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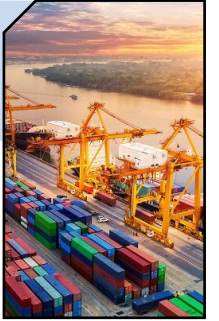
Biden's in-tray is already full

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\$1.2bn products to
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Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

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10 afs



Police force in Kabul to be doubled

First Vice President Amrullah Saleh said Monday the Presidential Palace will double the number of police in the city in a bid to cut down on security incidents and targeted attacks.

The decision comes just after a dramatic increase in assassinations and attempted assassinations in the capital which has sparked concern among residents.

"Based on the 6:30am session plan, a study found even in a relatively stable and calm state, Kabul has the lowest number of police in proportion to the number of residents," Saleh said.

Saleh also said in line with the new plan the responsibility for the mountain outposts in Kabul has been handed over to the army.

Kabul residents have raised their voices in the past few days over the high number of attacks in the capital every day and say they are having ... **P3**



An Institute for Afghanistan's Robotics Team to Open in Kabul University

The Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) of Afghanistan and the Digital Citizen Fund, have signed an agreement on the establishment of an institute for Afghanistan's robotics team. According to the agreement, "The Dreamers" institute will be built on Kabul University campus at a cost of USD 20 million.

"The institute will have various departments, including artificial intelligence, new technology, science and other departments," said TVET head Nadima Sahar.

She added that the purpose of the institute is to nurture creativity among young people.

Head of the Digital Citizen Fund Roya Mahboob said the institute will consist of two educational courses: the first course will be at high school level, grades 11th and 12th, and the second course will be the institute.

Mahboob added that the institute will have the capacity for 80 students.

The Dreamers institute will be built on a 10-acre land inside Kabul University.

Blast Targets Govt Employees' Bus in Kabul



An explosion targeted the employees of the National Statistics and Information Authority in Guzargah area in Kabul's PD7.

Kabul police said that at least six people were wounded in the explosion. Police said the bomb

was placed on a bicycle.

It was the second explosion of the day in Kabul.

In the first explosion, a security force vehicle was hit by a magnetic IED blast in Kabul city on Monday morning, Kabul police confirmed in a statement, adding that the

blast caused no casualties.

The incident occurred around 7:50 am local time in the Kolola Poshta area in PD4 of Kabul city as a magnetic IED that was placed on a security forces vehicle exploded, the statement said.

"The blast has no casualties," said

Ferdous Faramarz, a spokesman for the Kabul police, but some eyewitnesses claimed there were casualties.

Faramarz said investigations are ongoing.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for either blast.

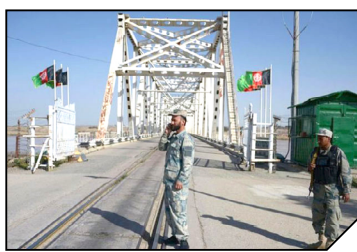
Three Afghan Senators Arrested in Accusation of Taking Bribes

The governor of Balkh has confirmed the reports of thousands of dollars in bribes being taken by three members of the Afghan Senate.

Speaking at a press conference in Mazar-e-Sharif, Farhad Azimi said the three members of the Upper House had been sent to Kabul for further investigation.

Other sources in the Afghan government and Senate have confirmed the arrest of Senators.

According to sources, the senators were tasked with a ... **P3**



Egypt lecturers to share experiences with Afghan scholars

Around 7,000 Afghan ulema and prayer leaders would attend an online training from Egypt's Al-Azhar University lecturers, an official said on Sunday.

Fazal Mohammad Hussaini, the Hajj and Religious Affairs Public Relations director, told a gathering at the Mashal University here that the training program was being implemented in cooperation between the Ministry of Hajj, Alkozai Company, Al-Azhar University and Mashal University.

He said the Ministry of Hajj would help bring together ulema and imams, the Alkozai Company would food and transport facility, Al-Azhar University would give salaries to the instructors and the Mashal University would arrange classrooms and learning platform. During this program, the Afghan ulema would be taught the principles of Dawat, art of delivering



sermon, children rights, women rights, hazards of drugs and daily issues. He said 50 ulema were taking part in the first round of this programme starting tomorrow (Monday), in Kabul.

Abdul BadaiSaiyyad, who represented the Alkozai Company, termed the role of ulema in peace process as weak and added ulema enjoyed strong influence in the

resolution of social issues. Alsaeed Mohammad Baig, a diplomat at the Egypt Embassy in Kabul, said: "Afghanistan is our brother and friendly country. We should share our experiences with religious figures in this country."

