



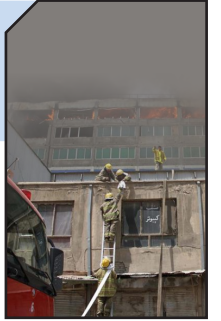
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Kabul
 32° / 16°



Herat
 33° / 22°



Nangarhar
 41° / 24°



Balkh
 35° / 25°



Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

Sunday, June 20, 2021

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10 afs



A Senior Delegation Will Visit Doha to Meet the Taliban Leaders

According to sources, a senior Afghan delegation will visit Doha next week to meet with the Taliban and Qatar officials.

The 7-member delegation includes the chairman of High National Council for Reconciliation, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, former President Hamid Karzai, former high peace council chief, Mohammad Karim Khalili, Babur Farahmand, deputy to HNCR, Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, State Minister for Peace, Sayed Sadat Mansoor Naderi and Advisor to President, Mohammad Akram Ekhpulwak.

There has not been an official announcement about the... **P3**



Pres Ghani Appoints New Acting Ministers for MoD, Mol, MRRD

The Presidential Palace (ARG) said on Saturday that President Ashraf Ghani has appointed new acting ministers to key security institutions and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

According to ARG, Bismillah Mohammadi has been appointed as acting defense minister – replacing Asadullah Khalid; Abdul Sattar Mirzakwal, is the new acting interior minister, and Hayatullah Hayat as minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

ARG added that the acting ministers will be introduced to parliament for a vote of confidence shortly.

Meanwhile, Ghani appointed Mujeeb Rahman Karimi as Senior Presidential Advisor for development and infrastructure.

Dr Abdullah: Turkey's Presence in Hamid Karzai Int'l Airport 'Important'



The head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation accused the Taliban of trying to "take advantage of relative vacuum after the withdrawal of foreign troops in the country," and said that Turkey's presence in the Hamid Karzai (Kabul) International Airport is 'important.'

In an exclusive interview with Anadolu Agency on the sidelines of Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Dr.

Abdullah Abdullah said: "Taliban have tried to take advantage of the relative vacuum that the absence of the international troops or departure of the international troops has left behind."

"The Taliban is trying to take advantage of that attacks," he said, but also added that the Taliban's gains were "temporary."

He went on to say that the Taliban's surging attacks are a part of their

strategy to use for the negotiation table or in search for a military solution, also noting that "it will not work" either way.

However, the centers of two districts in northern Afghanistan have fallen to the Taliban following clashes in the last 12 hours with sources reporting high casualties among Afghan forces in Jawzjan province. Amruddin Danishjo, the deputy head of the Jawzjan provincial

council, said the center of the Mardian district in Jawzjan fell to the Taliban on Saturday morning. He said that at least 16 security force members were killed and 14 more captured by the Taliban in clashes in the district.

Officials in Jawzjan have not commented on the fall of the district to the Taliban.

Meanwhile, Abdul Ahad Ail Bek, a member of the Faryab provincial council, said that the center of Khwaja Sabz Posh district in Faryab fell to the Taliban on Friday night. He said that Gul Ekhtiar Arab, a security forces commander in Faryab, has surrendered to the Taliban with his personnel after they did not receive support.

Faryab officials have not commented on the report.

This comes as the 209 Shaheen Corps in a statement on Saturday said that Mawlawi Sunnatullah, head of Taliban's military commission, and eight others were killed in the Afghan Army's operation in Qosh Tapa district in Jawzjan on Friday.

Sources have said that more than 30 districts have fallen to the Taliban in the last two months. The Defense Ministry reported clashes in 13 provinces on Friday.

Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran to Hold Trilateral Talks Today

On Sunday the foreign ministers of Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran will meet for trilateral talks as part of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

"Along with recent developments regarding the Afghan Peace Process, cooperation in the fields of security, energy, connectivity and irregular migration will be discussed during the Trilateral Meeting," said a ministry statement.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu will also hold bilateral meetings with his Iranian and Afghan counterparts on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy... **P3**



Al-Qaeda, IS-K in Afghanistan Pose Medium-Level Threat To US: Austin

The US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told a Senate hearing on Friday that Al-Qaeda, and IS-K in Afghanistan pose medium threat to the US.

"I would also say that it would take possibly two years for them to develop that capability," Austin said. General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave a similar timeline but downplayed prospects that the Kabul government would crumble. "I may be wrong, but I don't see Saigon 1975 in Afghanistan," Milley had said. "The Taliban just aren't the North Vietnamese Army. It's not that kind of situation."

The United States has been haunted by communist North Vietnam's takeover of the Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, and the hasty evacuations by helicopter as the longtime US ally fell. Of special concern are some 18,000



interpreters, commandos and other Afghans who have applied for visas to the United States but are caught in a backlog. Milley said that "planning is ongoing" but that the State Department was in charge. State Department officials say they are expediting visas but want to avoid setting off a panicked exodus of educated Afghans.

In fact, the situation is quite uncertain as US wants to maintain an over-the-horizon capability in

order to protect its allies with help from Afghanistan's neighboring countries. However, there has been a dent even in this plan as Prime Minister Imran Khan has clearly said that Pakistan will not give its bases to the US for operations in Afghanistan after the latter's troops' withdrawal.

In an interview with HBO Axios, Khan reiterated Pakistan's stance on the use of military bases and categorically stated that... **P2**

Al-Qaeda...

Islamabad will not allow it. "There's no way we're going to allow any bases or any sort of action from Pakistani territory into Afghanistan. Absolutely not," he said.

In a related development, Indian foreign secretary Harsh Shringla said that the situation in Afghanistan is fluid and uncertain amid the drawdown of US forces and the Taliban's "relentless pursuit of power through violence", including targeted assassinations and capture of territory.

Shringla's comments came against the backdrop of the US having completed the withdrawal of more than 50% of its troops from Afghanistan well ahead of a September deadline, and the Taliban launching a wave of attacks across the country and targeting Afghan officials, activists and journalists in many cities. The violence by the Taliban has increased despite talks with the group at different forums, whereas India has always backed calls for a ceasefire and talks involving various stakeholders and all neighboring countries to find a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, Shringla said.

The foreign secretary was responding to questions on the withdrawal of US and foreign forces and the possibility of Indian firms investing in Afghanistan, especially in sectors such as mining. Though there have been some investments in Afghanistan's mining sector, these have been affected by "uncertainties which are only increasing, not decreasing", he said. "We hope the time will come when companies can go in and invest and realize their returns on investments appropriately and there is peace and stability in the country," he added.

India, Shringla said, has always stood for a peaceful solution in Afghanistan. "We have always called for a ceasefire, we have always advocated that there should be talks between the government and the Taliban and others that are involved in this process, involving all the neighboring countries," he said. As a friend of Afghanistan and its people, India continues to fervently hope there is peace and stability in the country, he said.

"But as I said, the situation today is very fluid and obviously a large number of US and coalition forces that have maintained a certain amount of stability, when they pull out, it creates an environment of uncertainty and we have to watch and see," Shringla added

By: KABIR TANEJA & ANGAD SINGH

Can India help keep the Afghan Air Force Afloat?

The United States (US), by mid-June, has withdrawn more than 50 percent of its military presence in Afghanistan, according to the Pentagon, as the administration of President Joe Biden speedily works towards a full withdrawal by the set and symbolic date of September 11, 2021. The expedited American exit has thrown both Afghanistan and US policies into a chaotic mess. There is little clarity on the future US role in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in the country, an eventuality of the fall of Kabul once again; and perhaps most importantly, the future of the operability and vulnerabilities of the Afghan military fighting against an emboldened Taliban.

