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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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10 afs



President Ghani Stresses Digitization, Quality Education

President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammed Ashraf Ghani chaired a meeting on the implementation of the programs of the Ministry of Higher Education, a statement from the Presidential Palace said Sunday.

Following the week of professional and higher education, during the meeting with the leadership of the ministry, the programs of the ministry for the year 1400 were discussed and the country's president after hearing the reports, emphasized that the Ministry of Finance should cooperate in line with the provision of financial independence of the universities.

The president also instructed the resumption of the higher education ministry's projects suspended in the Ministries of Urban and Development and Lands.

The country's president ...

P2



COVID-19: 628 New Cases, 24 Deaths Reported in Afghanistan

The Ministry of Public Health on Monday reported 628 new positive cases of COVID-19 out of 2,647 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

The ministry also reported 24 deaths and 260 recoveries from COVID-19 in the same period.

The death toll reported on Monday is the highest number of COVID-19 fatalities since the start of the pandemic in the country.

The new cases were reported in Kabul (178), Herat (13), Kandahar (89), Balkh (34), Nangarhar (38), Takhar (14), Baghlan (14), Kunduz (28), Nimroz (15), Paktia (29), Faryab (1), Parwan (38), Bamiyan (20), Maidan Wardak (32), Badakhshan (4), Kapisa (21), Ghazni (7), Laghman (16), Panjshir (19), Uruzgan (5), Ghor (2), Khost (1), Farah (5) and Sar-e-Pul (5) provinces.

Deaths were reported in Kabul (9), Herat (2), Kandahar (1), Balkh (2), Nangarhar (2), Kunduz (1), Paktia (1), Helmand (1), Kapisa (1), Ghazni (1), Laghman (1) ...

P3

Russia Warns Taliban Against Monopolizing Power in Afghanistan



Moscow has warned the Taliban movement (outlawed in Russia) against monopolizing power in Afghanistan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview with the Argumenty i Fakty newspaper.

"We have made it clear to the

members of the Taliban that we oppose their attempts to monopolize power," he emphasized. According to Lavrov, concerns about the possibility of the Taliban seizing the power come, first and foremost, from Western observers. "However, first, the Taliban themselves have

denied such intentions and second, there are Afghan political forces that clearly will not support the Taliban's forceful takeover of power," the Russian top diplomat emphasized. On April 14, US President Joe Biden announced plans to start the withdrawal of US troops from

Afghanistan in May and complete the process by September 11, yet the former Trump administration had signed an agreement with the Taliban in Doha in February 2020, which said that US and allied troops were to leave the country by May 1, 2021. The Taliban strongly condemned this departure from the agreement, actually making it clear that they considered themselves no longer bound by the obligations under the Doha deal.

However, eight security force members were freed from a Taliban prison in an operation in northern Baghlan on Sunday night, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) said in a statement on Monday.

The operation was launched in Amarkhil village of Baghlan-e-Jadid and the security force members who had been taken captive were released, it said.

In the meantime, a security source said that two security forces members were killed, and another was wounded during the operation. The MoD did not comment on the possible casualties of the security forces during the operation.

The Taliban has not yet commented over the operation.

Afghanistan to Host Pakistan in White Ball Series Later this Year

The Afghanistan cricket team will host Pakistan for an ODI and T20 series in the UAE, sources said Sunday.

According to Pakistan's The News, the series will take place in August/September this year and will include three One Day Internationals (ODIs) and three T20 matches.

Sources told The News, that the cricket boards of the two countries are currently holding discussions on the matter.

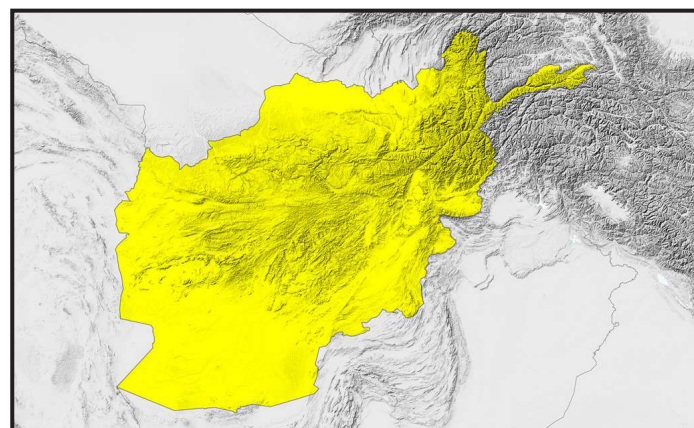
In February this year, Afghanistan cricket team member Mohammad Nabi said Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had promised to ...