He thanked the Hajj and Religious Affairs Ministry for inviting Al-Azhar University teachers to share their experiences with Afghan ulema.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China

Press Conference by Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang-related Issues in Beijing

...The numbers of trainees were dynamic. On December 9, 2019, all the trainees on the vocational and training program (learning the national common language, law and skills and receiving deradicalization education) graduated. As for the rumors created by some US and Western media outlets that “a million of Uyghurs were detained in the centers” are nothing but slanders and smearing. The Grayzone, an independent news website once published articles to expose that such ridiculous conclusions were fabricated and spread by the US government supported non-governmental organizations and anti-China forces: firstly, Chinese Human Rights Defenders drew a conclusion that among the 20 million people of Xinjiang, 10% were detained in the reeducation camps based on the interviews of eight Uyghurs. Secondly, the pseudo researcher Adrian Zenz also who forged such lies has admitted that “he is not certain about this estimate.” On July 25 this year, Max Blumenthal, an award-winning journalist and the author of several books, spoke at an international symposium No to New Cold War that many media reports alleging an astonishing number of a million Uyghurs being detained are based on shaky sources of information that don’t stand up to examination. I hope friends from the media could sharpen your eyes and do not be blinded.

Hatip Obulhasan Tursunniyaz of the Jama Mosque in Hotan City: On your second question: Respecting and protecting freedom of religious belief is a fundamental policy of the Chinese government. China’s Constitution stipulates that citizens are entitled to freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The State protects normal religious activities.

In Xinjiang, normal religious activities, such as recitation, praying, Koran teaching, fasting,

and celebrating Islamic festivals, conducted by Muslims at home or mosques are all believers’ voluntary activities and protected by law allowing no interference. The well-equipped Jama Mosque where I serve in Hotan City is in nice condition and has good surroundings. Though Xinjiang was struck by Covid-19 this year, normal religious activities were not affected much by the epidemic and nearby Muslims came to the mosque to pray largely as usual, thanks to our effective prevention and control work.

Installing cameras in the region’s mosques is to protect the safety of our clerics and believers, and to prevent and fight terrorist activities. In 2014, Senior Mullah Juma Tayir, vice president of Xinjiang Islamic Association and Imam of the Id Kah Mosque, was brutally killed by terrorists on his way home after morning Faji prayer. I am sure you are aware of the incident, which was also featured in the documentary Fighting Terrorism in Xinjiang broadcast by GGTN. Without the footage recorded by cameras, cracking the crime would have become more difficult, not to mention make the brutality of terrorists known to the world!

Some people falsely accuse that installing cameras in mosques is to make them under surveillance and to punish Muslims. It is totally a malicious smear, with a sinister intention to sow discord in the relations between China and Islamic world, to create contradictions between Muslims and Non-Muslims, and to disrupt Xinjiang’s religious harmony and our happy life. Next, let’s watch two video clips showing the scene of a religious activity in the Urumqi-based Yanghang Mosque and clerics being murdered by terrorists at the Shaanxi Mosque in Yining City.

Radio France International (RFI): 1) What are the security policies and measures Xinjiang has taken in 2020? 2) Whether trips to Xinjiang will be arranged for member states of UN Security Council and diplomats of EU countries to China?

Xu Guixiang: On your first question, I need to point out that, for some time, Xinjiang was plagued by terrorism and religious extremism, which gave rise to frequent violent terrorist incidents. According to incomplete statistics, the “three forces” (terrorism, extremism and separatism) had conducted thousands of violent terrorist attacks in Xinjiang and other parts of China, causing the deaths of a large number of innocent people and hundreds of police officers, as well as immeasurable property. Facing complex and grave circumstances, Xinjiang, upholding the principle of fighting and preventing terrorism at the same time while earnestly implementing The Counter-terrorism Law of PRC, has been taking aggressive action against violent terrorist crimes, and at the same time, addressing the problem at its source. It has been making every effort to protect the fundamental human rights of citizens from violation by terrorism and extremism. Specific measures include improving public wellbeing, promoting knowledge of the law through education, and offering education and aid through vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law. It has been proved that these measures suit the conditions in Xinjiang and have produced notable results. No violent terrorist attacks have occurred in the past four years in a row, and extremism has been effectively contained. Public security has substantially improved with people’s happiness, enhanced sense of gain and security.

