cash transfers (USD 50) in three consecutive months over the summer of 2021 to “ensure predictability and consistency, and so that households can plan their budgets accordingly and use the money to accessing nutritious food and cover their daily needs and avoid resorting to negative coping actions,” said Rajendra Aryal.

Unconditional cash transfers are equivalent to more than half (55%) of the standard monthly food basket for a family of seven members, according to the estimates of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan’s...

Babar had been to see him in his citadel just the previous week accompanied by the late Taliban supremo Mullah Mohammad Rabbani.

(Dostum recounted jovially how Babar treated the mullah with contempt, tapping him with the baton he was carrying.)

The former director-general of the ISI, retired Lieutenant-General Asad Durrani, wrote recently, “There is a fable about the frogs. They could not come out of the jar because anyone who tried would be pulled back by the rest. No idea how it ended: the pot broke, or the frogs died of exhaustion!”

“Afghanistan is not breaking apart, but the US is still lucky. None of its adversaries want it to be buried in the proverbial graveyard. Only its friends keep tugging at its legs to keep it in.”

True, it can be very exasperating. The Afghans never let go of their benefactors. Hundreds of millions of dollars went down the drain to support the Northern Alliance. Did the foreign patrons achieve anything? They couldn’t even save Massoud.

But for that hugely foolish enterprise, the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Islamic Emirate would be still ruling Afghanistan. The Northern Alliance was gasping for breath by the autumn of 2001. There is no knowing where all that money went. Wild rumors were in circulation in the Central Asian bazaars. The Northern Alliance warlords are millionaires today with assets and bank accounts abroad. How that happened no one wants to tell.

To pursue General Durrani’s metaphor further, do imagine

a jar containing Dostum, Mohammed Atta, Ismail Khan, Karim Khalili, Mohammed Mohaqiq, Ghani, Amrullah Saleh, Hamdullah Mohib, Abdullah Abdullah, Hamid Karzai, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Rasul Sayyaf – and US President Joe Biden. How long will that jar hold?

The most insightful thought in Riedel’s analysis is actually his acknowledgment that “Pakistan does not control the Taliban and it will suffer negative as well as positive consequences from their improved position. The Afghan Taliban will become more independent.”

If so, what is the need of paranoia? The door is opening wide to engage with the Taliban based on mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual interests.

Give diplomacy a chance.

UK, U.S. Foreign...

Britain holds the rotating presidency of the G7 group, which also includes the United States, France, Germany, Canada, Japan and Italy.

The meeting this week will also be attended by representatives from the European Union, Australia, India, Japan, South Korea, and South Africa, as well as this year’s chair of the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Brunei. The G7 summit will be held in Cornwall, a seaside resort in southwestern England, on June 11-13.

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| | | |
|-------|-----|-------|
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| 92.6 | € | 92.7 |
| 105.4 | £ | 105.5 |
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| 20.9 | රු | 21 |
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UK, U.S. Foreign Ministers Meet On COVID-19, Free Trade Deal

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on Monday met with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to discuss efforts to build back better from COVID-19 and a possible free trade agreement between the two countries.

The meeting took place in London ahead of the first in-person meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) foreign and development ministers in two years, according to a statement by the British government.

“Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab hosted U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at 1 Carlton Gardens ahead of this week’s G7 Foreign Ministers meeting. They held a discussion on foreign policy priorities and opportunities to strengthen the UK-U.S. friendship,” a British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said in a statement.

“Discussions included UK-U.S. shared commitment to open societies, a strengthened

multilateral system, efforts to build back better from COVID-19, including through the COVAX facility and a UK-U.S. FTA (free trade agreement),” said the spokesperson.

They also discussed latest developments in Afghanistan, Iran and Ethiopia, among other issues, according to the spokesperson.

During their joint press conference, Raab said that the world has changed quite a bit in the past two years, which brings challenges that require global solutions.

“Our societies and our economies have been shocked and shaken by coronavirus,” said Raab. “There’s also rapid technological change which brings new opportunities, we’ve seen that with collaboration on things like the vaccine, but also acute challenges, and there are global threats from COVID to climate change that frankly demand global solutions and we’re committed to trying to find and forge those solutions,” he



added.

The G7 foreign and development ministers gathered Monday for a three-day meeting in London for the first time in two years to address such issues as economist recovery after the

coronavirus pandemic and climate change. The conference was reportedly held with strict COVID-secure measures being insured by organisers. The last G7 Foreign Ministers Meeting took place in France in April 2019. ... **P3**

A look at the world

2 Killed, 18 Injured in Moscow Hotel Fire

Two people were killed and 18 others injured after a fire broke out at a five-story hotel building in Moscow, local media reported Tuesday.

