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Logar Bombing Condemned as 'Crime against Humanity'

The deadly truck bomb attack that targeted a guest house in Logar province on Friday evening was widely condemned as a crime against humanity and a terrorist attack against the people of Afghanistan.

The Presidential Palace said the "terrorist attack" targeted "innocent people" including students who were seeking to attend university entrance exams in the province.

Calling it a crime against humanity, the Afghan government blamed the Taliban for the bombing. The group has not commented on the attack so far.

Abdullah Abdullah, head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, also condemned the blast and called it "a cowardly terrorist attack against Afghan civilians." Former president Hamid Karzai in a statement condemned the attack as cowardly and an act by Afghanistan's enemies. ... **P3**



30 Soldiers Missing as Army Outpost Attacked in Ghazni

At least 30 soldiers have been reported as missing following a Taliban attack on the outpost of the Afghan National Army in the city of Ghazni on Friday night that led to hours of heavy clashes between the two sides, a provincial council member Khaliqdad Akbari said. The outpost has fallen to the Taliban, he added. Sources aware of the developments said that the soldiers were stationed at the outpost.

Taliban, however, has not commented on the attack.

Violence remains high in the country despite efforts to move the peace process forward amidst the announcement of the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan on April 14.

According to statistics provided by sources, 226 Afghan civilians and military personnel have been killed in Taliban attacks in 24 provinces since April 15. Of the figure, 69 are civilians and 157 are security force members.

As Formal Troop Withdrawn Starts, Al Qaeda Warns of War



With the formal withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan started on May 1, the Al-Qaeda has warned Washington of war against all its fronts.

Speaking to CNN media via an intermediary, the terrorist group said that their "war against the US will be continuing on all other fronts unless they are expelled from the rest of the Islamic world". US President Joe Biden on April 14 had announced an extension to the May 1 deadline

set as per the Doha agreement for foreign troop pullout to September 11. The Taliban had warned of serious consequences stating that the extension was a violation of the agreement.

One of the spokespersons of Al-Qaeda even praised the Taliban for fighting the US over the past 19 years, suggesting that "thanks to Afghans for the protection of comrades-in-arms, many such jihadi fronts have been successfully operating in different

parts of the Islamic world for a long time". The Taliban has denied any links with Al-Qaeda over all formal platforms.

This comes even as the United States is now formally ending the longest war, it has fought, on Saturday, by beginning to pullout its 2,500 troops from Afghanistan. The skies above Kabul and nearby Bagram airbase have been buzzing with more US helicopter activity than usual as the pullout gears up, following the start

of a concurrent NATO withdrawal. The US has deployed four B-52 bombers, an aircraft carrier and additional troops on ground in order to ensure safety of the troops withdrawing from the country.

Biden's sudden announcement of the new timeline has raised many eyebrows with security experts stating that a hasty withdrawal could lead the war-ravaged country into civil war. Biden, according to reports, also rejected his top-most generals' advice to keep in a residual force in Afghanistan for protection, which former veterans say is a bad choice as there is a chance that Taliban could take over the reign of the country. The latest to criticize Biden was Hillary Clinton, who on Friday, said that she was concerned about the potential fallout for the Afghan people, especially women, if the Taliban were to come back into power. She called it a "wicked problem" and said Biden "made the decision that he thought was the right decision."

The US withdrawal deal was struck in Doha, the Taliban have not directly engaged foreign troops, but insurgents have mercilessly attacked government forces in the countryside and waged a terror campaign in urban areas. There have been clashes and counter-clashes between the ... **P3**

Possibility of Humanitarian Catastrophe in Afghanistan Due to COVID19: Health Ministry

Statistics from the Ministry of Public Health show that in the last two weeks or so, the number of daily fresh positive cases and deaths due to Covid-19 disease has increased and the health ministry has warned the public that if people do not follow the health requirements, there is a possibility of a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan.

On Friday, 194 fresh positive cases had been reported while six died of the infection and 51 recovered from COVID-19. The total number of COVID-19 cases stand at 59, 939 while the death toll is 2,631 and 53,204 people have recovered from the disease so far. ... **P2**



1st Batch of Afghan Workers with Work Visas to Be Sent to Gulf Countries This Year

The process of sending Afghan workers to Gulf countries has been finalized and the first convoy of Afghan workers with work visas will be sent abroad this year, said Minister of Labor and Social Affairs on Saturday. He added that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are interested in accepting Afghan workers. At least 10,000 Afghan workers will soon be sent to the United Arab Emirates and about 100,000 workers to Saudi Arabia.