Today, Xinjiang is safe and stable, people are living in peace and contentment. We will persist in governing Xinjiang according to law, uniting and stabilizing Xinjiang, culturally moistening the Xinjiang, enriching the people and prospering the region, building Xinjiang with a long-term goal, and strive to an era of socialism with Chinese characteristics in Xinjiang featuring unity, harmony, prosperity, civilization, progress, peaceful living and work,

and sound ecology.

To answer your second question. I’d like to stress that Xinjiang is an open region. We conduct ourselves honestly and handle each thing according to its merits, and therefore we have nothing to hide. Since the end of 2018, nearly 1,000 people have visited Xinjiang. They include foreign diplomatic envoys to China, UN officials, Geneva-based senior diplomats of various countries, as well as more than 70 groups (or delegations) of people from news media and religious organizations of various countries. We welcome foreign visitors to Xinjiang, including those from UN Security Council and diplomats of EU countries to China, to see for themselves the real situation in Xinjiang. A joyful and harmonious Xinjiang awaits your visit.

Al Jazeera: 1) Last year, Xinjiang government announced all trainees had graduated. But the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) alleges that China has set up larger “detention centers.” As all trainees have graduated, what measures government is going to take against those who are considered to have “separatist” tendency. 2) Could you provide some statistics on how many laborers from Xinjiang are now working in factories in other parts of China? how many people have benefited from this policy? and what do local government do to implement such a policy and are there any indicators to measure?

Ilijan Anayat: On your first question, I want to sternly state that over a past period of time, terrorists and extremists had been very rampant and deceived a large number of people. Through the vocational education and training program centered on learning the country’s common language, legal knowledge and vocational skills as well as deradicalization, we have helped many trainees realize the criminal nature and serious harm of terrorism and extremism, get rid of the terrorists and extremists’ influence and control, and achieved remarkable results. ...

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By ANDREW HAMMOND

Biden’s in-tray is already full

Joe Biden is no stranger to massive foreign policy challenges. In 2009, the in-tray for him and Barack Obama was widely acknowledged as the most daunting of any White House team in the postwar era, ranging from Iraq and Afghanistan to tackling climate change.

Another parallel with 12 years ago is that, today, the US and wider world also simultaneously face separate, first-order crises. The first Obama administration sought to tackle the worst international financial turmoil since the 1930s, while the incoming Biden team is facing the coronavirus crisis, the first pandemic in a century, with the destabilizing geopolitical and economic impact it is unleashing internationally.

So the scale of combined dangers facing the new US president is comparably large and complex with that of 12 years ago, but there is one big difference. While Obama was elected in 2009 as a one-term senator, in terms of foreign affairs Biden is perhaps the most experienced and knowledgeable president-elect in modern US history.

Of course, experience does not equal success, but it should allow Biden to hit the ground running, which could

be critical; a number of burning issues require immediate attention, beyond the pandemic which will already consume much of his time in 2021.

First, with Russia relations remaining in the deep freeze, Biden must quickly choose how best to respond to the apparently massive cyber hack of US federal agencies, evidently of Moscow’s making. So far, there is only drift and denial from Donald Trump, who has a history of downplaying previous Russian interventions.

Other challenges include Iran, which has restarted work on its nuclear site at Fordo. North Korea, amid Trump’s flip-flopping between threats and courting of Kim Jong-un, now has long-range missile capabilities on top of being a nuclear power — a combination that could easily become a major crisis during Biden’s presidency.

Further geopolitical fault lines include the deep chill in US-China relations, post-pandemic; continuing instability in Afghanistan and Libya; and the bleak prospects facing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Meanwhile, long standing allies across the world require reassurance about US leadership after the

Trump era, while the nuclear non-proliferation system is in trouble and urgent action is needed to bolster international efforts on climate change.

Collectively, this is a massive, troubling agenda. And it underlines why the post-1989 vision forecast by some of a universal order of liberal, capitalist, democratic states living in peace and contentment has seemingly been replaced by a significantly different reality in which authoritarian states such as Russia appear to many to be a growing force on the world stage and unstable countries, including North Korea, have acquired nuclear weapons.