The Afghan Air Force (AAF) remains one of the most significant tools in fighting against the multiple insurgencies on the ground. However, the US withdrawal may throw a spanner in the workings of the air force as well, with more than 18,000 contractors aiding the efforts and keeping the flying machines running optimally also exiting. This could significantly diminish the capacity of the AAF, as it operates a number of US-made aircraft such as the UH-60 Black Hawk and MD500 Defender helicopters along with fixed-wing counter-insurgency specialist aircraft like the A-29 Super Tucano, all relying heavily on Western contractors for their upkeep. Reports indicate that alternatives to plug these gaps have still not been organized, which could potentially leave the AAF crippled.

The apparent lack of foresight by the US is not new. The second major theatre of war for the US in its post-9/11 'war on terror' campaign, Iraq, also witnessed a similar Washington DC-made crisis. Baghdad purchased and operated expensive F-16 fighter aircraft from the US as part of its air force modernization, despite better, smaller, and more economical options being available as far as COIN operations go. However, much of the

F-16 fleet today remains grounded as contractors pulled out of the country due to an increase in rocket attacks by militias against US military bases. While the US-made aircraft in the AAF are important, it was perhaps a degree of prudence on Kabul's part to keep a good section of its older, Russian-made helicopter fleet flying at the same time. This has allowed the Afghan forces to continue critical work, such as aiding counterterrorism forces on the ground, evacuating injured troops and so on. Much of this fleet comprises of Mil Mi-17 medium-lift helicopters, that by the look of things, may become the frontline mainstay for the AAF moving forward. The fleet also includes four Mi-24V attack helicopters donated by India to bolster Kabul's counterterrorism operations. From a capacity perspective, these replaced four older Mi-35s that India had donated from the Indian Air Force (IAF) fleet in 2015-16. However, India's contribution was limited only to providing the helicopters and training the aircrews. Further sustainment of the aircraft was to be handled by the AAF or the Operation Resolute Support coalition. This was obviously a less-than-ideal arrangement, and the subsequent status of these attack helicopters remains unclear, with some recent (unverifiable) chatter suggesting the machines are largely grounded due to issues with maintenance and spares.

While the US-made aircraft in the AAF are important, it was perhaps a degree of prudence on Kabul's part to keep a good section of its older, Russian-made helicopter fleet flying at the same time. This has allowed the Afghan forces to continue critical work, such as aiding counterterrorism forces on the ground, evacuating injured troops and so on

Opportunity for India
The renewed prominence of the AAF's older Russian fleet centered on the Mi-17 raises an interesting question and, perhaps, a proposition.



Can India, and in particular the IAF, which operates hundreds of Mi-17s in its fleet, help the AAF maintain a level of operability using its Russian fleet that allows it to continue with a significant section of its counterterrorism and COIN operations, supporting Afghan troops on the ground despite a full US withdrawal? Outside the country of origin, Russia, the IAF likely has the most experience flying and sustaining the Mi-17 and its variants. Indian pilots are familiar with the machine's characteristics in precisely the kind of harsh and demanding conditions it faces in Afghanistan, from their years of operating in India's equally unforgiving mountain frontiers. The IAF's engineers are intimately familiar with all the helicopter's technical characteristics, including any foibles that may crop up, and are capable of everything from frontline servicing to overhaul. In fact, the newest Mi-17 variant in India, the Mi-17V-5, is already operated by Afghanistan, and is assembled and overhauled at the IAF's No. 3 Base Repair Depot in Chandigarh. Given that the Mi-17 is by far the

most useful and versatile of all the AAF's aircraft, it stands to reason that this is the aviation capability the Afghan state will be least willing to lose. While the IAF might loathe to give away important helicopters in the near-term, specifically with multiple active challenges on its borders from Pakistan to Myanmar, in the longer-term, it is likely that the IAF will be ordering more Mi-17V-5s and can then make up any numerical shortfalls. What the IAF can certainly do with near immediate effect is engage with the AAF on their near-term training and sustainment requirements and begin to secure these.