"Our effort is to form the first flight of Afghan workers in 1400, which is really a change in the Afghan labor market," said Bashir Ahmad Tahing, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs. However, according to statistics provided by a number of



international organizations, unemployment and inadequate work in the country has increased significantly in recent years, which is why a number of young people are trying to find work by going to the Gulf countries illegally.

According to statistics, there are currently hundreds of thousands of Afghan workers working in the Gulf countries, but most of these workers have gone to these countries with passports from neighboring countries.

At Least 39...

side does not claim foreign territories but also “has no intention of sharing its land with anyone,” and stressed that all border and economic issues should be resolved at the negotiating table with the participation of high government representatives on the delimitation and demarcation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.

“As a result of several negotiations between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, agreements were reached on a comprehensive cease-fire from 20.00 hours [1400GMT] and the withdrawal of military forces to the places of their previous deployment,” it said.

The parties also agreed to hold a separate meeting of the heads of law enforcement and security agencies with the participation of representatives of local authorities, where further details of resolving the situation could be discussed.

Mukhriddin, for his part, stressed that Tajikistan is committed to address the issues with Kyrgyzstan through talks in view of its national interests.

Tajikistan will never cede its soil owned since ancient times, he added.

“The EU welcomes the agreement reached on Thursday by the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan on a cease-fire and further negotiations for a political settlement of the border issues,” said a European Union External Action Service (EEAS) statement.

“The EU regrets the violence over the past days and expresses its sympathy to those who have lost relatives or friends,” it added.

UN Chief Calls...

2025; close gaps in HIV testing, treatment and viral suppression; eliminate vertical HIV transmission and end pediatric AIDS; put gender equality and the human rights of women and girls at the forefront of efforts to mitigate the risk and impact of HIV; close the HIV response resource gap and increase annual HIV investments in low- and middle-income countries to 29 billion U.S. dollars by 2025.

COVID-19 has caused additional setbacks. Yet the pandemic is not an excuse for missing AIDS targets, but rather a stark warning to the countries that they can no longer afford to underinvest in pandemic preparedness and responses, said Guterres.

By Mira Patel

With US Withdrawal from Afghanistan, Fears of Another ‘Great Game’ Sequel

Earlier this month, the Biden administration confirmed its intent to withdraw all American troops from Afghanistan by September 11 of this year. With NATO announcing its decision to follow suit, Afghanistan will soon be free of foreign forces for the first time in the 20 years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The impact of this shift will be compounded by the Taliban’s rise in power.

Earlier this year, the Council for Foreign Relations asserted that the Taliban is currently at its strongest compared to any other point since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The Taliban now controls approximately 19% of districts in Afghanistan with the government controlling another 33% and the rest being contested between the two factions. The Taliban have thus far largely ignored the terms of the Doha treaty which marked a historic settlement between itself and the United States, leading to worries of increased insurgency in the country and the impending risk of civil war. Several regional observers also fear that the tacit support of Pakistan, Russia, China and Iran for the Taliban will legitimize its role and force the current Ghani administration to cede power to it. Due to its geographical positioning and influence on regional stability, the political future of Afghanistan will be of considerable significance to several nations with competing sets of interests as well as to pan-Asian relations as a whole. For many, the next round of the ‘great game’ is about to begin.

The many episodes of the ‘great game’ since 1870 The Khyber Pass, described by Rudyard Kipling as a “sword cut through the mountains,” has long functioned as a passageway between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent and currently lies on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. From Alexander the Great to Genghis Khan, many legendary generals have attempted to conquer India through this arid gateway, leading historians to describe the strategic borderland of Afghanistan as the Graveyard of Empires. Since the first invasion of Afghanistan in approximately

516BC, several conquests have been staged in the region, highlighting Afghanistan’s strategic importance and eventually giving rise to the concept of Afghanistan being the stage for the ‘Great Game.’