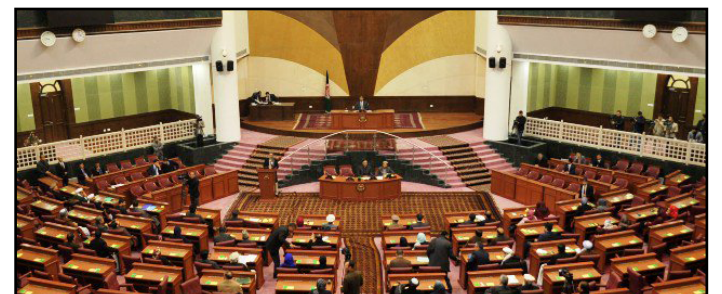
There are some quick wins for Biden, such as re-joining the Paris climate change accord. But the thorniest issues have no easy, immediate answers.

Some critics of Trump see this international landscape of risks as entirely a result of the maverick leadership in Washington for the past four years. However, while the current president has made many mis-steps, this is too simplistic a conclusion.

The US is not an all-powerful hegemonic power, ...

P3

Wolesi Jirga summons security bosses next week



The Wolesi Jirga or lower house on Monday decided to summon security bosses next week to brief lawmakers about increased violence in Kabul and provinces.

Abdul Sattar Hussaini, a lawmaker from Farah province, told on yesterday session that most of lawmakers skipped the house sessions due to security issues.

He said security organs had failed to provide safety to the public and district police chiefs appointed based on nepotism were unable to do their job.

In the last one month, the convoys of two lawmakers were attacked with IEDs in Kabul. “I apologize for my vote to the current interior minister; I will work to get him summoned,” he said.

Mir Haidar Afzali, a lawmaker from

Kapisa province, said that the current security situation across the country was unacceptable.

Mohammad Sadiq Qaderi, a lawmaker from Herat province, said that despite several requests, no attention was paid to the security of Herat. A number of other lawmakers held similar views and called for summoning of senior security officials to the lower house.

Speaker Mir Rahman Rahmani said that the leadership committee of the house had decided to summon all security leaders next Monday.

He expressed concern over intensified violence in the country and said that the government was responsible to ensure security of its citizens and control the deteriorating situation in Kabul and provinces.

Iran exports \$1.2bn products to Afghanistan in 8 months

Statistics showed that Islamic Republic of Iran exported \$1.2 billion worth of non-oil products to neighboring Afghanistan in the eight months of the current year (from March 21 to Nov. 22).

Accordingly, iron or steel bars, valued at more than \$70 million, accounted for maximum share of country's non-oil exports to Afghanistan in this period.

Based on the statistical tables of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), over 177.7 thousand tons of iron or steel bars, valued at over \$72.6 million, was exported to Afghanistan from March 21 to Nov. 22.

In addition, the country exported



798.1 thousand tons of white cement, valued at over \$21.4 million, to Afghanistan in first eight months

of the current year. Another statistic showed that 9.4 thousand tons of iron and steel

products, valued at \$7.8 million was exported from Iran to Afghanistan from March 21 to Nov. 22.

Biden's in-tray...

even if it remains the most powerful country in the world — certainly in a military sense, with ability to project and deploy overwhelming force. This has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout the post-Cold War period, in Somalia in 1993, Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11, and more recently in countries from Ukraine to North Korea.

To be sure, the US will remain for the foreseeable future the primary actor in many theaters across the world. And while its relative power may erode, it will seek to continue to set the international agenda in the political, economic and security spheres and succeed in doing so more often than any other state.

However, US success in helping manage the complexity of global affairs will increasingly depend upon cooperation of others, both competitors and allies, which is why international alliances are so important, despite Trump's frequent disdain for them. This is why Biden will in 2021 swiftly seek to bring traditional allies back more firmly into the US fold, including Europe.

Perhaps the key uncertainty is his presidency is China, whose economic and military power is only likely to continue to grow. While increasing rivalry appears most likely, post-pandemic, there remains an outside possibility of a more fruitful partnership.

Such growing cooperation is possible if the two powers can increasingly find ways to resolve harder power disagreements, including South China Sea territorial claims, while cooperating on soft issues such as climate change. The prize here could be deeper, collaborative strategic partnership, rather than escalating threats plus greater global instability, and a key question for Biden's presidency is whether the political window of opportunity to pursue this agenda has already been extinguished.

Three Afghan...

parliamentary panel to evaluate the performance of financial institutions in the port of Hairatan, which themselves "accepted taking \$ 40,000 in bribes."

This comes as the Attorney General Office and National Directorate of Security have confirmed the arrest of Senators.

Press Conference...

By December, 2019, all trainees under the vocational education and training program had graduated.

