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# Heart of Asia

*Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region*

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Issue No. 906

www.heartofasia.af

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**Two more explosions  
 rattle Kabul amid  
 growing outcry**

Kabul was rattled by two explosions on Monday morning, amid a surge in targeted killings and attempted assassinations that have prompted a strong outcry among the international community.

The first explosion on Monday happened at around 8:37 am when an IED was detonated against a vehicle in the Sarak-e-Shura area in PD3 of Kabul city.

Police said the vehicle targeted belonged to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, but that there were no casualties.

The Ministry, however, rejected the report stating that the vehicle belonged to the Afghanistan Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (ATRA).

Less than two hours later, a second IED detonated in the Khairkhana area in PD11 in Kabul – also targeting a vehicle. Police stated there were no casualties and no further details were ... **P3**



**Pres. Ghani,  
 Australian PM  
 Stress on Ceasefire  
 in Afghanistan**

President Ashraf Ghani had a phone conversation with the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday, the Presidential Palace (Arg) said.

Arg in a press release said that during the conversation, the two sides discussed the ongoing relations between Afghanistan and Australia and the peace process.

According to the press release, the two sides discussed the ongoing Taliban violence in Afghanistan and emphasized on an immediate ceasefire in the country.

The Australian Prime Minister said that the Taliban must accept the ceasefire that the Afghan people demand.

Australian PM also condemned targeted assassinations in the country.

Scott Morrison added that Australia supports the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in which the values and achievements of the past two decades are preserved and strengthened.

This comes as the ceasefire is one of the important agendas proposed by the government in the ongoing Doha talks.

## First VP Calls for Execution of Taliban Prisoners



Amrullah Saleh, the first Vice President says one of the reasons for the increase in targeted assassinations in major cities of the country is that Taliban prisoners thought they would be pardoned in any case and would not be punished for their terrorist activities.

"One of the main solutions to this challenge is the execution of a

number of Taliban detainees," Mr. Saleh wrote on his Facebook page on Monday. "They should be executed so that it can be a lesson for the rest." According to him, during the last 80 days, the security forces have made significant progress and the arrested terrorists have confessed to their crimes; But their only hope was that one day they would be released

without any punishment. "This challenge must be addressed and it will be one of the key points that I will raise at the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Rule of Law," he said. "A terrorist who is arrested must be executed." Mr. Saleh recently said that the IS-K Taliban had warned in a text message that if any of their prisoners are

executed, they would turn Kabul into a Shiite slaughterhouse and behead the abductees.

He said that the IS-k Taliban should know that no threat will prevent us from introducing their faces to the people on a daily basis.

The first Vice President further said that the Kabul police yesterday stopped several children and teenagers who were being transferred to Taliban schools for education and returned them to their families.

"This incident reminded me of 2005 and 2006," Saleh said. "In those years, hundreds of Afghan children were transported to Pakistan, mostly from the north, every week under the guise of religious instruction with dormitory services and clothing."

He said that he had once been in charge of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) and had stopped several of these transfers, and that the issue had been discussed in the cabinet.

The first VP stated that the previous governments had decided to allow children to be transferred to Pakistan to learn without the presence of their parents because the upbringing of children was up to the family, not the government.

According to him, most of ... **P3**

**Kandahar exports  
 pomegranates worth  
 \$8m this year**

Local officials say 35,000 tons of pomegranates worth \$8 million have been exported from southern Kandahar province abroad this year. A total of 200,000 tons of the fruit were harvested in the province this year. Closure of borders as well as lockdowns caused by coronavirus in the first four months of the ongoing solar year created problems for pomegranate market.

Eng. Abdul Baqi Bina, deputy head of Kandahar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the current year brought along numerous problems including ... **P3**



## Abdullah, Karzai in Meeting Call for Reduction in Violence

Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, met with former president Hamid Karzai on Monday and discussed the second round of peace talks, Abdullah's office said.

Abdullah and Karzai during the meeting discussed the second round of the peace talks in Doha and the international consensus for Afghan peace, it said.

Both leaders called for an immediate reduction in violence, it added.

Second round of talks Some members from each side in Doha, including the chief negotiators, held a meeting on Sunday evening and discussed the agenda, said Republic negotiator Nader Nadery.

The meeting comes after days of



delay. Over the nine days since the start of the second round of talks, the two sides have held four meetings, including Sunday evening's meeting, at the working group level, but they haven't had progress in finalizing the agenda that will open the way for formal talks.

Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem said that US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met with Abdul Ghani Baradar, head of the political office, and Mawlawi Abdul Hakeem Haqqani, head of the negotiating team, and discussed the peace agreement and emphasized that issues should be solved via dialogue ... **P2**

### Abdullah, Karzai...

and that every side should fulfill its responsibilities in a fair way.

This comes as violence has increased in the country in recent days, including targeted attacks in cities like Kabul.

The Taliban on Saturday claimed responsibility for a complex attack on an NDS facility in the southern province of Kandahar. Local officials said four attackers were killed in the attack that started with a car bomb explosion.

The officials said the attack took "no casualties" from Afghan forces.

### Samsung's Lee...

expected to count toward the sentence - leaving 18 months of his sentence to be served.

Monday's sentencing can be appealed to the Supreme Court within seven days, the judge said, but legal experts said that because the Supreme Court has already ruled on it once, chances are lower that its legal interpretation will change.

Shares in Samsung Electronics dropped as much as 4 percent after the ruling, while shares in affiliates such as Samsung C&T, Samsung Life Insurance and Samsung SDI also fell sharply.

### Biden to...

of 11 million undocumented people currently living in the country, in addition to a pledge to vaccinate 100 million people in his first 100 days in office.

Biden had previously announced he will push Congress to approve a \$1.9bn stimulus package to tackle an economic slump caused by the coronavirus.

By Frud Bezan

# 'Psychological Warfare': Taliban Adopts New Strategy in Afghanistan

For years, the Taliban's suicide bombers frequently struck high-profile political and security targets in Afghanistan's major cities.

But in a marked shift, the Taliban is now targeting civilians -- government workers, journalists, rights activists, moderate religious leaders, and women in public roles -- in urban areas.

The extremist group has reduced the number of indiscriminate, headline-grabbing suicide bombings it carries out. Instead, the militants are using so-called "sticky" bombs -- homemade magnetic bombs attached to vehicles and often detonated remotely -- to target specific individuals.

In a new trend, many of the targeted killings have gone unclaimed, with the Taliban denying responsibility in many cases.

Observers say the new tactics are a response to the U.S.-Taliban deal signed in February 2020, which limits where and what type of attacks the militants can conduct.

The shift, observers say, is also linked to the Taliban's strategy at peace talks with the Afghan government.

"Their intent seems to be to further disable and discredit the current government but also to decrease the number of people who might stand in their way postsettlement," says Jonathan Schroden, a security expert with the U.S.-based nonprofit research and analysis organization CNA.

Intra-Afghan peace talks -- which started in September 2020 in the Gulf state of Qatar -- are a key part of the U.S.-Taliban agreement.

That deal calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces in Afghanistan by May in return for counterterrorism guarantees from the Taliban, which has pledged to negotiate a permanent cease-fire and a power-sharing formula with the internationally recognized government in Kabul.

'Psychological Warfare'  
Since signing the deal with the United States, the Taliban has been blamed for a surge of targeted killings, including of prominent civic and political leaders.

The latest victim was Afghan journalist Bismillah Adel Aimaq, who was shot dead on January 1 by unidentified gunmen in the western Ghor Province. He was the fifth journalist slain in Afghanistan in the past two months.

On December 24, 2020, prominent Afghan women's rights activist Freshta Kohistani was shot dead by unknown gunmen on a motorcycle in the province of



Kapisa.

Meanwhile, a sticky bomb attached to an armored vehicle killed Kabul's deputy provincial governor, Mahbobullah Mohibi, and two others on December 15, 2020.

The campaign of assassinations has provoked public anger at authorities and struck fear among civilians in major cities where many oppose the Taliban.

"The new strategy is to win the support or submission of the population in government-controlled areas, particularly in urban centers, through intimidation and psychological warfare," says Rahmatullah Amiri, a Kabul-based political analyst.

'Chaotic Approach'  
Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid has denied any involvement in the attacks, calling the accusations "propaganda."

But Afghan officials and independent observers say there is little doubt the Taliban is behind the wave of attacks.

Afghan intelligence chief Ahmad Zia Siraj recently told lawmakers that security forces had arrested 270 members of a special Taliban unit with ties to the targeted killings, called Obaida Karwan.

