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Pakistani Delegation Arrives in Kabul

Pakistan's envoy Mohammad Sadiq, leading a delegation from Islamabad, has arrived in Kabul for discussions with Afghan leaders on peace, security and related matters, Pakistan's ambassador to Kabul, Mansoor Ahmad Khan, confirmed on Twitter on Sunday.

Before the arrival of the delegation, National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib confirmed that a Pakistani delegation would visit Kabul to discuss relations between the two countries and current issues.

On Friday, the foreign ministers from Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan held a meeting in Istanbul in an effort to revive the Afghan peace process days after a key UN-led conference was postponed due to non-participation by the Taliban. Turkey's foreign ministry in a statement said that in their meeting Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Afghan Foreign Minister ...

P2



63 Civilians Killed in 'Taliban Attacks' in Afghanistan: Mol

The Taliban is responsible for 62 blasts and an additional 6 suicide bombings in the last 11 days, killing 63 civilians and wounding 180 more, the Ministry of Interior (Mol) said in a statement on Sunday.

"Women and children are also among the victims," the statement said, adding that "Taliban fighters--including commanders--have also been killed in response" by security forces.

The Taliban has not yet commented on the Mol statement.

On April 14, a new UN report indicated that 573 civilians were killed and 1,210 more were wounded in the first three months of this year, a 29 percent increase compared with the same period in 2020. The report says that "extraordinary levels of harm inflicted on civilians" in the Afghan conflict continues unabated. Of particular concern is the 37 percent increase in the number of women killed and injured, and a 23 percent increase in child casualties compared with the first quarter of 2020, the report said.

In the six months between October ...

P3

U.S., NATO Begin Troop Withdrawal From Afghanistan



Gen. Austin Scott Miller, the US and NATO forces commander in Afghanistan, on Sunday said that the US and coalition forces have started the withdrawal process and they will continue to support their Afghan counterparts.

"All of our forces are now preparing to retrograde," Miller told reporters in Kabul. "The notification day will

be the first of May but at the same time as we start taking local actions, we have already begun that."

He said that he has "a set of orders" and he has "some very clear objectives."

"First and foremost, it's my objective to ensure that the Afghan security forces are in the best possible security posture. Also, that

I will--we will--conduct an orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan and that means transitioning bases and equipment to the Afghan security forces. He also said he was "charged with ensuring it is as safe as possible, meaning we will protect the force as we depart from Afghanistan," he said.

Miller said that the US has "the

military means and capability to fully protect our force during retrograde, as well as, support the Afghan security forces."

"As we retrograde to zero US forces, we will turn over the bases primarily to the Ministry of Defense and other Afghan forces and that's all bases as we start moving through the retrograde," he said.

Miller said that they will continue with handing over equipment to their Afghan counterparts.

"There's certain equipment that we must take back to our countries, that's a requirement, but wherever possible, if we do not have to, we're looking to ensure that the Afghan security forces have the bases, pieces of equipment, parts that are necessary for the functioning of the military," he said.

Miller said that the Taliban has to break its ties with al-Qaeda.

"As far as a relationship between al-Qaeda and the Taliban attack about have to break that relationship. That is something they have committed to and the world expects them to break that relationship and certainly that Afghanistan will never be used as a safe ...

P3

Steering Committee for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts Holds Meet

The 9th report of the steering committee on the implementation of Afghanistan and the United Nations joint action plan for children affected by armed conflicts held a meeting on Sunday at the Storai Palace of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mirwais Nab chaired the meeting which was attended by deputy ministers and representatives from stakeholder departments of the committee.

Nab called the finalization of the 9th report valuable for fulfilling the Afghan government's commitments ...

P3



Plan to Vaccinate 60% Of Afghan Population Prepared: Govt



The plan to vaccinate over 60 percent of the population in the country has been prepared by the Afghan Ministry of Public Health.

The move comes three months after the first batch of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine arrived in the country, Dastgir Nazari, spokesperson for the ministry, said. Recently, the

government had announced vaccination for all above the age of 18 as the country is looking at an impending third wave of the viral infection.

"A total of \$113 million has been pledged by the World Bank to implement the coronavirus vaccine; \$50 million is being provided by the Asian Development Bank, and 20%

of the population is expected to receive the coronavirus vaccine through COVAX and the World Vaccine Program," Nazari said.