The Great Game is a term popularized by Kipling for the rivalry between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia, starting in the 19th century and continuing through 1907. The conflict was rooted in Britain’s desire to create a buffer between its crown jewel India, and the ever-expanding Russian Empire. In 1830, the British Lord Ellenborough began the ‘Great Game’ with an edict establishing a new trade route from India to Bukhara (now in Uzbekistan) with Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan serving as a barrier against Russia. The Tsarist Russian government was vehemently opposed to such a move, which would not only compromise its access to the Silk Route, but also prevent it from taking control of any ports on the Persian Gulf. These diverging interests culminated in a series of four unsuccessful wars for the British to conquer Afghanistan, Turkey and Persia. Not only did Britain suffer resounding defeats in all of them, but it also lost control of several territories including Bukhara to the Russians. A young Winston Churchill later criticized British policy in the area, stating “financially it is ruinous. Morally it is wicked. Militarily it is an open question and politically it is a blunder.”

The Great Game officially ended with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which divided Persia into a Russian controlled northern zone, an independent central zone and a British controlled Southern Zone. Afghanistan was declared as an official protectorate of the British but remained a nominally independent nation. The proxy war between the USSR and USA in Afghanistan in the late 1970s gave the term Great Game “a new lease on life.” Serving as a battleground for the Cold War, Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union in 1979. Over the next nine years, the American backed Mujahedeen’ or jihadists, fought a series of guerrilla wars

against the Soviets and the Afghan government which ended with the withdrawal of foreign forces in 1989 in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Accord. The Soviet-Afghan war was widely considered as a failure for both sides, with historians pointing to the conflict as a root cause for the collapse of the USSR and attributing rise of extremism in Afghanistan to the destruction caused by the fighting. During the conflict, roughly 800,000 Afghans were killed, more than 5 million fled abroad and approximately 2 million were displaced from their homes.

Even with Afghanistan temporarily out of the global contest, the Great Game endured in Central Asia. In a 1996 editorial, the New York Times suggested that “everyone could benefit in the revived game by agreeing to split the winnings.” In its conceptualization of the game, players included not only the competing nation states but also multilateral corporations that stood to profit from the oil rich Persian Gulf.

The 1990s would prove to be tumultuous for Afghanistan, with the country falling into the hands of the Taliban in 1996. Although the Taliban was formed from the ashes of the American-backed Mujahedeen, it soon locked horns with its early benefactors by providing shelter to Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda. After Al Qaeda launched the September 11 attacks against the United States, Afghanistan, despite not claiming any of the terrorists as their own nationals, once again became the target of foreign forces. Once again, scholars seized upon this opportunity to label the NATO invasion of Afghanistan as another phase in the Great Game. However, while several aspects of the game endured, its fundamental premise seemed to shift closer towards the conceptualization of international affairs articulated by American political scientist Samuel Huntington in his seminal thesis, the Clash of Civilizations. Writing for the Journal of American History, Bruce R. Kuniholm describes this new great game not as a clash between civilizations, but as a conflict “within states, within cultures and within ...

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By JAVED TANVEER AFP

Optimism, Fear in Former Taliban Bastion as US Begins Afghanistan Pullout

As the US military began formally withdrawing from Afghanistan Saturday, some residents in Kandahar -- the former bastion of the Taliban -- were optimistic the exit will bring peace to the violence-wracked country.

“The fighting will then be between two Muslim brothers (Afghan government forces and the Taliban) and the hope is that the two will reconcile and make peace,” said Pacha Khan, a farmer from the southern Afghan province that was once a flashpoint of fighting.

US President Joe Biden had announced in April that the remaining 2,500 American troops will formally begin leaving Afghanistan from May 1 and complete their withdrawal by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, bringing an end to America’s longest war. In reality, the withdrawal has been a work in progress for months.

Fighting between US forces and the Taliban has stopped since a landmark deal between Biden’s

predecessor Donald Trump and the insurgents last year.

But battles rage daily between Afghan government forces and the militants across Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban who ruled the country in the 1990s with a harsh version of Islamic sharia law.

Few shops were open in Kandahar city’s main market on Saturday, while police set up checkpoints on roads leading to the airport -- almost deserted as most American troops have left. In Kandahar’s Bush Bazar -- named for former US president who started the war in 2001 -- shopkeepers sorted through used goods for sale from the former American base.

“A few days ago there was a big blast outside the airport. We later came to know the Americans had destroyed equipment,” said Esa Mohammad, the bazar’s secretary.