In response to the wave of assassinations, Afghan authorities have said they will double the number of police in Kabul and spend some \$100 million on high-

tech security cameras in the city of around 5 million people, leading many to question why the measures were not introduced sooner.

"The Afghan government's chaotic approach when it comes to dealing with security provides an excellent window of opportunity for the Taliban to benefit," says Amiri.

The Kabul government is deeply divided, corrupt, and heavily dependent on foreign aid and military support. The government controls provincial capitals, major population centers, and most district centers. But only around 30 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts are fully in government hands, with the rest contested or controlled by the Taliban.

'Optimizing' Tactics

Observers say the Taliban's new tactics are, in part, a response to the constraints imposed by the U.S.-Taliban deal.

Under the agreement, the insurgents are believed to be banned from carrying out suicide bombings in urban centers.

U.S. officials say the Taliban also verbally agreed to reduce overall violence, although that is contested by the militants.

Schroden says the militants are "optimizing their tactical approach to do as much as they can" within the constraints of the bilateral deal. ... **P3**

By Charles V. Peña

## Time to Withdraw from Afghanistan

In the wake of the storming of the U.S. Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump, security for the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden increased dramatically. Over 20,000 National Guardsmen are expected for the event. That's more than twice as many troops as are deployed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. So, it takes this many troops to protect Washington, D.C., which measures about 61 square miles with a population of over 700,000. Afghanistan covers some 250,000 square miles, with a population of more than 36 million. Why then do so many policymakers and pundits continue to insist that a small contingent of U.S. troops in Afghanistan will make a difference in quelling the violence in that country? It is obvious that that it won't, and keeping troops in Afghanistan is unnecessary for U.S. national security.

The mission in Afghanistan was effectively accomplished in less than a year. Al Qaeda's leadership was decimated or scattered into hiding, and the Taliban regime was dethroned for harboring Osama bin Laden and his followers.

Instead of declaring success, the mission morphed into nation-building and counterinsurgency. Those opposed to withdrawal from Afghanistan continue to refuse the reality that existed from the very beginning: We could never win, i.e., achieve military victory.

Why?

On one hand, counterinsurgency requires a military component. The history of successful counterinsurgency -- largely practiced by the British -- requires 20 troops per 1,000 civilians. The force requirement for Afghanistan would be 720,000 troops -- certainly a bridge too far. The United States stopped tracking how much of Afghanistan was under government or insurgent control in 2019, but according to the last estimate, about 37% of the population, some 13 million people, was not under government control. That would require 260,000 troops -- more than twice the largest deployment during 2010-2011.

But troop levels are not all that matters. Successful counterinsurgency often

requires the use of harsh and indiscriminate military force. Again, the British offer good examples, such as putting down the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya in the 1950s. While such action may kill the enemy, it also all too often results in killing innocent civilians. In January, a U.S. drone strike in Herat targeting and killing 16 Taliban militants also killed 10 Afghan civilians. According to the most recent United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan report, there were 5,939 civilian casualties (2,117 killed and 3,822 injured) from January to September 2020. Twenty-eight percent of those casualties were attributed to pro-government forces. The inevitable result is alienation of the civilian population, which makes them more sympathetic to expelling the foreign occupier.

The problem in Afghanistan is that foreign military occupation, while perhaps the correct tactical military solution to counter the violence, is strategically a mistake. Foreign occupation reinforces the perception that the Afghan government is being... **P3**

## TEFA Voices Concern Over Gov't Readiness to Hold Three Elections Next Year

Following the proposal of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) submitted to the presidency to hold three elections next year, the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) says the conditions are not suitable for holding the elections. TEFA in a statement on Monday called the decision of IEC to hold elections "alarming", saying holding of the elections next year is a matter of concern for democracy, the achievements of the past 20 years and the future of Afghanistan.

According to the statement, TEFA considers holding the elections is not suitable due to the security challenges, the uncertainty of the sources of funding for the elections and the non-implementation of key reforms.

TEFA stressed that Afghanistan is currently in a difficult security situation; "even as citizens in the capital and other major cities are not relatively safe."

TEFA cited that the budget for the elections that would make it possible is not available and the sources are not clear.

In the meantime, the statement said, the conditions for the presence of

women, which has always been a serious challenge, are also "impossible" in the upcoming elections.

Meanwhile, the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan has suggested that electoral reform should be incorporated into the structure and legal framework of the elections, taking into account the experiences learned from previous elections, and that the monitoring findings of the institutions involved in the elections should be amended to validate future elections.