P3



Amnesty International Raises Concerns About Afghan Women's Rights

In a statement released on Monday, the Amnesty International has highlighted the poor progress in the Afghan peace process and how it affects the progress made in the field of women's rights in the country. The human rights organization said that it is gravely concerned that the current peace talks with the Taliban, alongside the proposed unconditional withdrawal of US forces, offer no confidence that the government of Afghanistan is committed to protect the gains seen over the last twenty years of the human rights of all people in Afghanistan. A new date for a high-level round of peace talks in Istanbul, postponed since April, is yet to be confirmed and the rights of all individuals hangs in the balance. "Afghanistan is at a tipping point. As peace talks falter, the conflict continues to take the lives of civilians on an almost daily basis.



Taken alongside the forthcoming withdrawal of international troops, Afghanistan is drifting towards an outcome that threatens to undo more than twenty years of progress for women and girls," said Yamini Mishra, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director.

The organization also highlighted that the fact that there is almost

zero representation of women in the peace talks with the current composition of the delegations of both the Taliban, with zero women representation, and the government of Afghanistan, with limited women participation of four members. In the March peace conference on Afghanistan in Moscow, only one woman was included in ...

P2

Blinken Heads...

ceasefire". Biden said Blinken will meet with "Israeli leaders about our ironclad commitment to Israel's security. He will continue our administration's efforts to rebuild ties to, and support for, the Palestinian people and leaders, after years of neglect. "And he will engage other key partners in the region, including on the coordinated international effort to ensure immediate assistance reaches Gaza in a way that benefits the people there and not Hamas, and on reducing the risk of further conflict in the coming months," Biden said. The administration had previously sent envoy Hady Amr to the region in an attempt to calm the situation. Blinken's visit comes as Egyptian mediators have been shuttling between Israel and the Gaza Strip, which is governed by Hamas, in attempts to sustain the ceasefire. The mediators have also met Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in the occupied West Bank. It also comes after the United Nations Security Council on Saturday called for "full adherence to the ceasefire". It was the panel's first statement on the situation since the violence began, after the US had four times blocked proposals calling for a ceasefire.

Qatar Reiterates...

stabilising Libya to allow for elections to take place at the end of the year. Qatar, along with Turkey, had backed the government in the west of Libya, while countries including the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt had backed the eastern forces. According to the UN, more than 20,000 foreign mercenaries and military personnel are still in Libya.

By Zheng Huan

Why China's Leadership Model Enables Quick Solutions

Editor's note: "Roots of China's Growth" is a 10-episode series marking the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which has presided over the country's meteoric rise as a global power. The series focuses on 10 fundamental elements of the strategy that has led to China's transformation from an impoverished nation over the past 100 years. The "leadership model" is the first in the series.

How fast can a government respond to an earthquake? The answer not only affects how many lives might be saved, but also speaks to a government's leadership. China's answer to this question, even 13 years ago when the country's technological development was far from where it is today, amazed the world.

In 2008, a major earthquake jolted Wenchuan, a county of Sichuan Province in southwest China. Around 10 minutes after the disaster hit, China's military emergency response office issued a statement on the situation from Beijing, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) initiated its emergency response plan. By the 21st minute, the Chengdu Military Command dispatched four helicopters to survey the damage, with 6,100 officers and soldiers from the Chengdu Military Command stationed around the affected area and over 3,000 members of the Sichuan Armed Police Force also deployed to the frontlines.

In less than 10 hours, 20,000 PLA troops and armed police were already at disaster sites assisting with relief work. An additional 34,000 officers and soldiers were on their way to provide more support. Intrinsic speed of state responsiveness

What accounts for such a speed? Despite the misunderstandings some Westerners harbor about China, the answer to this question is undeniable: the government's leadership is an absolute source of it. From "Two Bombs, One Satellite" to the Chang'e lunar mission, from the south-to-north water diversion project to the Qinghai-Tibet railway, from the Beijing Olympics to the Shanghai World Expo, the CPC's resounding leadership has radiated across all social sectors.

But such leadership is by no means equivalent to what some portray as China's authoritarian rule. Having grown and developed in China, the CPC has leadership in its genes. This is expressed in the Party's capabilities in problem-solving, consensus building and social mobilization, as well as its great resilience amid uncertainties and challenges.



