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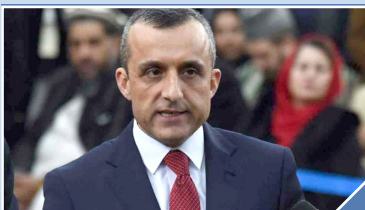
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Saleh: Door-To-Door Intelligence Coverage Started in Kabul

First Vice President Amrullah Saleh who is charge of the security of Kabul city, announced on Monday, that they had begun gathering intelligence from door-to-door.

He said that intelligence coverage has started from each alley and will grown to encompass all zones and neighbourhoods within the city.

No one has the right to lie or hide facts from the national security forces, the vice president said.

He announced that criminals and terrorists, along with their accomplices will be duly prosecuted.

According to his new decision, beggars will not be allowed to stand or spread out in the middle of the roads.

He also said that high-rise buildings that are being constructed without permits will be demolished.

Kabul Municipality has been asked to compile a list of all such ...

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Qureshi: Pakistan to continue facilitator role in Afghan peace

Afghan politician and Hezb-i-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who arrived in Islamabad on a three-day visit earlier on Monday, said Afghans think of Pakistan as their second home, a statement issued by the Foreign Office said. Hekmatyar made these comments during a meeting with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the FO.

During the meeting, the two discussed matters of mutual interest, bilateral relations between the two countries and the Afghan peace process, the statement added. The foreign minister said Pakistan will continue to play the role of a facilitator in the Afghan peace process.

"Prime Minister Imran Khan has said lasting peace can only be achieved through a political settlement accepted by the people of Afghanistan," Qureshi said, adding that he was pleased that Islamabad's stance was now being recognized by the world.

"Intra-Afghan talks provide a unique opportunity to the leadership for establishing lasting peace in the ...

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Abdullah: Interim Government Will Not Help Peace Process



Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, said that formation of an interim government cannot help the peace process, in remarks during an interview with an Iranian channel on Sunday night.

During an interview, Abdullah, who is visiting Tehran, said that the peace negotiations in Doha are at the preliminary stage and the agenda for the talks has not been prepared yet, and the issue of the formation of an interim government has not been

raised.

However, he added that its proposal will not help the peace process since the expected outcome of an interim government plan is "unclear" and not a solution to lasting peace.

The Afghan leader stressed that the goal of the talks is to achieve lasting peace, and that to achieve this goal, the two sides must agree on a comprehensive solution.

When asked about the future power sharing formula, the Taliban had also said the "system of choice" would be

in place.

"We want an independent Afghan inclusive of Islamic system, not a monopoly of power in which the people of Afghanistan see their aspirations subdued," said the group's political office spokesperson Naeem Wardak, in an interview with Ekurd Daily.

However, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that it is important that the people of Afghanistan achieve a real peace to preserve their successes after years

of war and conflict, and the political negotiations, as well as inter-Afghan talks, are the solutions to the problem.

Expressing hope for the success of the efforts to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan, the Iranian president added, "It is important that the people of Afghanistan attain a real peace after years of war and conflict." Pointing to the good relations between Iran and Afghanistan as two friendly and neighboring countries, President Rouhani stressed the development and deepening of Tehran-Kabul relations.

He added that "sustainable peace, stability, and security in Afghanistan as a neighbor and brother country is of special concern for the Islamic Republic of Iran".

Referring to the good relations between Iran and Afghanistan as two friendly and neighboring countries, President Rouhani stressed the development and deepening of Tehran-Kabul relations.

He pointed to the Khaf-Herat railway, saying that project will come on stream in the coming days.

The connection between the Iranian and Afghan railways would strengthen economic and trade collaboration between the two countries, Rouhani said. ...

P3

NATO ministers to discuss Afghan peace talks

NATO defence ministers will meet in Brussels next week to discuss the Afghan mission and the ongoing peace process, the alliance said on Monday.

The defence ministers will participate on October 22 and 23 in a video conference, NATO's media office told Pajhwok Afghan News.

The ministers are expected to exchange views on progress on a fairer burden-sharing, as well as on strengthening the alliance deterrence and defence posture ...

P2



Taliban's Claim of Agreement Violations 'Unfounded': Khalilzad

The U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has tweeted that the recent Taliban remarks about Doha agreement violations are "unfounded," and that "inflammatory rhetoric" does not advance peace.