It also said that the Afghan government should implement a realistic security plan for the upcoming elections; first ensuring the security of citizens and then presenting its security plans for the elections. The statement added that the election commission should be held accountable for the expenses of previous elections and specify a transparent mechanism for spending the budget in the upcoming elections.

This comes as (IEC) has proposed to the government to hold the parliamentary elections in Ghazni province, the provincial councils and a number of municipalities elections in the next solar year of 1,400.

## No Winter Recess Before Approval of Next Year's Draft Budget: Rahmani

The speaker of the Lower House Parliament Mir Rahman Rahmani says that based on the Afghan constitution, the lawmakers will not be able to go on leave until the draft budget for the fiscal year of 1400 is approved. Speaking at Monday's session, Rahmani said, "No one has the right to go on winter break until the (budget plan for FY1400) is approved." He also said that all the committees of Lower House will work on the

budget plan for the 1400 fiscal year starting next Saturday. The duration of winter recess of the House of Representatives is scheduled to begin on Wednesday for 45 days. However, the Article 99 of the Constitution states that if the important issues such as the annual budget or development program or the issue of public security, territorial integrity and independence of the country remain uncompleted, the National Assembly's session cannot



be ended before finalization and approval. This comes as the draft budget for the 1,400 fiscal year was rejected by the Parliament Members for the second time on Saturday.

### Time to Withdraw...

propped up and controlled by the United States, rather than being the sovereign government of a Muslim country. The result is the occupying force in Afghanistan is a magnet for jihad.

Ultimately, successful counterinsurgency requires more than just a military solution – it requires a political solution. Again, the British experience is important, because this is the lesson of the Belfast Agreement. The Irish Republican Army was not defeated, but peace was achieved via negotiation. After more than 19 years in Afghanistan and a direct cost of \$978 billion – other estimates include other costs and put the price tag at \$2 trillion – it is worth noting that the British Army spent 38 years in Northern Ireland. This should serve as a reality check for anyone who supports staying longer. More important, not only can we not win in Afghanistan, but we don't have to. The conflict in Afghanistan is not a war of U.S. national survival. The Taliban is not an existential threat to the United States. The violence in Afghanistan flows out of a longstanding civil war within the Muslim world. It is not America's war to fight or win. Only Afghans can determine the outcome.

We must understand that a continued U.S. military presence – however well intended and however successful at the tactical, operational level – is not the solution and is actually part of the problem. It creates resentment not just within the Afghan population, but also the broader Muslim world. Residual counterterrorism operations – which should largely be operational intelligence and targeting information – can be conducted without boots on the ground. We must be true to our own principle of self-determination and allow the Afghan government to act as a truly sovereign government and make decisions for itself – even if they are not the same decisions we would make. Our only real criteria should be that the government in Afghanistan – even if it includes the Taliban – not provide support or safe haven to terrorist groups who would attack the American homeland.

### First VP Calls...

these children are from poor families, and now when he studies the incidents of a number of terrorists and Taliban commanders in the northern provinces, it shows that these people are the same ones who were educated fifteen or sixteen years ago who were taken to Karachi and other Pakistani cities.

Saleh stressed that Afghanistan is now paying the price for the recklessness of previous years, but he is trying to do something about the transfer of underprivileged children to Taliban centers outside the Afghan soil that the most important thing to do is to create a legal framework to prevent it.

### Kandahar exports...

pest attacks that crashed the fruit despite high harvests. In the beginning of the year, roads had been closed for four months due to coronavirus related measured and when the fruit ripened violence in Arghandab, Zhari, Panjwai and other districts of Kandahar escalated, causing huge losses to orchard owners and traders, he said.

However, he said that despite the mentioned problems, Kandahar produced 200,000 tons of pomegranates this year. Bina said 35,000 tons of the fruit worth \$8 million was exported abroad, mostly to Pakistan and India and less to UAE and some European countries. He added that 900 tons of the fruit which had cracked due to pest attack was also exported as seeds.

He added that an air corridor was opened between Afghanistan and India four years ago which made orchard owners and traders happy as they found market to their

products, but the air cargo did not last longer. Not even one flight has been made since last two years despite traders' readiness to export 40 tons of dried and fresh fruits in a week, he said.