As per Nazari, so far, there are a total of 968,000 doses of vaccine to be adapted to more than 450,000 people in Afghanistan, including 150,000 tons of vaccines that have been delivered to the country's security sector.

Pakistani...

Mohammad Haneef Atmar, and Pakistan Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi reiterated their commitment to support a peaceful, sovereign, independent, democratic and unified Afghanistan.

The three ministers recognized that sustainable peace can be achieved only through an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process that aims for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire along with an inclusive political settlement to end the conflict in Afghanistan. They emphasized their support for the Afghanistan peace process and the ongoing Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha for the achievement of a just and durable political settlement.

UN Chief...

In 2019, Africa accounted for 94% of Malaria cases and deaths worldwide. Roughly 3% of malaria infections were recorded in South-East Asia and 2% in the Eastern Mediterranean region, while Americas and Western Pacific region each accounted for fewer than 1% of all cases. Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. It is preventable and curable. It is an acute febrile illness. In a non-immune individual, symptoms usually appear 10-15 days after the infective mosquito bite. Nearly half the world's population lives in areas at risk of malaria transmission in 87 countries and territories. In 2019, malaria caused an estimated 229 million clinical episodes and 409,000 deaths. An estimated 94% of deaths in 2019 were in Africa, according to the WHO.

By REBECCA KHEEL

Biden's Move On Afghanistan Raises Guantanamo Questions

President Biden's decision to fully withdraw from Afghanistan is raising questions about what, if any, effect that will have on the future of the Guantanamo Bay detention center.

At least two prisoners who have been challenging their detention have already updated their complaints to include Biden's withdrawal as a reason they should be released.

But the war on terrorism will continue even after the last U.S. service member leaves Afghanistan. And the congressional war authorization that has also been used as the legal justification for indefinite detention at Guantanamo does not appear to be going anywhere anytime soon.

"I think the short answer is that we just don't know," Steve Vladeck, a University of Texas law professor, said of the withdrawal's effect on Guantanamo.

"It clearly provides the remaining Guantanamo detainees with a new ground on which to challenge the legal basis for their continuing military detention, and one that is not necessarily foreclosed by existing precedent," he added in an email. "But it's not at all clear that courts will be sympathetic to those arguments, not just because they haven't been to date, but because the Executive Branch is likely to argue that the conflict with al Qaeda isn't ending just because we're leaving Afghanistan."

Forty men remain detained at the facility opened by former President George W. Bush after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Six have been cleared for transfer, and seven have been charged in the military commission system, including the five 9/11 suspects. The Biden administration is in the midst of reviewing the facility with the intention of closing it, but it remains to be seen whether that effort will be successful.

Former President Obama also sought to shutter the facility, signing an executive order on his second day in office to close it within a year. But his plan relied on transferring detainees to U.S. prisons, something Congress blocked him from doing with a law that remains on the books banning transfers to the United States.

Amid the administration's review, Biden is facing pressure to fulfill his promise to close the facility.

Twenty-four Senate Democrats penned a letter to Biden last week saying he could close the facility with "sufficient political will and swift action."



"After years of indefinite detention without charge or trial; a history of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; and multiple attempts at a thoroughly failed and discredited military commission process, it is past time to close Guantanamo's detention facility and end indefinite detention," read the letter, which was organized by Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.). When Biden announced earlier this month he was ordering a full withdrawal from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, he declared, "it's time to end the forever war." Alli McCracken Jarrar, North American campaigner for Amnesty International, argued that if Biden is serious about ending the "forever war," he will shutter one of its vestiges.

"I hope that he can align his timeline to withdraw from Afghanistan with his plan to close Guantanamo," she said. "It would be wonderful to see the whole detention camp shut down and the men transferred out by Sept. 11. And I think that would make a lot of groups feel happy and would really be a positive sign that he's committed to his human rights obligations." This past week, lawyers for two Guantanamo detainees filed motions seeking their clients' release citing the withdrawal. The motions were first reported

by The New York Times.

Lawyers for Khalid Qassim, a 44-year-old Yemeni man who has been held without trial at Guantanamo for nearly 19 years, are seeking to update his existing habeas corpus lawsuit to include the argument that Biden's announcement of an "end to the involvement of United States troops in active combat in Afghanistan" means "there can no longer be any legal basis under the [authorization for the use of military force] or otherwise for Qassim's detention by the United States."