"Instead, we should pursue strict adherence to all articles of the US-Taliban Agreement and U.S.-Afghanistan Joint Declaration." Said Khalilzad.

"Taliban attacks in Helmand, including on the provincial capital; Taliban attacks against Afghan security forces; and Taliban complaints of ANDSF operations and coalition strikes led to a recent meeting in Doha," said Khalilzad, apparently referring to a meeting between himself, US Gen. Miller and the Taliban in which, Khalilzad reported earlier, there would be a "re-set" and operations of all sides would decrease so casualties would



be reduced.

"The belief that says violence must escalate to win concessions at the negotiating table is very risky. Such an approach can undermine the peace process and repeats past miscalculations by Afghan leaders," says Khalilzad.

Khalilzad says that in the Doha meeting, all sides agreed to decrease attacks and strikes and reduce violence and casualties. But although violence in Helmand has decreased, violence overall in the country remains high, he said.

Violating Doha agreement

The Taliban has blamed the United States forces in Afghanistan for violating the deal the two sides signed in Doha back in February, something that critics say will further complicate the ongoing peace efforts in the war-hit country. The group issued a statement on Sunday, saying that US forces--in contravention of the peace deal--have bombed non-conflict zones in Helmand, Farah and a few other provinces.

The US forces last week ...

P3

By Saphora Smith, Mushtaq Yusufzai and Ahmed Mengli

Corruption, conflict and a common enemy: Can old Afghan opponents come together to make peace?

It has become almost a cliché among Afghan watchers to say the two men tasked with making peace with the Taliban would make a near-perfect team — if only they could work with each other.

Between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's reputed eye for detail and the purported people skills of Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, it's possible they could form a strong front against the Taliban.

In practice, theirs is an uncomfortable marriage between two former rivals scarred by years of power sharing — men who differ in background, temperament, experience and vision, people who know them say.

Yet, the fate of this battle-scarred country hangs in part on their relationship.

On Sept. 12, the Taliban and an Afghan delegation embarked on complex peace talks. A clash between the president and the man in charge of peace efforts could jeopardize Kabul's ability to force the Taliban to lay down its arms and persuade the militants to engage with the country's fragile democracy. More than a month after the opening ceremony, the talks are slow moving and violence at home has not abated but both sides remain at the table.

At stake is a chance at peace. Day by day, more Afghan men, women and children get caught in the crossfire of a conflict that started some four decades ago with the invasion by the Soviet Union in 1979 — before the Taliban was even formed.

Between 2009, when the United Nations began documenting the impact of the war on civilians, and last year, about 28 civilians have been killed or injured every day — more than 100,000 casualties.

Decades of war made the country a haven for Al Qaeda, whose leader, Osama bin Laden, planned the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States from Afghanistan. The conflict has created desperation, poverty and dependence, with donors paying for 75 percent of Afghanistan's total public expenditure.

Meanwhile, corruption in Afghanistan

continues to undermine U.S. reconstruction efforts, according to John Sopko, special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, whose office was created by Congress to provide oversight of Afghanistan reconstruction projects. Sopko has warned that unless corruption is addressed, any peace will not be sustainable.

The answer to many of these questions rests on the shoulders of the two longtime rivals, Ghani and Abdullah. "The big question now is will their views, given their experience and background, complement or clash over peace and war," Omar Samad, a former adviser to Abdullah and former Afghan Ambassador to Canada and France, said. "The average Afghan wants peace and preferably a just and inclusive peace. ... They don't think more bloodshed is the answer."

A small balding man with a glint in his eye, often pictured in traditional dress, Ghani, 71, has a reputation as an ambitious outsider with a sharp tongue and a vision to modernize Afghanistan, having observed his country for years from abroad.

By contrast, Abdullah, who was born to a Tajik mother and a Pashtun father — the two dominant and sometimes warring Afghan ethnic groups — has lived through most of the conflict in Afghanistan. He has dark bushy eyebrows and a penchant for Western suits, as well as a reputation for being conciliatory but having a vision that he struggles to communicate. The pair have clashed repeatedly. After two contested presidential elections and years of bitter power-sharing, some are concerned that infighting between those around Ghani and Abdullah could scupper the talks.

"That's the real danger of their disunity — that it sabotages any chance for ending the war," Ashely Jackson, a researcher at the Overseas Development Institute, said.

Spokesmen for Ghani and Abdullah did not respond to questions from NBC News.