China is a populous, multi-ethnic country with vast territory, and drastic regional differences that make nationwide solidarity hard to achieve. The past two millennia witnessed the rise and fall of dynasties, secessionism and civil unrest with disruptive consequences.

Born in such a volatile historical environment, the CPC, through a century of exploration and experiment, has established a stable and strong political system that is full of life.

A unique governance philosophy While managing a mega-society, the CPC draws on the wisdom of the Chinese civilization and has developed a unique leadership philosophy with Chinese characteristics.

The CPC's leadership is reflected in its consensus-building capability. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CPC locked down the city of Wuhan to contain further spread of the virus.

In the beginning, this elicited confusion, questions and even panic from some groups in society. The CPC provided timely updates on the situation through the central government and helped people under lockdown address challenges regarding everyday life – through grassroots community actions mobilized by local governments. Such efforts effectively curbed the spread of the pandemic and fostered social stability. On the other hand, some countries were bogged down by deep social divisions, resulting from partisan conflicts. According to a Pew Center poll in 2020, more than three-quarters of respondents believed their countries were more split than before the pandemic.

The CPC's leadership is also demonstrated by the Party's social mobilization capability, which enables the government to pool all resources to complete key national undertakings.

In the early stages of the coronavirus outbreak, Wuhan was in dire need of pandemic relief supplies. The Central Committee swiftly put in place a supporting mechanism through which 19 provinces provided direct assistance to 16 cities and prefectures outside Wuhan in Hubei Province. More than 330 military and civilian medical teams comprised of more than 40,000 healthcare workers came to Wuhan's rescue and volunteered to work at the frontline.

"I have never seen, in my life, this kind of mobilization," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom. "China's speed, China's scale and China's efficiency... is the advantage of China's system."

In some other countries, however, state governments are adopting different and sometimes contradictory COVID-19 policies, making a coordinated, efficient and mobilized COVID-19 response unlikely.

The CPC's leadership is also fully demonstrated by its resilience. The pandemic has been a test of national resilience. In stark contrast to the U.S. where partisan fights weaken countries from within, the CPC need not worry about power struggles and can therefore concentrate on economic recovery.

During the pandemic, the CPC not only worked on short-term economic stimulus, but also charted a strategic blueprint for socio-economic development over the next 15 years as an endeavor to turn crises into opportunities. ...

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By: Xi Meng

We Need Both Clear Waters and Green Mountains, As Well As Invaluable Assets

I have been to many beautiful mountain villages, including those in China and Afghanistan. Some are poor, and some are rich. Briefly speaking there are two types of these, some were and are poor so far, and some were poor in the past but now have become rich. Why is there such a big difference in the state of their development? Is there only one choice between protecting natural ecological resources and developing industrial economy? These problems have been bothering me for a long time. Not long ago, I visited Chun'an County, Zhejiang Province, where Qiandao Lake (Thousand Island Lake) is located and its high-quality water resources are famous all over China. There I also found my own answers to the above questions.

The so-called Thousand Island Lake, literally you can see that there are countless green islands in the lake. Qiandao Lake is actually an artificial lake, or a reservoir, covering an area of 580 square kilometers. Overlooking Qiandao Lake, it is like a jade belt inlaid with countless sapphires. The water quality of Qiandao Lake is excellent, and it is the main drinking water source for tens of millions of local people. The fishes from Qiandao Lake are famous all over the country for their good taste. How to protect the clear water and green

mountains has become an important task for the local people.

When it comes to protection, many people associate it with the word "Prohibition", such as prohibition on the construction of industrial projects, prohibition on the use of pesticides, prohibition on over development and so on. It is true that water resources are both important and fragile. Industrial wastewater, pesticides and fertilizers used in agriculture and animal husbandry, and even domestic garbage of local residents may cause irreversible damage to the water quality of Qiandao Lake. Through scientific and technological innovation, the local government and people have gradually explored a new water protection path, striving to find a balance between protecting the environment and enriching the people. During this trip, I visited Anyang Township, Chun'an County, and went to the ecological rice fields and tea gardens built by local farmers under the guidance of a doctor of Peking University. From the source of planting, to the fields and then to the product sales, the comprehensive management of precision fertilization, emission control and high-quality products has been realized. The good products produced among clear waters and green mountains have both

quality guarantee and price advantage. Let the people gain money from the protecting actions, and take the road of sustainable development of rural revitalization.