“Now we get scrap from there to be sold in the market.”

Many ordinary Afghans remain bitter at US forces for the

hardships over the years.

Mohammad, a farmer who gave only one name, said the past 20 years had been worse than the 1980s, when Afghanistan was occupied by Soviet troops.

“The Russians did not inflict the kind of casualties the Americans did,” said the father of eight.

“The Americans killed my brother 10 years ago when they bombarded our village. These infidels have inflicted heavy losses and I’m happy they are leaving.”

His views were echoed by Agha Shireen, a trishaw driver from Arghandab on the outskirts of Kandahar city.

“They have killed a lot of our people and brought only misery,” he said.

“If the Taliban return, the situation might turn better.”

- ‘An unending war’ -

But Pari, 31, who works in Panjwai district believes that for lasting peace, the Taliban have to declare a ceasefire.

“I’m happy the US is withdrawing... but if the situation deteriorates in the

absence of a ceasefire I might be unable to work,” she said.

One of the biggest achievements of the last two decades has been a boost to women’s rights, with Afghan women working in almost every sector.

Women were banned from work and girls from attending school during the Taliban regime.

Even as the mood appeared optimistic in Kandahar, fear lurked in other cities over the US pullout.

“I feel the Taliban will again be strong after the withdrawal of foreign troops,” said Ghulam Nabi, a shopkeeper from the western city of Herat.

“I feel scared of another civil war and that we will be forced to leave the country.”

The departure of US forces will weaken the morale of Afghans, said Adila Kabiri, a professor at Herat University.

Her views were shared by Abdul Ahad Safi, a resident from the restive eastern city of Jalalabad, which has seen deadly attacks by Taliban and jihadists from the Islamic State.

“They should not go until we have peace,” he said.

“We are worried about the bloodshed and an unending war in our country.”

Possibility of...

Despite implementing a mass vaccination drive in the country for all above the age of 18, the COVID-19 infections have spread across provinces including Kabul which has made the Afghan administration launch a public awareness campaign. In coordination with the Ministries of Hajj and Rural Development, religious scholars are raising awareness about the “third wave” of the coronavirus through mosques and villages in remote areas and districts. According to the fatwa of the Ministry of Hajj, receiving the vaccine during Ramadan is not a problem. At least 35,000 citizens of the country received the COVID-19 vaccine on Friday.

The new strain of virus is wreaking havoc in India and Iran has also closed all its common borders with Afghanistan to Afghan citizens. Dastgir Nazari, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, said that there are about

100 cases of the “UK type” virus in various provinces, including Kabul. As per the ministry, people in various provinces and major cities are paying less attention to health issues. The ministry had added that even though the third wave has not started in the country, the public needs to follow all precautions and health guidelines.

Medical experts believe that the recklessness of the people and the inattention of the government in curbing the new wave of the coronavirus are likely to have dire consequences, and that the number of positive cases and deaths due to Covid-19 disease will increase in the coming days.

Recently, the ministry had released plans to ban flights from India, which is worst-affected by the pandemic currently and put in place restrictions on public gatherings in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

Afghanistan Signs Border Agreement with Iran; Eyes Better Trade with Pakistan

In a bid to set the path for a smooth transition period, the Afghanistan government has been busy forging border agreements with its neighboring nations. After a five-hour intense meeting on Saturday, the second agreement on border cooperation was signed by the Deputy Governor General for economic affairs of southeastern Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchestan, Mandana Zangeneh; and the Deputy Governor of the

southwestern Afghan province of Nimroz, Abdolnabi Barahooei in Zaranj. Zaranj City in Afghanistan hosted the signing ceremony and it can connect Afghan businesspersons to Chabahar free waters in south of Iran due to its proximity to the Iranian border. The Iranian official noted that joint meetings will help facilitate transportation in borders and also secure livelihood of those living in joint borders. Zmaryalai Ahadi, the

Governor of Nimroz who was present at the signing ceremony, said he is keen to make development in joint borders. Meanwhile, US senators too introduced a bipartisan bill to promote and generate economic benefits for Pakistan and Afghanistan. The bill is called the 'Pakistan-Afghanistan Economic Development Act'. The legislation proposes the setup of reconstruction opportunity zones along Pak-Afghan border areas.