An existential threat

The Taliban, which is overwhelmingly Pashtun, is estimated to have around

60,000 full-time fighters and to control or contest more than half the country. It has created vast shadow authorities, taking over state hospitals and schools and running a shadow justice system while disputing the legitimacy of the government in Kabul and presenting itself as a government-in-waiting.

These men pose a threat to those in power — particularly Ghani. And their rhetoric will no doubt alarm the president and his supporters.

A senior Taliban commander in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, who spoke to NBC News on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media, said that, while the Taliban had agreed to a general amnesty, it would exclude the president, who is "liable to death." It remains unclear whether his views reflected those of other Taliban leaders.

Nevertheless, transitions of power in Afghanistan over the past 40 years have often been violent.

"In the past it was exile, or coup, or assassination and it goes back to that sense ... in Afghan politics, if you're out of power, you're out of luck," said Scott Smith, who served as the political director for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan from 2017 to 2019.

"If you're an Afghan politician playing with these high stakes, you have a legitimate reason to not count on the Afghan political DNA having changed so significantly," he said. "Especially when you're dealing with guys like the Taliban who have shown they're not afraid to be ruthless."

What is clear is that the Taliban direct their ire most fervently at the president, painting him as an American puppet.

"He is even worse than the Americans and there is no way we can settle our issues with him peacefully," a senior Taliban leader in Afghanistan's Helmand province said on condition of anonymity.

Cut from a different cloth

Born to an influential family from Afghanistan's dominant Pashtun ethnicity in 1949, Ghani excelled from the first.

He attended the prestigious Habibia

High School in Kabul before spending most of his higher education years and early career abroad. He first went to Lebanon, where he met his future wife, Rula, and later the United States, where he taught anthropology before joining the World Bank in 1991.

"He was usually the best read and most articulate student in the seminar," said Richard Bulleit, a professor emeritus of history at Columbia University, who was on Ghani's doctoral dissertation committee.

Bulleit said Ghani's dissertation, which examined the ungovernability of Afghanistan largely from the point of view of its political economy, was "remarkable." His work researching every district meant he had an understanding of the country's overall structure, putting him in an usual situation among Afghan political and military figures, who tend to be regionalists, Bulleit said.

In 2001, in the wake of the U.S. invasion, Ghani returned to Afghanistan after 24 years. He later entered politics and earned a reputation for surrounding himself with Afghans who had studied and worked abroad, often in the West. "He was abroad for years and many Afghans don't know him very well," said Khalil Roman, who once served as an adviser to deposed Communist President Najibullah and was deputy chief of staff for former President Hamid Karzai.

Roman said he later advised Ghani when he chaired the Transition Coordination Commission that helped transfer authority from international troops to Afghan security forces.

"He also did not know the situation in Afghanistan and the Afghan people," Roman said — repeating a routine charge against politicians who have spent years of the crisis abroad. Roman was a running mate to a minor candidate in the 2019 presidential elections.

The foreign roots of Ghani's wife, who was born in Lebanon to a Christian family, have also been used against him.

As first lady, Rula Ghani has taken on a more public profile, marking a sharp break with her predecessor, the wife of President Hamid Karzai, who rarely

appeared in public. The decision has left her with both admirers and critics. The couple have two children — a daughter, Mariam, a New York-based artist, and a son, Tarek, an economist for the International Crisis Group, which works to prevent wars, in Washington D.C.

Those who have worked with Ghani in Afghanistan say he has an academic and technocratic approach to governance and has a vision to overhaul and modernize the country. But he also reputedly has a fierce temper.

Abdullah, 60, is cut from different cloth.

Born in 1960, Abdullah stayed in Afghanistan for most of the 40-year conflict that ravaged the country.

In the 1980s, he became an adviser to the northern resistance hero and ethnic Tajik warlord Ahmad Shah Massoud, whose fighters battled the Soviets, and later the Taliban, after it swept to power in 1996.

Massoud, who remains widely admired in Afghanistan, was assassinated Sept. 9, 2001, by Al Qaeda suicide bombers posing as journalists. Abdullah displays a photo of himself with Massoud at the top of his Facebook page.

Abdullah retains a strong following among ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan's north and is a member of the Tajik-dominated Jamiat-e-Islami party. He is known as personable, and for building alliances, but also for lacking a clear vision for the country.

He is married and has three daughters and one son. Abdullah's family also reportedly live abroad in New Delhi but NBC News could not independently confirm this.

Afghan watchers and former colleagues spoke more easily about his appreciation for sharply-cut suits than they did about his policies.