In the best-case scenario, India's underutilized capacity for military diplomacy will secure a foothold in a crucial regional country in a time of serious upheaval with a minimal capacity commitment.

The specific contours of the IAF-AAF engagement can be circumscribed depending on how far, or not, the Indian government is willing to go in Afghanistan. In the best-case scenario, India's underutilized capacity for military... **P3**

By: Ali Safavi

Why the Next Iranian President Is Dangerous to the World

On February 9, Mahmoud Alavi, Iran's Minister of Intelligence, notorious for murdering dissidents and masterminding bombing plots around the world, threatened that if the Iranian regime is pushed into a corner, it will choose to acquire nuclear weapons. While one state-run website tried to downplay the threat, no official has ever condemned the statement.

On May 26, the Guardian Council, a watchdog loyal to Ali Khamenei, the clerical regime's current Supreme Leader, disqualified all but seven officials from running as the next president. Khamenei's pick is Ebrahim Raisi, an infamous judge who has a 41-year dark track record of committing heinous human rights abuses and mass murder.

In 1988, Ruhollah Khomeini, Khamenei's predecessor issued

a religious decree ordering the killing of all political prisoners who remained loyal to the main democratic opposition Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK). "Show no mercy to the enemies of Islam," Khomeini said in the fatwa. Among the very few men chosen to execute his fatwa was Raisi, the current frontrunner on the ballot for the June 18 sham presidential elections.

Successive US administrations have been confronted by the regime's terrorism and killing of American servicemen. Four of seven presidents in the regime's history have come to power, promising better relationships with the West. With a new administration in Washington, Tehran has stepped up its aggressive behavior and nuclear extortion. It continued to breach the terms of the nuclear deal with world powers by

increasing uranium enrichment up to 63 percent. In May, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi told Financial Times: "A country enriching at 60 per cent is a very serious thing — only countries making bombs are reaching this level. Sixty percent is almost weapons grade, commercial enrichment is 2, 3 [percent]."

The Iranian regime also increased attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq, pushed to undermine the Abraham Accords through flaming the Gaza crisis and sabotaged the U.S. plan to withdraw from Afghanistan through inviting the Taliban to Tehran and bombings in Kabul. The regime is desperate to prove it has leverage in the course of negotiating with the U.S. and other signatories of the nuclear deal.

Since 2018, the Supreme Leader has barely survived three major

nationwide uprisings. The theocracy that he represents usurped the people's sovereignty in 1979 after the Iranian people toppled a corrupt monarch. Since then, the mullahs' fundamentalist regime has proved itself to be even more corrupt and murderous. Not only have the Iranian people been deprived of their basic human rights and freedoms, but they also cannot even afford staples like bread and rice now. Every day, Iranians in various cities and from different backgrounds take to the streets to strike, protest and demonstrate their anger against the regime's corruption and economic mismanagement.

They chant, "Our enemy is right here, they lie when they say it's America." That is because the Iranian people know the root of their misery is the Iranian regime and nothing else. Now, most of them have joined an international campaign to boycott the sham that the regime describes as "presidential elections."

Khamenei has demonstrated he's determined to purge all his rivals and eliminate any semblance of the regime's capability to reform itself. By installing mass murderer Raisi as the regime's next president, Khamenei and his regime are bracing for an all-out war against the Iranian people and the international community. The Iranian people have rightly dubbed Raisi "the henchman of 1988."

Khamenei himself has said many times that if the regime retreats in the context of the nuclear deal, it would have to make subsequent retreats, including when it comes to human rights and Tehran's regional meddling and support for international terrorism. In the end, that means that the entire regime will need to be changed. So, Khamenei will not budge.