Bina said they did not know the exact reason behind the delay and they have repeatedly asked for resumption of cargo flights. On the other hand, he said that Afghan traders also faced problems in exports through Chabahar port. He added that Afghan traders were unable to transfer their money to Afghanistan after exporting goods to Iran due to sanctions imposed by the US, an issue he said was also shared with the Presidential Palace. Bina said the Chabahar port should be exempted from US sanctions on Iran.

Pomegranate traders and orchard owners also complain of problems regarding exports. Haji Nasir, a trader of fresh fruits, said that the only route they currently used was Spin Boldak-Chaman road.

He said they exported the fruit to Pakistan this year but they could not earn the transit costs due to low quality of the fruit this year.

Besides poor quality of pomegranate, increased tax on the fruit by Pakistan was another problem, he said, adding that Pakistan previously taxed 30,000 Pakistani rupees on a single truck but this year it increased the levy to 80,000 and 100,000 Pakistani rupees. He asked the government to resolve their problems.

Additional, the opening ceremony of the Trade House of Craftsmen Association of Uzbekistan was held in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan. Director of Uzbekistan's Craft and Art company Zafarbek Akbarov presented displayed samples of handicrafts, arts and crafts and applied arts of Uzbekistan, UzA reported. Last summer the Trade House of Uzbek Craftsmen was also opened in Greece. The Turon Trade House was opened in September 2020 in New York.

### 'Psychological...

"The Taliban places great value in that agreement, but it also sees violence as its primary form of leverage against the government," he says. Since February 2020, the militants have increased the overall number of their attacks without taking credit for them, allowing them to claim they are adhering to the deal. But U.S. frustration over the Taliban's breaches of the deal appears to be spilling over. For the first time, the U.S. military directly blamed the Taliban for the surge of targeted killings, saying it was an impediment to peace. "The Taliban's campaign of

unclaimed attacks & targeted killings of government officials, civil society leaders & journalists must also cease for peace to succeed," tweeted Colonel Sonny Leggett, the U.S. military spokesman in Afghanistan, on January 4. The remarks come amid an ongoing war of words between the U.S. military and the Taliban over the terms of the deal. U.S. forces have retaliated to the Taliban's intensifying violence across the country by increasing air strikes against the militant group. The militants allege the strikes are a violation of the U.S.-Taliban deal. The U.S. military has forcefully reiterated that

it reserves the right to defend Afghan forces who come under Taliban attack.

Despite the Taliban's widespread violations of the deal, outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump ordered in November 2020 an accelerated U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The move was seen as an election ploy ahead of the November presidential vote that he lost.

The current deployment of around 5,000 American troops will be halved by mid-January when President-elect Joe Biden takes office, the lowest level since the beginning of the war in 2001.

### Two more...

provided as to who the vehicle belonged to. This comes a day after two female Supreme Court judges were gunned down in a targeted killing in Kabul city – a move that sparked a wide outcry. The US condemned Sunday's targeted killing and called for a prompt investigation. The US Chargé d'Affaires Ross Wilson blamed the Taliban for

the attack stating, "the Taliban should understand that such actions for which it bears responsibility outrage the world and must cease if peace is to come to Afghanistan." The UK also spoke out and called for a thorough investigation. "The continued targeting of Afghan civilians who are working to make the country safer, fairer, and more secure is abhorrent. We must see

transparent investigations into the assassination of two female judges in Kabul today and an urgent ceasefire," the UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab tweeted. No group claims responsibility for the ongoing attacks but some government officials repeatedly blame the Taliban. However the Taliban has stated in the past that it is not involved in these attacks.

### Exchange Rates

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Print: Waygal Printing .Co - +93 - 202512626

# Biden to reverse Trump's Muslim ban on inauguration day

On his first day in office, US President-elect Joe Biden plans to issue a number of executive orders, including one rescinding the controversial travel ban on several predominantly Muslim countries. According to a memo circulated on Saturday by Ron Klain, Biden's incoming White House chief of staff, the new US administration will launch a spate of reversals on policies implemented by US President Donald Trump over its first 10 days in office.

These also include new coronavirus prevention efforts, rejoining the Paris climate change accord, and immigration legislation allowing for millions to gain citizenship.

Shortly after taking office in 2017, Trump issued an executive order that banned travellers from seven Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States.

That order was, however, reworked several times amid legal challenges and a version of it was

upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018.