"It's not clear what he stands for, other than that he isn't Ghani and represents some of the political elites excluded by Ghani," Jackson said. And, unlike with Ghani, she added, there were no "horror stories" of him screaming at people.

A wedge

The rivals' seeming potential ...

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Source: IRNA

Why Iran defends peace process in Afghanistan?

A visit to Iran by the Chairman of Afghan Peace Council Abdullah Abdullah is undoubtedly far beyond just bilateral relations between the two countries and is scheduled to focus on the peace process in Afghanistan and the challenges facing this process.

"Iran" newspaper published an article by Nozar Shafiei, an international analyst, on Monday, in which he expressed his belief that the political crisis in Afghanistan has affected all the neighboring countries.

He said that cultural commonalities between Iran and Afghanistan, border exchanges, as well as Iran's opposition to the presence of US forces in Afghanistan has doubled the impact of Afghanistan's developments on Iran, Shafiei said.

He said that Iran has been grappling with a wave of Afghan immigrants and shelter-seekers, drug trafficking from Afghanistan as well as border conflicts with its eastern neighbor over the past decades.

All the above-mentioned challenges have raised Iran's sensitivity about Afghanistan so that it is natural for Tehran to seek the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan, the analyst said. In contrast, countries farther away from Afghanistan are less likely to help resolve the issue fundamentally, especially when those countries are challenging Afghanistan's neighbors, he added.

The United States has both obvious and hidden challenges with a significant portion of

Afghanistan's neighbors; From Iran and China to Russia and some Central Asian countries and even Pakistan, Shafiei said, adding that Afghanistan is a place where the US can cause serious inconvenience to these countries by making it insecure.

It is only the passage of time that will show what strategy the Americans are pursuing in the Doha talks, the analyst said. Therefore, if Iran is defending negotiations with the Taliban, it is first in terms of political realism and secondly in order to address security concerns, because if the distribution of power in Afghanistan fails to provide relative satisfaction to the various forces in Afghanistan, then there will be concern of spreading conflicts to Iran, he added.

Qureshi:...

country," the foreign minister said. During his visit, the Afghan leader is expected to meet President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan in addition to Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani and National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser among others.

He is also expected to speak at a programme of a policy think-tank where he will interact with the media.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the FO had said Hekmatyar's visit would provide an opportunity for exchanging views on the Afghan peace process, strengthening bilateral

relations between the two countries as well as people-to-people interaction.

Hekmatyar's visit comes a few weeks after Chairman of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation Dr Abdullah Abdullah visited Pakistan.

Hours before returning to Kabul after completing his three-day visit, the Afghan leader had said: "We had good discussions, extensive discussions with authorities, civilian and military, and in most of the case for example on the need for reduction in violence, the need for getting to ceasefire, on the need for showing flexibility [...] we are on the same

page."

Abdullah's visit, his first to Pakistan in his new role, was meant to seek Islamabad's cooperation for what he had said in his speech at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad "to see the process through to the next stage".

For that to happen an equal emphasis was placed by both sides on exploring possibilities for improving Pak-Afghan bilateral ties that had been marred by mistrust and acrimony for a long time. Both sides, by the end of the visit, suggested that ground had been prepared for turning the page in bilateral relations.

NATO ministers...

and the resilience of allied societies.

"We expect our defence ministers to reaffirm their steadfast support to the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace

process," one NATO official said.

The ministers will reaffirm support to the Afghan security forces, through NATO's Resolute Support Mission and for the country's long-term security and stability.

75pc of Samangan grapes exported to Pakistan

This year's grape harvest showed 28 percent increase over last year's produce in northern Samangan province, an official said on Monday. Mohammad Osman Hanafi, the provincial agriculture director, told Pajhwok Afghan News that this year's grape produce reached 32,000 metric tons and 75 percent of the fruit was exported to Pakistan.

He said Firuz Nakhchir and Hazrat Sultan districts of the province have 7,400 acres of vineyards. According to him, the agriculture department's study shows the grape production of these two districts last year was about 25,000 metric tons but this year it reached 32,000 metric tons. He also noted that the total value of this year's grape harvest in the

province was estimated at 960 million afghanis against last year's about 625 million afghanis. He said growers sold one kilogram of grapes for an average price of 25 afghanis last year while this year's price was 30 afghanis and the quality of grapes was also better than last year's due to the lack of plant diseases. Gul Mohammad, a grower in Hazrat

Sultan district, said he earned 840,000 afghanis from his vineyard this year and last year his income from was 600,000 afghanis. Dr. Nusratullah, a grapes trader said about 75 percent of Samangan grapes have been exported to Pakistan so far this year. Satisfied with the market, he said this year he sold 630 metric tons of grapes in domestic and Pakistani markets.