Lawyers for Asadullah Haroon Gul, an approximately 40-year-old Afghan captured by Afghan forces in 2007, similarly argued in a motion seeking their client's immediate release that the withdrawal takes away any basis to continue holding him.

"The law is clear: Asadullah gets to go home now, regardless of whether, as the government incorrectly contends, he was part of or substantially supported Al Qaeda," they wrote in the motion.

But while U.S. troops are withdrawing from Afghanistan, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, Gen. Frank McKenzie, spent the past week assuring that lawmakers the military would maintain the ability to conduct counterterrorism strikes in Afghanistan even if that is harder ... **P3**

By Joschka Fischer

Darkness over Kabul

The Afghan drama is nearing its end; at least as far as Western militaries are concerned. Exactly two decades after Al Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City, the last Western troops are, if US President Joe Biden sticks to his timetable, scheduled to leave Afghanistan on September 11, 2021. The war had to end at some point. But after so much blood and treasure spent, many will be wondering what, if anything, has been achieved.

Though Al Qaeda's terror network was weakened by the war, it was not destroyed. The United States tracked down and killed the group's leader, Osama Bin Laden, and expelled the Taliban from Kabul. But outside of the capital and a few other areas, the Taliban is stronger than ever — and poised to reclaim power once Western troops leave.

Radical Islamist terrorism has not been defeated, either

militarily or ideologically and remains a constant threat to the West. After all these years, Afghanistan still lacks stable governing structures capable of policing domestic terrorism, corruption, and the drug trade, let alone offering Afghan society the prospect of a more peaceful, prosperous future. Regional stability will probably be more fragile after the Western withdrawal than it is today.

We should harbour no illusions. The West's troop drawdown amounts to a defeat, the humanitarian consequences of which will be dramatic. For the Afghan people, the war will continue. The probable return of the Taliban and their stone-age Islamism will again force women and girls under the burqa and deprive them of their human rights. Legions of well-educated, urban Afghans will try to flee to the West. Those who remain will face a dismal fate, along with most ethnic and religious

minorities.

One wonders if the European Union and NATO are really prepared for what comes next. Militarily, the withdrawal makes sense: The West has nothing to gain in Afghanistan. Yet, in humanitarian and moral terms, it is flirting with a foreseeable disaster. The EU, in particular, should expect a large flood of refugees, reminiscent of the Vietnamese "boat people" who sought shelter in the West after the US withdrawal from Vietnam.

The geopolitical price will also be high. How will Islamist extremist groups interpret the West's acceptance of defeat? Will Afghanistan really not become a terrorist safe haven again, as it did after the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of the erstwhile Red Army? And, beyond Central Asia, might not Russia and China respond to the West's perceived weakness with increased ... **P3**

Lukashenko...

the Interior Ministry and KGB," BelTA news agency said quoting Lukashenko.

The Belarusian president explained that all of them are armed, and if they could have clashed, it would have been "the most terrible and hottest civil war which none of the countries has ever experienced."

According to Lukashenko, "apart from that, the conspirators were planning to black out Minsk."

Lukashenko informed about a cyberattack plotted against the country, adding that it could be carried out "only at the state level," since a handful of hackers would not be able to cope with the task. According to the president, new details of the case will be published soon.

Failed plans of the opposition According to Lukashenko, during his visit last October to the detention center, where blogger Sergei Tikhanovsky, husband of ex-presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, is kept, he read out a document that outlined a plan of the opposition which sought

power. In particular, the plan was to put the president's youngest son, Nikolai, in jail, although he is underage.

"They (the opposition - TASS) betrayed us a long time ago, and they were supposed to allegedly come to power here for 24 hours and declare that we are in power. What for? To ask NATO to send troops in to Belarus and to deploy them on the eastern border near Smolensk. It was a springboard - I have always told you - to attack Russia. It was the first step. Even though they would deny it, today we see that it is true," said Lukashenko.

Belarus held presidential elections on August 9, 2020. According to the Central Election Commission's official results, incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko won by a landslide. His closest rival in the race, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, came in second, but refused to accept the result of the election and fled Belarus. After the results were announced, mass protests erupted in downtown Minsk and other Belarusian cities. During the early post-election period, the rallies

snowballed into fierce clashes between the protesters and police. Sporadic local protests continue to date.