Trade in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region will help bolster economic development and improve the livelihoods of local populations leading to political stability. Also on May 1, Pakistan reopened its border with Afghanistan at Chaman which would remain operational for 18 hours a day during entire week. Such inter-border trade and agreements will help bolster Afghan's efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region.

As Formal Troop...

Afghan government and the Taliban over the past months, killing many civilians. Violence, too, across the country still remains a grim issue even as we witness incidents like late Friday night wherein with a car bomb in Pul-e-Alam, south of the capital, killed at least 21 people and wounding over 90. The United States invaded Afghanistan in late 2001 after the Taliban refused to hand Osama Bin Laden over to Washington, claiming the US had failed to present it with evidence of bin Laden's involvement in 9/11, and the terror leader himself initially denying responsibility. The leader claimed full responsibility for the attacks in a 2004 video. Meanwhile, there have also been unconfirmed reports that Taliban insurgents have been protected western military bases in Afghanistan from attacks by rival, or rogue Islamist groups for over a year under a secret annex to a pact for the withdrawal of all US forces by May 1, three Western officials with knowledge of the agreement told Reuters. The US State Department gave no immediate response to Reuters over the existence of any such document. Nor did it have any immediate comment on what the three officials described as a "Taliban ring of protection". Since the United States struck a deal with the Taliban in February 29, 2020, paving the way for America to end its longest war, there have been no US combat deaths, and there have been only isolated attacks on US bases.

Logar Bombing...

He asked parties to the conflict to expedite their efforts for peace. The French embassy in Kabul in a statement said they condemn in the strongest terms those who deliberately targeted civilians in yesterday's Logar car bomb attack. "Such senseless terrorist violence must come to an end, the people of #Afghanistan deserve peace," the embassy said. Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement said, "We condemn the perpetrators of this heinous terrorist attack and hope that they will be held accountable before justice." The latest figures by members of the Logar provincial council show that 26 people were killed and over 100 more were wounded in the blast that has damaged many houses in the area, including a public hospital. The Ministry of Interior Affairs has confirmed that 21 people were killed and over 90 more were wounded in the explosion.

Apple Charged...

for that." "Spotify has become the largest music subscription service in the world, and we're proud of the role we played in that," the spokesperson said, but added that "the Commission's argument on Spotify's behalf is the opposite of fair competition."

With US...

an increasingly global community over the values and ideas that underpin modernization." However, that iteration of the conflict proved to be less of a great game and more of a zero-sum game. The US invasion of Afghanistan was the longest foreign conflict fought by the Americans as well as the most expensive, costing upwards of \$1 trillion. At one point, NATO had approximately 100,000 boots on the ground, of which, 3,500 returned. Afghanistan suffered even greater losses, with more than 65,000 security personnel and 111,000 civilians dying as a result of the conflict. Furthermore, despite channelling billions of dollars of aid into the country, World Bank figures indicate that over half the Afghan population live on less than \$1.90 a day.

India and the Great Game India and Afghanistan have shared a relationship from the time of the Indus Valley civilization. Afghanistan has been the gateway to India for several invading armies including that of the Mughals and were both ruled by the same rulers more than once. India has also maintained strong ties with Afghanistan since independence, signing a number of treaties with Kabul under Afghan King Zahir Shah's regime in the mid-twentieth century. While India was not heavily involved in the anti-Soviet jihad or the NATO invasion of Afghanistan, it, along with Russia and Tajikistan, provided important resources to the Northern Alliance in their fight against the Taliban. Changing dynamics within Afghanistan could have potential ramifications in India in regard to the spread of extremism, Pakistan's growing sphere of influence in the region and India's own relationship with the Taliban. Sameer Patil, Fellow for International Security Studies Programme, Gateway House told indianexpress.com over phone that "India is unlikely to deviate strongly from its current position in Afghanistan. It has historically been reluctant to intervene militarily in any foreign nation and stands little to gain from doing so in Afghanistan." Due to India's