“Two adults died in the hospital. It was not possible to save them,” the TASS news agency reported, citing a source from the local department of the Russian Emergencies Ministry.

According to the source, the fire, which started at 3:27 a.m. local time (0027 GMT) at the Vechny Zov Hotel in Moscow and was extinguished by 4:30 a.m. local time (0130 GMT), covered an area of about 100 square meters.



At the time of the fire, 305 people were inside the building, said the report.

An investigation was underway to determine the cause of the fire, which might be a short circuit, TASS said

However, At least 23 people were killed and 70 others injured after a metro bridge collapsed in southern Mexico City Monday night, according to local authorities.

Authorities said on social media that 49 of the injured have been rushed to hospital. In an interview with local TV station on Tuesday, Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said that the accident occurred Monday when a concrete beam collapsed just as a subway train was passing.

“The corresponding investigations will be carried out to publicize the causes of the accident. We are very sorry for what happened,” she said.

At the moment, the rescue operation has been interrupted because the train which had fallen is at an unstable condition and authorities do not rule out a major collapse. The Metro 12 line that runs over the collapsed overpass was put into use since 2012.

UN Envoy Stresses Implementing UNSC Resolutions in Talks with Libyan Officials



Special envoy of the United Nations (UN) secretary-general for Libya Jan Kubis stressed the importance of implementing the recently-adopted Security Council Resolutions 2570 (2021) and 2571 (2021) in meetings with senior Libyan officials, the UN Support Mission in Libya said Monday.

Kubis held talks here on Sunday with Chairman of the High National Election Commission (HNEC) Emad Sayyeh on “preparations and steps needed for the holding of national elections” scheduled for Dec. 24, in accordance with the resolutions, the mission said in a statement.

“Special Envoy Kubis renewed the UN and the international community’s readiness to continue to provide the necessary support to HNEC,” the statement said.

According to the statement, Kubis also met with the country’s Central Bank Governor Siddiq Al-Kaber to discuss the economic and financial situation in the country and the need to support the government and the institutions of Libya.

Another meeting took place between Kubis and Minister of Justice Halima R. Abdul Rahman, which covered the overall human rights situation across the country, particularly the issues of arbitrary detention, illegal detention centers, and detainees held without due process, the statement said.

Besides, Kubis held talks with senior Libyan officials from the petroleum industry on the persistent lack of adequate and timely financing for maintenance and renewal of petroleum infrastructure and operational needs of the petroleum sector, it said.

The statement added that the UN envoy also met on Saturday with Commander of the eastern-based Libyan National Army Khalifa Haftar on advancing the implementation of the Libyan ceasefire agreement in full compliance with the UN resolutions, starting with the immediate reopening of the coastal road and the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya without further delay. The two UN resolutions, both adopted on April 16, extend the ban on the illicit export of petroleum and approve arrangements for a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned ceasefire monitoring mechanism.

Bill and Melinda Gates To Divorce After 27 Years Together

Bill and Melinda Gates have announced their decision to divorce after 27 years of marriage but will continue to work together at their namesake philanthropic foundation, a development that shocked the world of philanthropy.

Bill, the billionaire founder of Microsoft, and Melinda, an author and businesswoman, announced their decision to separate on Monday in an identical statement posted on their individual Twitter accounts.

Over the last 27 years, we have raised three incredible children and built a foundation that works all over the world to enable all people to lead healthy, productive lives,” the statement read. “We continue to share a belief in that mission and will continue our work



together at the foundation, but we no longer believe we can grow together as a couple in this next phase of our lives.”

The couple, who met at Microsoft and married in Hawaii in 1994, asked for privacy.

A joint petition for dissolution of marriage filed by the couple in King County Superior Court in Seattle stated: “The marriage is irretrievably broken.”

The couple asked the court to approve their agreement on the division of assets but did not disclose details, according to Reuters news agency.

Bill Gates, 65, founded Microsoft in 1975 with Paul Allen.

His net worth stands at an estimated \$130.5bn, according to Forbes, and he has donated \$35.8bn worth of Microsoft stock to the couple’s foundation.

He announced last year he would be stepping down from Microsoft’s board to focus full-time on his work as the foundation’s co-chair.

Melinda Gates, 56, serves as the foundation’s co-chair and is the founder of Pivotal Ventures, an investment and incubation company that works to advance the interests of American women and families.

Launched in 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the largest private philanthropic foundation in the United States and one of the biggest in the world, with net assets of \$43.3bn at the end of 2019, according ... **P3**



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