Abdullah: Interim...

"Iran is ready to connect gas and oil pipelines to Afghanistan to provide our neighboring nation with energy products," he added.

Rouhani stressed, "We have always stood along with the people of Afghanistan, and we will continue to support this country in all aspects."

Abdullah Abdullah thanked the supports of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding developments and efforts to establish lasting peace and security in this country and said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is a good friend and neighbor of Afghanistan."

He appreciated Iran for hosting Afghan refugees during the years of war and conflict in this country and said, "During my visit to Tehran, I had good meetings with the officials of the Islamic Republic and I will take the message of Iranian support to Kabul and follow up the agreements between the two countries."

The Afghan official expressed hope that Afghanistan will witness the conclusion of the Afghan peace talks and the establishment of lasting security and peace in his country with the support of the Islamic Republic.

Abdullah arrived in Tehran on Sunday for a three-day visit and a meeting with high-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran on expanding bilateral relations and the ways to develop Afghanistan's peace and stability processes.

He met and held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

He is also scheduled to meet with Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani.

A delegation of high-level national reconciliation council officials, members of parliament, and officials from the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs accompany Abdullah during the visit.

Taliban's Claim...

confirmed they had conducted airstrikes in Helmand to support their Afghan partners in the fight against the Taliban, who attacked different parts of the province nearly two weeks ago.

The Helmand conflict has left more than 5,000 families displaced, according to the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation in Helmand. Meanwhile, over 40 schools that enroll thousands of students have been closed due to the conflicts in the province, according to the education directorate in Helmand.

US forces in Afghanistan in a statement rejected the statement by the Taliban.

"We categorically reject the Taliban's claim the United States has violated the US-Taliban Agreement. US airstrikes in Helmand and Farah have been and continue to be solely in defense of the ANDSF as they are being attacked by the Taliban," US forces spokesman in Afghanistan Col. Sonny Leggett said.

Corruption,...

for complementing each other must frustrate those longing for peace.

However, contested presidential elections in 2014 and 2019 — and a term together in a national unity government beset by infighting — have made reconciliation a bitter pill to swallow.

In the national unity government, their discord stemmed from the vagueness of the U.S.-devised power-sharing agreement, with Abdullah believing the agreement gave him an equal share in government, and Ghani and his advisers insisting that ultimate power resided in the presidency, according to the International Crisis Group.

Both sides stacked the government and security agencies with allies, mainly on ethnic grounds, with Ghani favoring fellow Pashtuns and Abdullah preferring Tajiks, according to the group.

Trust broke down to such an extent that in 2017, when a series of blasts tore through a funeral attended by Abdullah and members of his Jamiat-e-Islami party, some speculated that the government had allowed the attack to happen, Smith, now a senior expert for Afghanistan peace processes at the United States Institute of Peace, said.

Since then, Abdullah has contested the results of a second presidential election held last September in which Ghani was declared the winner. In March, the depth of the crisis was on show for all to see when the rivals held parallel presidential swearing-in-ceremonies.

Two months later, forced to admit defeat, both men signed their second power-sharing deal agreeing that Ghani should stay on as president while Abdullah assumed responsibility for the peace process with the Taliban and was also given the power to appoint half of Ghani's cabinet. The adversary

There are areas of agreement, however. When it comes to peace with the Taliban, Abdullah and Ghani both believe the country should remain a republic and that the rights of women should be upheld, according to Anwar-

ul-haq Ahady, a political ally of Abdullah and a former minister of commerce and industries under Karzai.

On the future governance of Afghanistan, however, they will likely differ sharply with their Taliban adversaries.

Formed in the early 1990s by Afghan Islamic fighters who had fought the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989, the Taliban went on to seize power in 1996, ruling the country as an emirate, led by an emir rather than a president.

Under their rule, Afghanistan had no parliament, no elections and jurisprudence was based on Sharia law. Most women were barred from attending school, holding jobs or leaving their homes without male escorts.

Later in 2001, they were ousted in the American-led invasion after they refused to give up bin Laden. Since being toppled, the Taliban have said they will not compromise on Sharia law, and have rejected taking part in elections. They have indicated they will adopt a less draconian stance toward women and girls than before but have offered scant detail.