I have to talk about the mountain villages in Afghanistan now. There is no doubt that Afghanistan is a beautiful country, although it is suffering from war for a long time. The Hindu Kush mountain extends from northeast to southwest in the country, and many peaks of it are covered by heavy snow all year round. The pure snow water flowing down from the mountains nourishes tens of millions of Afghans and forms many gem like lakes and rivers. Not to mention the rich mineral resources buried in these mountains, many people know that the taste of grapes, pomegranates and apricots in Afghanistan is much sweeter than that in other areas under the irrigation of snow water. However, the development task facing the Afghan government and people is more urgent and heavy. But China's experience tells us that we should not sacrifice long-term interests for immediate interests, and we should not follow the old road of pollution before development. Getting both clear waters and green mountains as well as invaluable assets is not extravagant hopes. Clear waters and green mountains are invaluable assets.

Amnesty International...

the 16-member government delegation. It added that all parties to the peace talks must ensure an effective guarantee for the enjoyment of all human rights and especially women's rights after the foreign troop withdrawal.

The organization also called for the full, equal and meaningful representation of women at all stages of the peace process and stated that the UN Security Council also has consistently affirmed the importance of women's equal participation in peace.

Under Taliban rule from 1996-2001, Afghan women were subjected to severe restrictions including being banned from working outside the home and appearing in public without a close male relative. Women and girls were further denied access to education and had limited access to healthcare. These restrictions still invariably apply to women in areas currently controlled by the Taliban.

Now, there are now 3.3 million girls in education, and women more actively participate in the political, economic and social life of the country. However, Afghan women still face major obstacles to the full realization of their rights. According to UNICEF, 2.2 million Afghan girls still do not attend school.

"The significant under-representation and frequent sidelining of women throughout these talks is indicative of how far there is still to go. The Afghan government must ensure inclusive and meaningful participation of women in the talks," said Yamini Mishra

President Ghani...

emphasized for the quality higher education and said the universities should teach students in accordance with the needs of the country.

He added that this year, the biggest priority of the government was digitization and urged the leadership of the Ministry of Higher Education to work on this plan.

UN, Ngos Pledge to Deliver Aid to Millions of Afghans in Need

Humanitarian actors in Afghanistan (the UN and national and international NGOs) are committed to staying and delivering impartial and neutral assistance to millions of people in need, according to a statement on Monday. Ongoing conflict, spiralling food insecurity and the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a near-doubling of people in need in the space of 12 months – up from 9.4 million in January 2020 to 18.4 million in January 2021. While intra-Afghan negotiations present the opportunity for a lasting peace, humanitarian actors are deeply concerned by continued violence across the country characterized by high levels of civilian casualties and almost 100,000 people internally displaced just this year. Increasing conflict and bureaucratic impediments have required humanitarian organisations to assess, mitigate and navigate the changing operational space. Despite these challenges, some 165 humanitarian organisations continued working across the country and reached nearly 12 million people with life-saving assistance in 2020. Even with significant funding and operational challenges, 3.7 million people received



aid during the first three months of 2021, demonstrating a strong capacity to stay and deliver assistance and protection to people in need, including in challenging environments. In the context of growing need driven by the pandemic, food insecurity, conflict and a looming threat of drought, humanitarian organisations are mobilising to scale-up support and continue to respond wherever assistance is most needed. In order to achieve the above, humanitarian actors in Afghanistan ask the following to parties to the conflict:

1. Protect civilians, aid workers and civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals in compliance with International Humanitarian Law.
2. Provide unimpeded access and ensure that aid workers and service providers can deliver assistance and services without interference, in accordance with the principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality. To donors and the international community:
3. Urgently release and increase funding to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan.

In 2021, the UN and humanitarian partners in Afghanistan require US \$1.3 billion to help 15.7 million people in need. Only \$166.8 million (13 per cent) of the funding has been received so far. Humanitarian Coordinator Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov says, "The COVID-19 crisis has already had significant consequences on the lives and livelihoods of Afghans and on humanitarian operations. At this critical time, it is more important than ever that we continue to work together to uphold the rights of all people in Afghanistan, including their right to life-saving aid."

Afghanistan to...

allow a cricket series to take place between Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to Nabi, his meeting with the prime minister was an 'exciting' one, The News reported. "Meeting Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan was exciting. We had lunch & had a photoshoot with him," he was quoted as saying. "We asked him to give Afghanistan a series with Pakistan and he has promised that. We enjoyed that meeting and discussed some cricket things with him," added the cricketer. Australia will meanwhile host the Afghan team for a one-off Test at the Bellerive Oval in Hobart from November 27 to December 1. This one-off Test was originally scheduled for last year but had to be postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19: 628...

and Farah (2) provinces. The ministry reported that the cumulative total of known COVID-19 cases is 66,903, the total number of reported deaths is 2,836, and the total number of recoveries is 56,295. So far, 449,103 samples have been tested in government centers and there are 7,772 known active COVID-19 cases in the country, data by the ministry indicates. According to Johns Hopkins University, the number of deaths from COVID-19 globally is more than 3,463,996 and the number of known global coronavirus cases is 3,463,996.