developmental track record, having provided over \$3 billion in aid to Afghanistan, it stands to benefit from the goodwill of the Afghan people and any form of aggression, diplomatically or otherwise, could provide fodder for the Taliban to stroke nationalist sentiments against another "foreign occupier." Writing for Foreign Policy, Harsh Pant and Kriti Shah, researchers at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, note that both the Taliban and New Delhi have indicated a willingness to work together in recent years. Whether or not they will be successful in that endeavour will be contingent on Afghanistan curbing the spread of extremism across its borders, on the strength of Indo-Pak relations following the ceasefire on the Line-of-Control and on India's ability to successfully walk the line between providing transitional stability and overextending its interference in Afghan politics. The big concern of terrorism A big reason for concern among regional powers is the possibility of rising terrorism after the withdrawal of American forces. The Soviet-Afghan war necessitated the military training and armament of countless Afghan citizens and foreign volunteers, many of whom ended up becoming leaders of groups including the Taliban and Al Qaeda. While their training and tactics originated in the battlefields of Afghanistan, they were soon exported to every corner of the globe. This practice continued well after the war. Writing for the New York Times Magazine in 1994, Tim Weiner had reported, "in the five years since the Soviets withdrew, tens of thousands of Islamic radicals, outcasts, visionaries and gunmen from some 40 nations have come to Afghanistan to learn the lessons of jihad, the holy war, to train for armed insurrection, to bring the struggle back home." Under the Taliban, the situation intensified. After seizing Kabul in 1996, the Taliban imposed a strict form of Sharia law across the vast majority of Afghanistan that was under its control. Political experts have warned that with changing dynamics within Afghanistan,

India will have reason to fear the resurgence of Taliban in the country. Patil pointed to the spillover of the Mujahedeen into Jammu and Kashmir in the 1980s as a historical precedent for such concern. He also noted that when the Obama administration first signified its intent to exit Afghanistan in 2014, the Taliban and Pakistan-based terrorist groups saw an opportunity to spread instability to J&K through means of irregular warfare. This shift from conventional warfare to irregular warfare in many ways vindicates Kuniholm's theory of the new great game. Pakistan and China in the new 'great game' In a speech to the National Defence University in Washington DC, in 2010, Pakistani General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani argued that Pakistan wanted "strategic depth in Afghanistan but (did) not want to control it." Furthermore, he asserted that it was within Pakistan's imperative to keep Afghan state institutions, including the military and police, in check in order to ensure that they did not pose a threat to Islamabad's "strategic interests." Pakistan has since maintained this narrative, insisting that its involvement in Afghanistan is a byproduct of security concerns emanating from a need to protect its borders. No Afghan government has recognized the Durand Line, an international boundary separating Pakistan and Afghanistan, and despite the Taliban's ties to the Pakistani military, the organization has aligned itself with the government's viewpoint on this matter. Pakistan has been a key player in the great game since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and it is unlikely that Islamabad's role will be diminished anytime soon. Then there is China. In a way, China's involvement in the great game is more similar to that of the British and Russian Empires than to the more recent conflicts fought within Afghan borders. Like the Russians in 1830, China views Afghanistan as an important component in its One Belt, One Road initiative and is eager to protect its investment in the region, especially in terms of the China-Pakistan economic corridor.

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U.S. CDC Estimates 1 in 3 Americans Infected with COVID-19

About 35 percent of all Americans have been infected with COVID-19 over the past year, according to a new study of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC estimates that from February 2020 to March 2021, 114.6 million Americans were infected with COVID-19, 97.1 million had symptomatic illnesses and 5.6 million were hospitalized with COVID-19.

The current U.S. population is about 330 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau website. The number of people who were infected with COVID-19, estimated by the CDC, is about 35 percent of the total U.S. population, or a little more than 1 in 3 people.

Of those infected, nearly 50 percent are between the ages of 18 and 49, and 23 percent are 17 or younger. As for hospitalizations, about 47 percent are estimated to be 65 and older, according to the CDC.



A look at the world

At Least 39 Dead in Clashes Along Kyrgyz-Tajik Border

At least 39 people were killed – including a 13-year-old girl – and 134 wounded in two days of clashes along a disputed section of the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border, said the Kyrgyz Health Ministry on Friday.

Some 25 injured people were taken from Kyrgyzstan's southwestern Batken region to the capital Bishkek by special plane and hospitalized, including two in critical condition, said the statement.

The ministry added that the number of Kyrgyz people who died in the armed conflict rose to 31.

Kyrgyz authorities said that 49 of 134 injured were brought to hospitals in Bishkek.

Kyrgyz Health Minister Alymkadyr Beishenaliev along with other doctors flew to the Batken region to provide practical assistance to the injured.