He has rather decided to shrink his circle and consolidate power. His most trusted lackey is Raisi, who has a proven track record... **P3**

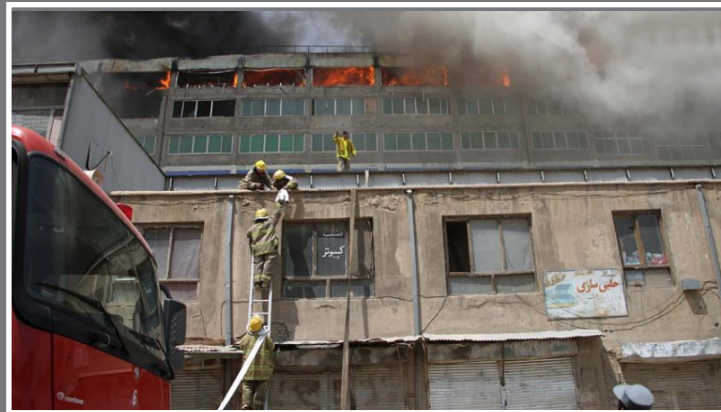
Fire Guts 174 Hectares of Forests in Nuristan

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, 174 hectares of forest have been gutted so far following a fire in the forests of Nuristan in Nurgaram district. The fire, which is spreading, is the result of an armed conflict between two ethnic groups in Nurgaram district and has been going on for four days.

On Wednesday, the Minister of Agriculture, Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi, instructed the relevant departments of the Ministry and the Department of Agriculture of Nuristan Province to take

immediate action to contain the fires in the Nurgaram forests. Ahadi has also ordered officials from the Ministry of Agriculture to send the necessary equipment to Nuristan to contain the fire. Abdul Wahab Nasimi, director of Nuristan Agriculture, said that as a result of an armed conflict between two tribes in Nurgaram district, the forests of Dara-e-Sham district caught fire. Nasimi added that the fire was spreading to the forests of the Korgel Valley.

The Director of Agriculture of Nuristan said that according



to the order of the Minister of Agriculture, equipment and technical facilities have been sent to the area by the General Directorate of Natural Resources

of the Ministry to control the fire and efforts are underway to control it. He reported that the intensity of the fire was high in some areas and lower in others.

A Senior...

agenda of the visit, but more likely the delegation will be meeting the Taliban leaders in Doha and as well as with the Qatar officials.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the special envoy to United States for the Afghanistan peace process is currently in Doha.

This comes as the Afghan peace process which began nearly a year ago is more likely with no progress and paused, however, the war and violence have dramatically increased throughout Afghanistan as the deadline for the U.S and NATO troops' withdrawal is getting closer.

Afghanistan, Turkey...

Forum, which is taking place in Turkey's famed Riviera resort.

Both Turkey and Afghanistan border Iran.

The three-day Antalya Diplomacy Forum, with Anadolu Agency as its global communication partner, is hosting 10 heads of state and government, 42 foreign ministers, three former heads of state and government, and more than 50 representatives of international organizations or former government officials, according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

Debates of global importance will be analyzed in-depth during the forum, including the Balkans, the future of Europe, trans-Atlantic relations, refugees and migrants, and the threat of terrorism. There will also be a session on Turkey's proposal for an Eastern Mediterranean conference.

Guterres...

and enduring response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences."

"Our single most immediate test will be effectively overcoming COVID-19 and equipping the world to prevent and be better prepared for future pandemics and other existential threats," he said.

"The virus is spreading faster than vaccines," said the secretary-general, adding that "we need an all-out effort to ensure vaccines for everyone everywhere - and we need it now."

Talking about other points of "imperatives for action," he said that efforts will be made to "leave no stone unturned in the search for peace and security," make peace with nature and press for climate action, and "turbocharge" the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and a more equitable world.

"The struggle against inequality is at the core of a new globalization that is fairer, more inclusive, sustainable and human-centric. We

will advance our efforts to integrate work within the UN system that straddles across peace and security, sustainable development and humanitarian action, firmly underpinned by human rights," he said.

Other action plans will include the protection of human rights, taking gender equality "to the next level," advancing multilateralism and our common agenda, embarking on a "United Nations 2.0."