Why China's...

When comparing the performance of Chinese and American governments, some scholars have noted that China's political party system has been very stable. Under the leadership of the CPC, China's per annum GNP keeps growing, meeting the needs of the country's 1.4 billion people and promoting a robust economic rebound. In the meantime, the U.S. still struggles to produce a long-term plan due to its partisan divisions. Whether or not the Biden administration will be voted out after its first term is uncertain. Debunking the autocracy theory For some Westerners, China's government has been a synonym for "autocracy," but data shows that its leadership is deeply rooted in the masses. During the pandemic, many

people around the world have been generally disappointed by political parties. A study by The World Values Survey found 75 percent of respondents from 55 countries have little or no confidence in their parties. Only respondents from China, Vietnam and Malaysia mostly answered "a great deal" or "quite a lot" in describing their confidence. In China, public satisfaction with the Chinese government in 2016 was higher than at any time over the previous two decades, according to a report by the Harvard Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation in 2020. The data shows a vast majority of Chinese people support the CPC. Political parties are key instruments of state governance. Extraordinary leadership is a political party's most powerful

asset in managing crises. How do we build responsible political parties? How should ruling elites play their respected roles? How do we handle the relationship between political parties and the people? These are common challenges facing political parties across the world. Today's China, under the leadership of the CPC, is showing its advantages to the fullest as a socialist country with Chinese characteristics. And the CPC's leadership is the answer. The author is Professor Zheng Huan of the Party Development Research Center at the Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC. You can contact him directly at zhenghuan@ccps.gov.cn. Please send any other contributions, including expressions of interest in sharing expertise with us, to opinions@cgtn.com.

WHO Estimates...

"The ongoing vaccine crisis is a scandalous inequity that is perpetuating the pandemic." "More than 75% of all vaccines have been administered in just 10 countries." He said that no variants have emerged that significantly undermine the efficacy of vaccine diagnostics or therapeutics. "But there is no guarantee that will remain the case. This virus is changing constantly. Future changes could render our tools ineffective and drag us back to square one. "We must be very clear; the pandemic is not over. And it will not be over until and unless transmission is controlled in every last country," the WHO chief said. More personal protective equipment needed Tedros said the world must do

its part to ensure health workers' safety, and manufacturers must boost supplies of personal protective equipment. "Individuals: stop using masks if you're healthy. Masks are needed for the sick and those caring for them. We cannot fight COVID19 without health workers. "Countries that vaccinate children and other low-risk groups now do so at the expense of health workers and high-risk groups in other countries," he said. Speaking at the meeting, French President Emmanuel Macron said: "The first lesson that we can learn from this pandemic is that we can only succeed together; no country alone will save itself, and no country alone will save the others." "Therefore, the only international response has to be cooperation."

Macron urged the assembly to consider adopting a pandemic treaty to be debated, but the US had stated reservations about such an accord. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel said her country "shares that view" on the pandemic treaty. "We should take up these proposals, devise joint rules, and make sure that they adhere to this and would serve to enhance not only preparedness in each individual nation, but also joint alert and response capabilities," said Merkel. "The pandemic reminds us, in particular, of just how important international cooperation is." The pandemic treaty would create a high-level, binding instrument covering countries' obligations to prepare for, prevent, and respond to disease threats more transparently and equitably.

Exchange Rates

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Blinken Heads to Middle East Amid Israel-Gaza Ceasefire

United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken will head to the Middle East amid a ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinian factions in Gaza, but tensions have remained high in occupied East Jerusalem after Israeli police escorted Jewish settlers to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on Sunday.

Blinken will depart on Monday for a short visit to Israel, the occupied West Bank, Jordan and Egypt for what will be the administration of President Joe Biden's highest level in-person meeting on the most recent escalation, which began on May 10 and lasted for 11 days.

At least 248 Palestinians, including 66 children, were killed in the Israeli bombardment of Gaza. At least 12 Israelis, including two children, were killed by rockets fired from Gaza before the ceasefire was reached on Friday.