According to local Tajik sources, eight Tajik citizens lost their lives and more than 90 were injured. Cease-fire



On Thursday, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbaev held talks with his Tajik counterpart Sirojiddin Mukhriddin and other representatives over “further joint actions aimed at resolving the situation” in the border area, said a Foreign Ministry statement.

“The Foreign Ministries of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan stressed the urgent need to resolve the conflict situation, which led to the victims and wounded from both the Kyrgyz and Tajik sides, through peaceful political and diplomatic negotiations,” the statement said.

According to the statement, Kazakbaev said the Kyrgyz ... **P2**

UN Chief Calls for Efforts to Address Inequalities While Ending AIDS By 2030



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for efforts to address inequalities in order to bring the world back on track to end AIDS by 2030.

There has been intensive action and progress against HIV in some places and population groups, while inaction in other places has allowed HIV epidemics to expand and deaths to mount, said Guterres in a report released on Friday. Six years after the UN General Assembly set an ambitious global goal to end AIDS by 2030, momentum is being lost. The global targets for 2020, which was agreed to in 2016, were missed, he noted.

According to the report, the 1.7 million new HIV infections that occurred in 2019 are more than three times higher than the 2020 target of less than 500,000 new infections. In addition, the 690,000 AIDS-related deaths in 2019 far exceed the 2020 target of reducing deaths to fewer than 500,000 a year. “The stark contrast of successes in some areas and failures in others confirms that HIV remains a pandemic of inequalities. Getting back on track will require urgent, transformative action to reduce and end inequalities, as well as increased domestic and international investment in HIV, health, social protection, humanitarian responses and pandemic preparedness and control systems,” said Guterres in the report.

The secretary-general made 10 recommendations, including: reduce and end inequalities that are obstructing progress to end AIDS; prioritize HIV prevention and ensure that 95 percent of people at risk of HIV infection have access to and use effective combination prevention options by ... **P2**

Apple Charged with Breach of Competition Law

The iPhone maker unfairly puts music-streaming rivals at a disadvantage due to its App Store rules, the EU's competition commissioner has said.

EU antitrust regulators on Friday charged Apple with illegally distorting competition in the music-streaming market through restrictive App Store rules. It is one of the biggest-ever competition cases against the US tech giant and could lead to hefty fines, Deutsche Welle reported.

An Apple spokesperson rejected the accusations, saying the EU's case was “the opposite of fair competition.”

The charges follow an EU investigation stemming from a complaint by the popular music-streaming service Spotify. “Our preliminary conclusion: Apple is in breach of EU competition law,” EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a statement.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, said Apple's App Store rules force rival developers to use its in-app payment system — which charges up to 30% commission —



and prevent them from informing users of cheaper payment methods. Vestager said this ultimately raised the cost for consumers and limited their choice.

“By setting strict rules on the App Store that disadvantage competing music streaming services, Apple deprives users of cheaper music streaming choices and distorts competition,” the commissioner's statement said.

“This is done by charging high commission fees on each transaction in the App Store for rivals and by forbidding them from informing their customers of alternative subscription options.” An Apple spokesperson rejected the charges and accused Spotify of wanting “all the benefits of the App Store,” without thinking “they should have to pay anything ... **P3**

On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, the Muslim World League distributed food packages to more than 1217 needy families

On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, the Muslim World League, in coordination with the Afghan Red Crescent Society and the General Directorate of Kuchi, distributed food to more than 1,217 needy families, including flour, rice, beans, oil and sugar.

In addition to charitable work and other projects implemented in Afghanistan, the organization distributes food every year during the holy month of Ramadan, and this year, under the special guidance of Dr. Mohammad Abdul Karim Al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League and Dr. Abdul rahman moatar, Includes Afghanistan

as a country where food distribution program is implemented. The program was implemented in coordination with the Afghan Red Crescent Society and the General Directorate of Kuchi in Kabul and Surobi district.

Mr. Habib-ur-Rahman Ahmadzai, Director General of Kuchi's, and Dr. Mohammad Nabi Burhan, Deputy Director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, and Mr. Alhaj Ghulam Habib Hussam, Head of International Relations of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Poor families distributed food, thanked the organization for its assistance, and called on the organization to continue providing assistance to needy families.