On "United Nations 2.0," the top UN official said that "we will strive for a more integrated, cohesive and joined up UN that also actively brings in outside networks." Referring to his last point for action, Guterres said that "underpinning all our efforts, is the focus on people - bettering the lives of individuals, families and communities. Reaffirming the dignity and worth of the human person. Rekindling a strong commitment to shared and enduring values."

Guterres told reporters that "this is a time to strengthen multilateralism. This is a

time to understand that each country alone can do nothing, that independently of the divisions that exist, countries must come together."

"To rebuild trust is the way to make the impossible possible," the secretary-general noted.

Answering the question regarding the vaccination for the COVID-19, the top UN official said that the world needs "a global vaccination plan."

"My suggestion is to create an emergency task force at G20 level with the governments of all countries that produce vaccines or can produce vaccines ..."

In responding to the question about the lesson that he learned in his first term, the secretary-general said "the most important lesson is that we need to rebuild solidarity and trust, and if there is something I need to do better in the second term, it is to make sure that I do everything I can to rebuild trust, trust among governments, trust between people in the institutions and trust in the United Nations."

Can India...

diplomacy will secure a foothold in a crucial regional country in a time of serious upheaval with a minimal capacity commitment. And in the longer-term, who knows, perhaps there will be a time when Indian-made helicopters such as the HAL Dhruv, specialized for high altitudes, could be offered to wear the AAF colors?

Conclusion

As the US continues to send mixed signals on what its post-withdrawal strategy is, the current AAF supremacy in the skies over Afghanistan could be contested, as reports suggest that some factions of the Taliban may have invested in surface-to-air missiles. Even without such a capacity, the Taliban had claimed shooting down an AAF Mi-17 in April. While India's kinetic options are limited, providing technical

expertise to make sure the AAF's Mi-17 keep operating, providing critical firepower to the very idea of democracy that India has invested heavily in Kabul, may not be the worst project to put some weight behind. And as scholar Rajesh Rajagopalan notes in context to India's foreign policy: "Ideas, as important as they are, will not go anywhere unless these ideas have got material power backing them."

Why the Next...

of being determined to annihilate all opposition to the regime. Khamenei is simply in survival mode. The regime is at its weakest point in its history. Its presidential elections are a one-man show and the Iranian

people have overwhelmingly decided to boycott it. After the 2019 major uprisings, during which the regime killed at least 1,500 protesters (by the most conservative estimates), the world witnessed that the mullahs' rule is illegitimate and

must end. The Iranian people are now saying that their only vote is to "overthrow" this evil theocracy. The world needs to decide: Does it stand with the Iranian people, or does it want to deal with their mass murderers?

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Ebrahim Raeisi Set to Become Iran's New President

Iran's judiciary chief and the top conservative candidate, Ebrahim Raeisi, looks all but certain to romp home victorious in the country's presidential election.

As per preliminary vote count of the 28.6 million votes cast, Raeisi was leading with 17.8 million, followed by Mohsen Rezaei with 3.3 million, Abdolnasser Hemmati with 2.4 million and Ghazizadeh Hashemi with one million votes, according to the Interior Ministry on Saturday.

Vote count was still underway with the final announcement still pending, but reports suggest Raeisi could be winning by a big margin.

All three rival candidates in the polls have issued separate statements congratulating Raeisi on his electoral victory, calling him "people's choice" and the "president-elect". In a statement, his main reformist challenger and former top banker AbdolNaser Hemmati urged Raeisi to work for "hope, peace and welfare" of the people.

His two fellow conservatives, former IRGC

chief Mohsen Rezaei and former deputy parliament speaker Ghazizadeh Hashemi, also congratulated him on being the "decisive choice" of the people.

Rezaei, in a statement, called for a "strong and popular government" that works to "solve problems of people".

President Hassan Rouhani also congratulated Raeisi, without naming him, on winning the presidential election.