Coup plot

On March 18, Ivan Tertel, the Belarusian KGB chief, reported that a coup attempt by a terrorism-related organized group, which plotted the killing of President Alexander Lukashenko and his family and an armed uprising to seize power, had been thwarted.

According to the investigators, the plot was conspired by dual Belarusian-American citizen Yuri Zenkovich, who has lived in the United States since 2007. He was detained in Moscow along with Belarusian nationals Alexander Feduta, a political analyst, and Grigory Kostusev, a leader of the Belarusian People's Front opposition party. According to Belarusian investigators, the coup plot was financed from abroad and the conspirators maintained close contacts with terrorist organizations. Overall, no less than three scenarios to seize power in the republic were planned. Later, the KGB said that four individuals were charged with conspiracy to seize power.

ACAA Requests Gradual Handover of Kabul Airport from NATO

The Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (ACAA) is seeking to gradually take full control of responsibilities for air control operations and maintenance at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. Currently, these tasks are run in part by international personnel, who are expected to be withdrawn in the next few months.

In a letter dated April 19, 2021, the ACAA has asked NATO's Resolute Support forces to hand over the responsibility of the operations for the Control Tower at the airport as a first step by May 1, 2021, and "subsequently commence practical negotiations on Mission Essential Equipment on Hamid Karzai International Airport ground to discuss the handover of resources upon complete NATO/RS withdrawal." Air traffic control, firefighting, safety and meteorology are some of the tasks controlled by NATO forces.

If implemented, the decision will cut aviation costs by 50%, Afghan officials predict.



ACAA officials said they expect the handover process to begin in the near future. According to the officials, at least 60 million is invested in aviation services every year.

"We have human resources (for the operations) in various areas. Our first question was about the control tower, which is now under foreign forces' control. We have asked them to hand

it over to ACAA in the first step," said Amanzib Ansari, the deputy head of the ACAA.

Mahmoud Shah Habibi, the head of the Afghanistan Aviation Support Association, a non-profit organization in Kabul, said operations in all major airports in the country are controlled by foreign forces, therefore, there is a need for required preparations

when it comes to the transition of the responsibilities.

"Lots of resources are often needed for the aviation sector. There should be a budget for it and procedures should be created," Habibi said.

Hamid Karzai International Airport is one of the biggest airports in the country and at least 1,000 passengers travel through the airport every day.

63 Civilians...

2020 and March 2021, UNAMA recorded a 38 percent increase in civilian casualties compared with the same period one year earlier, the report says, adding that it is worth noting that in February 2020, both Afghan government forces and the Taliban agreed to a week's reduction in violence, which immediately and significantly reduced the scale of harm to Afghan civilians, demonstrating that political commitment can save Afghan lives.

The report says the overall increase in civilian casualties in the first quarter of 2021 was mainly driven by the same trends that caused the increase at the end of last year: ground engagements; improvised explosive devices; and targeted killings.

"Anti-government elements continued to be responsible for the majority (61 percent) of all civilian casualties in the first three months of 2021, while pro-government forces continued to cause approximately one quarter (27 percent) of the total civilian casualties," the report said.

According to the report, in the first three months of 2021, UNAMA documented increases in the number of civilian casualties as compared to the first quarter of 2020, attributed to both the Afghan army and the Taliban, with the Taliban responsible for 43.5 percent of all civilian casualties, and the Afghan national army responsible for 17 percent.

U.S., NATO Begin...

haven for terrorism," he said.

He rejected the claims that the United States has violated the Doha agreement.

"The Taliban have claimed we've violated the agreement and that they have no violations. We know that's not true. If the Taliban attack US or any coalition forces, we will have a forceful response if our forces are attacked," he added.

Miller said the only reasonable way forward is a political path to peace, otherwise "the violence is senseless."

Biden's Move...

to do with troops stationed elsewhere.

"It's going to be extremely difficult to do. But it is not impossible to do it," McKenzie said at a House hearing. Additionally, while the White House has said Biden is open to a rewritten authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) and some lawmakers are working to do that, those efforts face an uphill climb, and the existing 2001 AUMF is expected to stay on the books.

That authorization underlies

ongoing U.S. military counterterrorism operations throughout the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere.

"The real reform, as has always been clear, would have to come from Congress," Vladeck, the law professor, said of the future of Guantanamo.