The ASPI's claim that "Xinjiang has built even bigger detention centers" is in every way conjecture and nonsense. Even Australian Citizens Part's official publication Australian Alert Service could not stand it anymore, so it published an article pointing out that the ASPI report was absolutely ridiculous. The two so-called "detention centers" in Turpan City alleged in the report are in fact office buildings respectively of the Industrial and Commercial Information Technology Bureau and Veterans' Affairs Bureau of Gaochang District; and the "detention centers" in Kashgar City are in fact local high schools and technical secondary schools. The ASPI report does not make any sense apart from fabricating sensational fake news. We have shown relevant photos on the scene of press conferences on Xinjiang-related issues. I hope our friends from the press can also read about the reports of these press conferences, and will not be blinded by ASPI's lies.

Let's take a look at what on earth the ASPI is. It has long received financial support from the US government and arms dealers. It has been keen on fabricating and hyping various anti-China topics and spreading rumors for the benefit of its paymasters to stigmatize and demonize China. It is not an academic research institution at all, but an anti-

China tool manipulated by the US government, and an anti-China vanguard in an academic guise. In particular, it has been notorious for throwing out fallacies on Xinjiang related issues that are unfounded and full of illusions and groundless suppositions. the ASPI just fawns on its paymasters so as to make more money. It is not responsible to its readers.

Of course, counter-terrorism and deradicalization is a long-term and arduous mission. Some violent terrorists and separatists are still trying to incite and deceive, and it cannot be ruled out that individuals may be deceived, but we believe that the vast majority of the people are clear-minded and have already seen through their ugly face and evil intentions, and thus will not follow those bad guys. For individual people who may be affected by terrorism and extremism, we will provide them with assistance, education and guidance in strict accordance with relevant Chinese laws and regulations, so as to enhance their capability to guard against infiltration of erroneous thoughts and avoid taking the road of crimes.

Xu Guixiang: On your second question, in recent years, Xinjiang has prioritized employment, made and taken a series of policies and measures to enlarge employment, which aim to help workers of all ethnic groups to realize stable, sustained and long-term employment, so that they can live a well-to-do life through their hard work. One of the key measures is to utilize the

central government's Xinjiang-aiding mechanism to make overall plan on employment in and out of Xinjiang and actively facilitate people of all ethnic groups to find jobs in inland provinces and cities. Since 2014, a total of 117,000 Xinjiang people have worked or been working in inland provinces and cities.

Supported and guided by the employment-oriented policies, many people from rural area in Xinjiang, especially those in southern Xinjiang, have migrated to cities to work. From farmlands to factories, the farmers have become workers, who have not only got higher pay but also realized their ideals and value of life. For example, Arapat Ahmatjan, from Charbagh village, Lop county, Hotan Prefecture, used to earn less than 10,000 yuan a year as a farmer. In 2017, he went to work in an electrical company in Nanchang city, Jiangxi province and earned more than 160,000 yuan within 3 years. Another example. Pashagul Keram, from Bartokay Village, Wuqia County, Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture, signed up voluntarily for a job in a company in Dongguan City. Today, she makes an annual income of 60,000 yuan from the job. Inspired by her experience, more than 1,300 workers from Kizilsu Prefecture have gone to Guangdong Province for work and most of them have shaken off poverty. Because of her leading role in hard work, Pashagul also won several awards, such as "China's most beautiful workers of 2020".

Continue

Police force...

to cope with explosions and targeted shootings almost every day.

While Kabul has dominated in the number of targeted attacks, the rest of the country is also dealing with the same problem. Just last week, Freshta

Kohistani, civil society activist was assassinated in Kapisa province.

On Wednesday, Yousuf Rashid, the CEO of Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), was gunned down outside his home in Kabul in what has become

a clear increase in targeted assassinations, either through the use of magnetic IEDs against vehicles or by shooting.

This has emerged over the past few months and public figures, including civil society members, media workers and government officials appear to be the targets.

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Palestine urges UN protection from settler attacks

Palestine's prime minister on Monday called for UN protection from Israeli settler attacks in the occupied West Bank.

"It is worrying that the [settler] aggression is happening under the watch and protection of the Israeli army," Muhammad Shtayeh told a weekly Cabinet meeting. "We call on UN bodies in Palestine to establish protection teams to shield our people against these settler attacks," he said.

The premier said the construction of thousands of settlement units shows "blatant disregard for the international stance that rejects the establishment of

settlements," adding that Israeli authorities are trying to take advantage of the last days of the US' Trump administration.