'Poison of hate'

Analysts say the ban could easily be undone as it was issued by executive order and presidential proclamation, though lawsuits from conservative opponents could delay the process.

"As president, I'll work with you to rip the poison of hate from our society to honour your contributions and seek your ideas. My administration will look like America, with Muslim Americans serving at every level," Biden said in October.

Other reversals include the extension of pandemic-related limits on evictions and student loan payments, the imposition of mask mandates in federal property and interstate travel, as well as a solution to reunite immigrant children separated from their families, the memo said.

Biden also plans to submit new legislation to provide for the naturalisation ... **P2**



### A look at the world

#### UAE suspends visa waiver agreement with Israel

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has suspended a visa waiver agreement with Israel in an effort to stem the spread of coronavirus, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

A ministry statement said the suspension will continue until July 1.

"The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed that according to the signed visa waiver agreement and in light of the efforts made to limit the spread of coronavirus, the



visa waiver agreement will be suspended until July 1," the statement reads.

"Until the aforementioned date, Israeli citizens will be required to obtain an entry visa before traveling to the United Arab Emirates and UAE citizens will be required to obtain an entry visa in advance before traveling to Israel," the statement added.

Thousands of Israelis have traveled to the UAE in the past few months.

Israel and the UAE have reached an agreement for the mutual exemption of visas for both countries' citizens within the framework of their agreement to normalize relations.

The UAE was the first Arab country to sign a visa waiver agreement with Israel.

Israel and the UAE signed a US-sponsored deal on Sept. 15 last year to normalize their relations, a move that was followed by Bahrain and Sudan and recently Morocco. The normalization agreements have drawn widespread condemnation from Palestinians, who say the accords ignore their rights and do not serve the Palestinian cause.

#### China imposes sanctions on U.S. officials over Taiwan



China on Monday announced imposing sanctions on US officials over enhanced engagements with Taiwan.

"China has decided to impose sanctions on related US officials who have behaved badly on Taiwan question," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a news conference in the capital Beijing, according to the state-run Global Times.

The move comes days after the US eased restrictions on contacts between American and Taiwanese officials.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Jan. 9 termed "null and void" the self-imposed restrictions on US diplomats, service members, and other officials' interactions with their Taiwanese "counterparts."

Beijing considers Taiwan - officially known as the Republic of China - a breakaway province, but Taipei insists on its independence since 1949, and has diplomatic relations with 16 countries and regions.

The US formally recognized China in 1979 and under "Three Communiques," shifted diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing, acknowledging the "One China" policy and thus including Taiwan as part of mainland China.

It, however, has increased its engagement with Taiwan recently. Last August, US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar became the highest-ranking US politician to hold meetings on the island in decades.

It also approved arms sales to Taiwan worth billions of dollars in 2020.

#### Samsung's Lee Jae-yong sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for corruption

A South Korean court sentenced Samsung Electronics vice chairman Lee Jae-yong to two and a half years in prison, the court said on Monday, which will have major ramifications for his leadership of the tech giant as well as the Republic of Korea (ROK)'s views toward big business.

With this, Lee will be sidelined for the time being from major decision making at Samsung Electronics as it strives to overtake competitors. He will also be unable to oversee the process of inheritance from his father, who died in October, crucial to keeping control of Samsung.

Lee, 52, was convicted of bribing an associate of former President Park Geun-hye and was given a five-year jail sentence in 2017.



He denied wrongdoing, the sentence was reduced and suspended on appeal, and he was released after serving a year.

The Supreme Court then sent the case back to the Seoul High Court, which issued Monday's ruling.

The Seoul High Court found Lee guilty of bribery, embezzlement and concealment of criminal proceeds worth about 8.6 billion won (\$7.8 million), and said the independent compliance committee Samsung set up early last year has yet to become fully effective.

"(Lee) has shown willingness for management with newly stronger compliance, as he has vowed to create a transparent company," said Presiding Judge Jeong Jun-yeong.

"Despite some shortcomings... I hope that over time, it will be evaluated as a milestone in the history of Korean companies as a start of compliance ethics for a greater leap forward," he said.

Lee, dressed in a dark coat and silver tie and standing to hear the sentencing, sat down after it was read.

"The nature of this case is the former president's abuse of power violating corporate freedom and property rights. Given that nature, the court's decision is regrettable," Lee's lawyer, Lee In-jae, told reporters.

With Lee returning to prison, the year he already served in detention is ... **P2**



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