Health authorities in the occupied West Bank have separately confirmed 27 killed in that region,

bringing the total to 275 across all Palestinian territories.

"At the request of President Biden, I am traveling to Jerusalem, Ramallah, Cairo, and Amman to meet with the parties to support their efforts to solidify a ceasefire," the secretary of state said in a tweet on Monday.

The 11 days of fighting were proceeded by protests over the forced expulsion of Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in occupied East Jerusalem and crackdowns by Israeli security forces at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. The violent storming of the mosque on Islam's holy night of Laylat al-Qadr caused global outrage.

While the administration has been roundly criticised for appearing to take a hands-off approach to the violence, in the statement on Monday, Biden defended Washington's "quiet, intensive diplomacy to bring about a ... P2



A look at the world

Qatar Reiterates Support for Libya's UN-Backed Political Process

Qatar has reiterated its support to Libya's internationally-backed political process, which aims to end 10 years of chaos and "foreign interference" in the North African country.

"We support the UN-sponsored political process in the hope that it preserves the territorial integrity of Libya and prevents foreign interference in its affairs," Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said on a visit to the Libyan capital on Sunday.

"Our exchanges were fruitful, in particular on support for the transition process in Libya



... Qatar's position is firm," he told reporters, standing alongside his Libyan counterpart, Najla al-Mangoush.

Since Libya's new government took power, several countries have reopened embassies, and al-Mangoush said she hoped that Doha would soon follow suit.

"I think I have had good news," al-Mangoush added, without providing further details.

The toppling and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising plunged Libya into a bloody struggle for power.

But in October, rival groups signed a truce, setting in motion a United Nations-led process.

Libya's interim unity government came into being in March, replacing two rival administrations – one the UN-recognised government based in the capital Tripoli and the other in the country's east allied to renegade commander Khalifa Haftar – to lead the country to elections in December.

"Qatar played a crucial role in supporting the Libyans' ambitions to become a democratic state," said Al Jazeera's Malik Traina, reporting from Tripoli.

Traina said the Qatari delegation and their Libyan hosts discussed ways ... P2

WHO Estimates at Least 115,000 Healthcare Workers Died in Pandemic



The World Health Organization estimates that at least 115,000 healthcare workers have lost their lives in the fight against coronavirus, the WHO chief said Monday on the opening day of the 74th World Health Assembly.

"We estimate that at least 115,000 health and care workers have paid the ultimate price in the service for others," WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus said.

"We will lose many more as long as the pandemic rages," he added.

"Health and care workers do heroic things. But they are not superheroes. They're humans, like the rest of us. They sweat and swear. They laugh and cry. They feel and hope many feel frustrated. Helpless," said Tedros.

He said they are affected by a lack of access to personal protective equipment, vaccines, and tools to save lives.

"Globally, we remain in a fragile situation. No country should assume it is out of the woods," Tedros warned.

'We are at war with a virus'

The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of WHO and meets each year typically. In 2021, it is meeting virtually for the second time due to the pandemic.

Also addressing the meeting, the UN chief Antonio Guterres said: "We are at war with a virus. We need the logic and urgency of a war economy to boost the capacity of our weapons."

He said that COVID-19 has brought a "tsunami of suffering."

Switzerland's Health Minister Alain Berset made the opening speech of the gathering in Geneva, which will run through on June 1.

"As we have sought to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize that we are now facing new threats," said Berset.

"Of course, we see the proliferation of variants of the virus, but we also see threats related to the socio-economic consequences of the crisis."

'Scandalous inequity' in vaccine distribution On the unequal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, Tedros said: ... P3

Suu Kyi Makes First In-Person Court Appearance Since Myanmar Coup

Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi attended a court hearing on Monday, according to local media reports, in her first public appearance after being detained in the military coup this February. Prior to the hearing, she had only been allowed to speak with her lawyers through a video link in the presence of security personnel.



Speaking to her lawyers before her hearing at the Naypyidaw Council, Suu Kyi said, referring to her party, which the coup leaders declared dissolved: "The NLD [National League for Democracy] was founded for the people and it will exist as long as those people are there,"

The Myanmar military staged a coup on Feb. 1 by overthrowing Suu Kyi's elected government.

She and members of her NLD are among more than 4,000 people detained since the coup.

Suu Kyi is facing charges ranging from illegally possessing walkie-talkie radios to violating a state secrets law.

Since then, pro-democracy protests have taken place in cities and towns across the Southeast Asian country.

As of Sunday, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported that 818 people have been killed by Myanmar security forces since the February coup.



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