When Obama declared an end to U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014 and pledged to bring all troops home by the end of his term, a Yemeni prisoner challenged his detention on the basis that the president said the conflict was

over.

But a federal judge ruled in 2015 the detention was still legal because fighting was ongoing regardless of what Obama said. "A court cannot look to political speeches alone to determine factual and legal realities merely because doing so would be easier than looking at all of the relevant evidence," Judge Royce Lamberth of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia wrote at the time. "The government may not always say what it means or means what it says."

Darkness over...

aggression toward Ukraine and Taiwan, respectively?

Biden's inaugural message was that "America is back". But the loss of US credibility after Donald Trump's presidency cannot be reversed so easily. The process of restoring America's place in the world will take time and could lead to dangerous miscalculations by its foes and rivals.

In Afghanistan, the end of the West's long presence will create a power vacuum that competing regional powers will seek to fill. The last 20 years were not just about America and its war against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. For Pakistan, the war has always been about safeguarding its hinterland against its archenemy, India. Islamist terrorism is a key tool in Pakistan's effort, which is why its policy toward the US has been so ambiguous. On one hand, Pakistan allowed the US to use its harbours and territory to provision US forces in Afghanistan. On the other hand, it provided a safe haven for Islamist terrorists, including bin Laden and much of the

Taliban leadership.

Meanwhile, the Iranian regime has long sought to protect the Afghan Shiite population and its own eastern border by maintaining a presence in western Afghanistan. And the region's largest, most expansive power, China, has significant natural-resource and geopolitical interests in the country. In addition to being a potential entrepôt for China's Belt and Road Initiative, Afghanistan's close relationship to Pakistan could become more salient now that China has rekindled its Himalayan border conflict with India.

Just as the West's presence in Afghanistan has helped to contain these conflicts, so will its withdrawal likely have the opposite effect. China will increasingly try to assert itself as America's successor as regional hegemon. Whether it can handle this powder keg better than the Soviets and the Americans did is another matter. There are good reasons to doubt that it can.

The tragedy of Afghanistan, at least since the nineteenth century, is that it has constantly been the focus of great-power

interests. Early on, it was a major bone of contention between the British and Russian Empires in their scramble for Central and South Asia. Then in the twentieth century, it got caught in the crossfire of the Cold War, when the Soviets invaded in 1979. After the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the country descended into civil war, becoming a base for groups like Al Qaeda when the Taliban consolidated control. And, after September 11, 2001, the US and its Western allies swooped in. All told, the country has been at war for a half-century, and there is no reason to think that its misery will end anytime soon.

There is no stable alternative to a Western military presence in Afghanistan. September 12, 2021 will not bring a safer, better world. On the contrary, the Western withdrawal inevitably will result in humanitarian catastrophe. The Afghan people will be the first to suffer, but they will almost certainly not be the last. Joschka Fischer, Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005, was a leader of the German Green Party for almost 20 years.

Steering...

towards the United Nations and emphasized fulfilling the Afghan government's commitment to preventing underage enrollment in the

national defense forces.

In the meeting, the recommendations of the participants were analyzed and then the steering committee stressed on the

relevant entities to share their recommendations with MoFA immediately so that the report can be finalized and sent to the United Nations and relevant organizations.

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Japan Should Promote Cooperation with China, S. Korea

A Japanese diplomat has called on Tokyo to promote practical cooperation with China and South Korea to reap benefits even though Japan is at odds with the two East Asian neighbors over history and other issues.

In an interview with Jiji Press, Hisashi Michigami, secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, also stressed that Japan should actively use the three countries' cooperation frameworks.

The TCS, which was established in 2011, works to facilitate cooperation among the three countries by offering support for ministerial talks, as well as business and

cultural exchanges, among Japan, China and South Korea. The top TCS post of secretary-general has been rotated among the three countries.

The TCS has been increasingly able to make "substantive contributions" to the trilateral cooperation in the last five years, said Michigami, who has served as minister at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing and then at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

The TCS is not well known in Japan, but there are as many as 21 ministerial forums among Japan, China and South Korea, with active interchanges being made to accelerate the three countries' cooperation, he said.



A look at the world

Lukashenko Says \$10 Mln Allocated for His Assassination

Organizers of the assassination plot against Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko allocated \$10 mln to achieve the goal, Lukashenko told reporters on Saturday.