It is dangerous to be a Taliban adversary. Since their formation some 30 years ago, no Afghan leadership team has been able to defeat or negotiate peace with the group.

Deposed Communist President Najibullah was killed and then hanged near the presidential palace in Kabul when the Taliban militants swept into the capital in 1996. And former President Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated in 2011 when a man pretending to be a Taliban emissary exploded a bomb reportedly hidden in his turban. Several Taliban commanders have acknowledged to NBC News that the group was behind both attacks.

And in August, Fawzia Koofi, one of four women on the team negotiating with the Taliban, was shot while traveling through Taliban-controlled territory. While the militants publicly denied they were behind the attack, two Taliban commanders acknowledged to NBC News that they had been. This is the force Ghani and Abdullah are up against. It has

been buoyed recently by the signing of a deal with the United States that could see all U.S.-led foreign forces withdraw from Afghanistan by May in exchange for Taliban security guarantees. U.S. troops have been in Afghanistan for 19 years and withdrawal would hand Trump a foreign policy coup. However, the Taliban will also claim foreign troops leaving Afghanistan as a victory. Excluded from the U.S.-Taliban negotiations, the Afghan government has much to lose. While the deal called for the peace talks between the militants and an Afghan delegation, the withdrawal of U.S. troops is not tied to the success of these talks.

A coalition withdrawal could leave the Afghan government more vulnerable to the Taliban insurgency. Following the February deal, Taliban attacks on Afghan security forces have surged, according to Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. On June 22, a spokesman for Afghanistan's National Security Council said that the past week had been the deadliest of the past 19 years, with Taliban attacks killing 291 Afghan National Defense and Security Forces members and wounding some 550 others.

In other words, Ghani and Abdullah are embarking on an extraordinary challenge even for a united Afghan leadership team. And perhaps the greatest challenge will be if they are asked to cede power.

Last year, Abdullah said he would step aside from his then-role as CEO of Afghanistan if it would secure peace. By contrast, Ghani has been careful not to make promises, telling a virtual event in June that Najibullah made the "mistake of his life" by announcing he would resign. "Abdullah has on a few occasions said he is willing to step aside for peace, Ghani has not said that yet," Samad said. "If their perspectives continue to differ or contrast, then yes, it could create a situation where you would end up with a peace vs a war lobby," he said, but added that the hope was that a broad and inclusive peace agenda would be reached

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Saleh: Door...

illegal constructions and extensions for action to be taken. "The government will impose additional taxes and fines for the same amount that they built without a permit," Saleh explained.

All shops that have encroached

on the sidewalk have been warned to clear them for pedestrian traffic or face closure.

Saleh also said that the crime reports and charts are monitored every morning for progress as they document all incidents and ongoing

investigations in each district. A few officials have also been arrested for being involved in criminal activities, he said. He requested the people to cooperate with the government because only a "strong government" can guarantee the "dignity" of its citizens.

China urges Canada to 'face up to the facts' regarding bilateral ties

China on Monday firmly opposed the erroneous remarks and unwarranted accusations made by the Canadian PM Justin Trudeau and senior officials, reiterating Canada's decision of detaining Meng Wanzhou is the crux of the difficulties in China-Canada relations in recent two years.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters at a briefing. He urged the Canadian side to face up to the facts, correct mistakes by immediately releasing Meng and ensure her safe return to China.

The Canadian side should listen to the common wish of many insightful people from the both sides, act positively to remove the barrier in China-Canada ties so as to create conditions for bilateral relationship going back to the right track, said Zhao.

Chinese Ambassador to Canada Cong Peiwu earlier also stated China's consistent and clear

stance on China-Canada relations.

Rebuking the groundless accusations made by Canadian officials on China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Cong said they are purely China's internal affairs and have nothing to do with human rights issues.

Noting some Canadian officials are planning to ground political asylum to violent criminals in Hong Kong, the ambassador warned such behavior will "embolden" them.

"So if the Canadian side really cares about the stability and prosperity in Hong Kong, and really cares about the good health and safety of those 300,000 Canadian passport holders in Hong Kong, and the large number of Canadian companies operating in Hong Kong SAR, you should support those efforts to fight violent crimes, those efforts to make sure that One Country, Two Systems is more steadily and



comprehensively implemented in Hong Kong," said Cong. However, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi will attend a meeting held by the United Nations Security Council

on the situation in the Persian Gulf region on Tuesday, said Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday. The meeting will be held via video link, said the Ministry.