He demanded that the international community activates UN Security Council Resolution 2334 to stop what he called "colonial projects."

The resolution describes Israel's settlement activity as a "flagrant violation" of international law which lacks "legal validity," demanding that it be halted.

Israeli rights group Peace Now said in a recent report that settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories doubled during Trump's nearly four years in office.

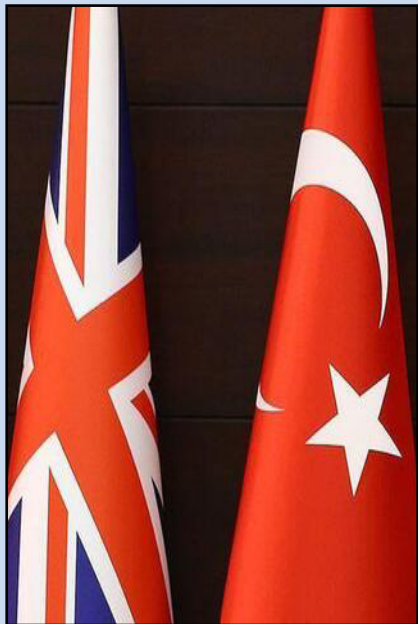


A look at the world

UK says it will sign free trade deal with Turkey this week

The United Kingdom and Turkey are set to sign a deal on Tuesday to extend their trading arrangements, making it the first since British Prime Minister Boris Johnson secured a new trade agreement with the European Union.

The UK-Turkey deal would replicate the existing trading terms between Ankara and London, but British trade minister Liz Truss said on Sunday that she was hopeful



a bespoke arrangement between the countries could be struck soon.

"The deal we expect to sign this week locks in tariff-free trading arrangements and will help support our trading relationship. It will provide certainty for thousands of jobs across the UK in the manufacturing, automotive and steel industries," Truss said in a statement.

"We now look forward to working with Turkey towards an ambitious tailor-made UK-Turkey trade agreement in the near future."

The trading relationship was worth 18.6 billion pounds (\$25.25bn) in 2019, and the UK said it was the fifth-biggest trade deal the trade ministry had negotiated after agreements with Japan, Canada, Switzerland and Norway.

The UK has now signed trade agreements with 62 countries ahead of the end of the Brexit transition period on January 1, when it leaves the EU's trading arrangements. It clinched its narrow trade deal with the EU, its biggest trading partner, last week.

Trump signs 2021 budget, avoids government shutdown



US President Donald Trump signed the \$2.3 trillion draft budget for 2021, which included almost \$900 billion worth of economy support measures due to the pandemic, White House Deputy Spokesman Judd Deere announced in his Twitter Sunday.

Trump's approval of this document makes it possible to avoid the so-called government shutdown, which could begin on Tuesday and would involve several million officials, unless an addition temporary resolution on funding extension is adopted.

"President [Donald Trump] has signed H.R. 133, an Act making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021, providing coronavirus emergency response and relief, and for other purposes," Deere tweeted.

By signing this document, Trump effectively agreed to making direct payments to the citizens within the economy stimulation package only \$600 - something he previously opposed. However, he made it clear that he intends to fight to get these payments increased up to \$2,000 after the budget is signed, while excluding some expenses he considers unjustified.

"I will sign the omnibus and covid package with a strong message that makes clear to Congress that wasteful items need to be removed," Trump said in a statement released on Monday.

He noted that the House will vote on Monday to increase stimulus payments from \$600 to \$2,000.

"Additionally, Congress has promised that Section 230, which so unfairly benefits Big Tech at the expense of the American people, will be reviewed and either be terminated or substantially reformed," he said.

Previously, Trump repeatedly spoke against Section 230.

Belarus set to deliberate on constitutional reform



Belarus will hold a meeting of All-Belarusian People's Assembly in February next year to discuss constitutional reforms, the country's President Aleksandr Lukashenko announced on Monday.

Lukashenko called the assembly "a body of direct democracy," and said the representatives of all groups of the Belarusian society will take part in the convention on Feb.11-12.

Simultaneously, a wide public dialogue on necessary constitutional amendments will be held throughout the country, he added. Lukashenko noted the constitutional reform is being carried in the conditions of unprecedented external pressure.

The president had announced his plan to amend the Belarusian constitution prior to the 2020 presidential election that he won on Aug. 9.

The US and the EU rejected the election and imposed sanctions on top Belarusian officials for their role in vote manipulation and a crackdown on protesters.



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