The BelTA news agency reported citing Lukashenko that armed people were to attack his residence in the countryside, that \$10 mln were allocated for this purpose and \$1 mln for the sniper.

"We have long seen that. Do you think we carried out this operation in Moscow out of the blue? We were keeping a close eye on them. They were expected to come to Minsk and conduct this operation," Lukashenko said. In Lukashenko's words, the conspirators had drawn up a few scenarios. First, they plotted to assassinate the president at the May 9



parade. Next, they considered an attack on the presidential motorcade, so they even bought grenade launchers and brought them to Belarus. Lukashenko continued that under the third scenario, armed people were tasked to attack the presidential residence in the countryside.

Lukashenko added that among the conspirators was a security officer who acted as a general who had sold out.

"He was our agent. Well done. Thanks to the guy, since he helped us massively and was not scared. They wanted him to call for the army uprising," Lukashenko said.

Apart from that, the coup plotters planned to use the army to blockade Minsk, as well as the forces of the riot police, internal troops, the Interior Ministry and State Security Service (KGB), Lukashenko added.

The Belarusian president explained if they had clashed the law enforcement forces, it would have been "the most terrible and hottest civil war which none of the countries has ever experienced." Lukashenko went on to say that the conspirators planned to black out Minsk. He emphasized that new details of the case would be published in the near future.

Organizers of the coup in Belarus planned to use the army to blockade Minsk and black it out, Alexander Lukashenko said. "The insurgents planned to use the army to blockade Minsk, along with the forces of OMON [riot police], internal troops, ... P2

Up to 82 Killed in Huge Fire at Baghdad Hospital



The death toll from a huge fire that broke out in a hospital treating coronavirus patients in Baghdad rose to 82 killed and some 110 wounded, the Iraqi Interior Ministry said on Sunday.

"The fire of Ibn al-Khatib Hospital resulted in the killing of 82 patients and health workers and the wounding of 110 others," Khalid al-Mahana, spokesman of the ministry, told the official Iraqiya channel.

"Many of the wounded are still in critical conditions," al-Mahana said.

The incident occurred late on Saturday night when several oxygen cylinders exploded, setting a huge fire at Ibn al-Khatib Hospital, which is dedicated to treating coronavirus patients on the eastern side of the capital, said a statement released by the country's civil defense.

Civil defense teams and firefighting vehicles arrived at the scene to put out the fire and were able to prevent the fire from reaching the upper floors, the statement said.

They also rescued some 90 patients and health workers who were surrounded by flames in the building, the statement said.

"Many patients were affected by the cut of oxygen cylinders during their evacuation from the hospital, and others suffocated by the smoke," the statement added.

A statement by the media office of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said that al-Kadhimi has ordered an immediate investigation into the incident and that the families of the victims should be compensated and treatment is provided for the wounded.

The incident came hours after the country's Health Ministry reported 6,967 new COVID-19 cases, taking the national tally to 1,025,288.

It also reported 43 new COVID-19-related deaths, bringing the national total to 15,217. P2

UN Chief Says 'Malaria-Free Future Is Possible'

Malaria can be defeated if means are embraced tightly, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on Sunday, marking World Malaria Day.

"Malaria can be defeated. This #WorldMalariaDay, I commend all countries that have reached the ambitious target of zero malaria. Together, they are showing the world that a malaria-free future is possible," Guterres said on Twitter.

The UN chief, however, reminded that several countries, mostly African, are still suffering from the infectious disease.

As cited by the UN news website, he said malaria kills more than 400,000 people,



mainly children in Africa and infects over 200,000 million every year.

Boosting hopes for the elimination of the disease, Guterres asserted: "With robust political commitment, adequate investment and the right mix of strategies, we can reach our common goal of a world free of malaria." WHO malaria-free certification

In February, El Salvador became the first country in Central America to be certified for Malaria elimination after proving that the country was Malaria-free for at least three consecutive years, according to the World Health Organization.

The WHO grants a certification of malaria elimination when a country has proven that the chain of indigenous transmission has been interrupted nationwide for at least the previous three consecutive years.

China, which registered zero indigenous cases in 2016 and has recorded no malaria cases since then, applied last year for the WHO malaria-free certification.

According to the UN health body, between 2000 and 2019, the number of countries with less than 100 indigenous malaria infections increased from six to 27, posing as "a strong indicator" that malaria elimination can be achieved. ... P2



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