A look at the world

IMF: Nearly all Mideast economies hit by pandemic recession

The coronavirus pandemic has pushed nearly all Mideast nations into the throes of an economic recession this year, yet some rebound is expected as all but two — Lebanon and Oman — are expected to see some level of economic growth next year, according to a report published Monday by the International Monetary Fund.

This comes as the IMF estimates that the global economy will shrink 4.4% this year, marking the worst annual plunge since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Well before the coronavirus swept across the globe, several Mideast countries had been struggling with issues ranging from lower oil prices and sluggish economic growth to corruption and high unemployment.



The IMF projects the Lebanese economy will see one of the region's sharpest economic contractions this year at 25%. The pandemic has only pushed the country further to the brink after a wave of anti-government anger before the virus struck. Lebanese demonstrators were protesting government corruption, foreign exchange shortages, hyperinflation, constant electricity cuts and increasing poverty. The currency has dropped by 70% compared to the end of last year, with people struggling to afford basic goods.

A devastating explosion at Beirut's main port in August killed at least 180 people, injured more than 6,000 and destroyed entire neighborhoods. The blast left hundreds of thousands of people homeless. While Mideast nations have seen fewer confirmed cases and deaths from the virus than countries in Europe and the U.S., the region still faces challenges in containing the disease.

"Risks of a worse-than-projected scenario loom large, particularly given recent surges in COVID-19 infections in many countries around the world that have reopened," the IMF warned.

Global coronavirus cases pass 40 million



The number of confirmed global cases of Covid-19 has passed 40 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University tally.

The US research institute which collates reporting of cases from around the world said the milestone was passed today.

It said infections had reached 40,050,902. There have been more than 1.1 million deaths.

The actual worldwide figure of Covid-19 cases is likely to be far higher, as testing has been variable, and many people have had no symptoms meaning they are unaware of having the disease.

Some governments have also been accused of concealing the true number of cases.

The US, Brazil and India are reporting the highest numbers of cases, although the increase in recent weeks has been driven by a surge in Europe.

An analysis by Reuters has shown the global rate of infection is continuing to rise.

It took just 32 days to go from 30 million global cases to 40 million, compared with the 38 days it took to get from 20 to 30 million, the news agency said.

Record one-day increases in new infections were seen at the end of last week, with global coronavirus cases rising above 400,000 for the first time.

New round of UN-hosted Libya talks begins in Geneva

The military track of the intra-Libyan negotiations resumed on Monday with a 5+5 Libyan Joint Military Commission (JMC) meeting in Geneva under the acting UN special envoy Stephanie Turcos Williams.

The meeting began with the playing of the Libyan national anthem, followed by opening remarks by Williams and the heads of both delegations.

The work of the 5+5 JMC, the security track, is one of the three intra-Libyan tracks on which the UN support mission (UNSMIL) is working to try to bring peace to the North African country.

The others are economic and political tracks, which emerged from the 2020 Berlin Conference on Libya at the end of January, said the UN.

These tracks were endorsed by Security Council Resolution 2510 of 2020, which called on both parties to reach an agreement for a permanent cease-fire to their years' long conflict.



The second round of the UN-sponsored talks on Libya, between the warring sides, ended in Geneva on Feb. 23. "On this occasion, UNSMIL appreciates the leadership of both parties for facilitating this round of talks. "It also thanks to the members of both delegations for traveling to Geneva during these unusual conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic," the UN said in a statement.

The UN said that the launch of this round of talks was marked by "in-person meetings" between the delegations of the two conflicting parties in Libya.

The deliberations of this round will continue until the 24th of this month. UNSMIL hopes that the two delegations will solve all outstanding issues to achieve a complete and permanent cease-fire across Libya, said the UN.

Libya has been torn by civil war since the ouster of late ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The Government of National Accord was founded in 2015 under a UN-led agreement, but efforts for a long-term political settlement have failed due to a military offensive by forces loyal to warlord Khalifa Haftar.

The UN recognizes Faye al-Sarraj's government as the country's legitimate authority as Tripoli has battled Haftar's militias since April 2019 in a conflict that has claimed thousands of lives.

Calls have been growing inside Libya and abroad for holding legislative and presidential elections in the conflict-ridden country, instead of staging a new 18-month transitional period.



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