"Since it has not been officially announced yet, I will delay official congratulations," Rouhani said during a government meeting. "But it's clear who got enough votes and he will take over the presidency in 45 days".

Parliament speaker Baqer Ghalibaf congratulated Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei over what he termed "high participation of people" in the Friday's election.

There are still no official statistics on the voter turnout and the margin of victory for the winner. The Interior Ministry is likely to make the official announcement before Saturday

afternoon. Conservative estimates suggest Raeisi garnering above 50 percent votes, followed by Rezaei, Hemmati and Hashemi.

The vote is not likely to go to a second round, according to observers. On Friday, following

complaints of a delayed start at some polling stations, voting lines remained open till late at night. While the result will be announced on Saturday, the incumbent government will continue in office until early August.



A look at the world

Guterres Appointed as UN Secretary-General for Second Term

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Friday appointed Antonio Guterres as the UN secretary-general for a second term of five years beginning Jan. 1, 2022.

President of the 75th UNGA session Volkan Bozkir has officially announced the appointment.

Speaking to reporters after the appointment, Guterres said that he will take on the responsibility of serving a second term as secretary-general



"with profound gratitude and a deep commitment to work together to advance the UN Charter at a time of great peril and promise."

Noting that the pandemic "has revealed our shared vulnerability, our interconnectedness and the absolute need for collective action," the secretary-general said that "our biggest challenge - and at the same time our greatest opportunity - is to use this crisis as a chance to turn things around, to pivot to a world that learns its lessons, recovers fairer, greener and more sustainably, and forges ahead with much more effective global cooperation to address global concerns."

Guterres recalled that the "driving theme" in the vision statement which lays out the details for his second term is "prevention," noting that means the "prevention in all its aspects - from conflict, climate change, pandemics to poverty and inequality."

Talking about his 10 "inter-related imperatives for action," the secretary-general said that the first starts with "mounting a massive... **P3**

China Condemns U.S. FCC Vote to Advance Ban on Chinese Equipment



China on Friday said that it firmly opposes a U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) vote to advance a plan to ban equipment from Chinese firms including Huawei in U.S. telecoms networks.

China will continue to support its relevant companies in upholding their legitimate rights and interests in accordance with the law, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian told a daily news briefing.

The United States has kept abusing state power to suppress and contain Chinese companies in the name of national security without any evidence, he said.

Zhao said that the U.S. move is typical and unveiled economic and technological bullying and flagrant denial of market economy principles that the U.S. claims to champion, adding it also exposed the hypocrisy of the United States in claiming "fair competition."

China once again urged the U.S. side to stop its wrongdoing of stretching the concept of national security and politicizing economic issues, and create a fair, just and non-discriminatory environment for the normal operation of Chinese companies in the United States, said the spokesperson.

Israel to Send 1M Vaccine Doses to Palestinian Authority in Swap Deal

Israel will send at least 1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to the Palestinian Authority under a swap deal, an Israeli government statement said.

Under the deal, the statement said, the Palestinian Authority will give Israel a reciprocal number of doses it ordered from the Pfizer company in September or October, 2021.

Israel has recently witnessed a decrease in the coronavirus infections, with authorities removing most of



the restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the virus.

More than 5.1 million people of Israel's 9 million population have been fully vaccinated.

For her part, Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila said the Palestinian government reached a deal with Pfizer to start receiving one million doses from Israel as of Friday. In a statement to the Palestinian official Wafa news agency, al-Kaila said the Palestinian government had contracted with Pfizer to purchase 4 million doses, but the company would not be able to start delivering the order before October or November.

Al-Kaila added that in order to meet the urgent needs, Pfizer suggested that the Palestinian Authority takes the excess stock of the doses from Israel.

She added that the Palestinian Health Ministry started to receive the doses on Friday.

So far, the Palestinian Health Ministry has reported a total of 341,340 infections, including 3,816 deaths and 334,231 recoveries.

The Ministry said that 445,412 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have received vaccine jabs.



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