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Heart of Asia

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Australian Embassy
Afghanistan

Australian Embassy to close in Afghanistan amid Booming Turmoil

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Tuesday the embassy in Kabul will close this week, underscoring fears about the "increasingly uncertain security environment" in Kabul as foreign troops withdraw.

He said the embassy will reopen "once circumstances permit"

The Taliban on Tuesday pledged to provide a "safe environment" to foreign diplomats and aid organizations after Australia announced it would close its embassy over security concerns.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan assures all foreign diplomats and staff of humanitarian organizations that (we) will not pose any threats to them," Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem told AFP.

"We will provide a safe environment for their activities," he said.

This comes as US and NATO troops continue to withdraw from the country - a task expected to be complete by September 11.



Germany wants to Increase Access to Justice, Legal Awareness in Afghanistan

A technical cooperation agreement has been signed between the Ministry of Justice and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Afghanistan on Tuesday to increase access to justice, raise the legal awareness of citizens, especially women, and improve the state of justice in the war-torn nation.

Justice Minister Fazl Ahmed Manawi and Brand Miser Schmidt, Project Manager of supporting the rule of law Office (GIZ) were the signatories of the agreement under which the German government has pledged €4.5 million to the Afghan government for the rule of law, access to justice for citizens, raising the legal awareness of citizens, especially women, in the northern provinces, strengthening the effectiveness of the Ministry of Justice and improving the situation ... P3

Troop withdrawing: U.S. Not 'Walking Away' From Region



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at a news conference with Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas on Tuesday said that NATO remains committed to its partnership with Afghanistan.

"We will continue to help the Afghan people and contribute to the peace efforts, including with continued training and funding of the Afghan

security forces," Stoltenberg said. As the US military carries out President Joe Biden's order to withdraw all American troops from Afghanistan by September, the Pentagon insists the US commitment to the region is not wavering.

"Just because we are removing our troops and ending our military mission in Afghanistan doesn't mean

that we're walking away from the region," Pentagon Spokesman John Kirby told reporters Monday.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," he said.

According to an AP report, last week Gen. Frank McKenzie, the commander of US Central Command, said negotiations with Afghanistan's neighbors for overflight rights and

troop basing are "moving forward" but will take time.

On Monday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Pakistan's chief of Army staff, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa. The Pentagon didn't get specific about what the two military leaders discussed, other than to say they talked about "shared regional interests and objectives."

"During the call, Secretary Austin reiterated his appreciation for Pakistan's support for Afghanistan Peace Negotiations and expressed his desire to continue to build on the US - Pakistan bilateral relationship," the Defense Department said.

Commanders have said they will monitor threats from "over the horizon," to ensure that terrorists cannot again use Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks against the US. But they have acknowledged that the US does not yet have any agreements for basing or overflights from any of the neighboring countries.

"There's still going to be a robust United States presence in the Middle East, in the Central Command area of responsibility," Kirby told reporters.

"There's absolutely going to be no diminution of our commitment to our allies and partners in the region," he said. ... P3

Former Chief of Pashtany Bank Gets 5 Years of Prison Time for Embezzling \$900,000

Hayatullah Dayani, the former head of the Pashtany Bank and three other officials of the bank have been sentenced to five years and one month in prison for the embezzlement of USD 900,000, announced the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

Ahmad Fahim Qawim, head of legal and judicial studies and spokesperson for the Supreme Court, said that all parties to the case were present at the hearing, and the appellate court eventually sentenced each of the defendants to imprisonment.

The Court of Appeals for Combating Serious Crimes has sentenced the defendants for the corruption charges.



1,353 Corruption Cases Registered in First 3 Months

At least 1,353 cases of corruption have been registered in the first three months of the 1400 fiscal year, announced Jamshid Rasooli, spokesperson for the Attorney General's Office, on Tuesday.

Rasooli said that of these, 1,276 cases had been registered in the appellate courts in the center and provinces, and another 77 cases had been referred to the Judicial Center for Combating Serious Crimes. At least 879 cases are related to civil corruption and another 397 cases are related to military corruption in the north. Rasooli added that in connection with the examination of 1,276 cases, 1,424 people have been identified as suspects, accused, convicts and criminals, of whom 323 have been sentenced to prison and fined. Also, 578 people were released on bail and are being investigated. "At least 298 people



are currently in custody and investigations are ongoing."

The spokesperson for the Attorney General's Office said that due to precautionary measures, of 1,424 people, 30 had been suspended and another 68 had been barred from leaving.

Rasooli added that the cases include bribery, abuse of office, embezzlement, abuse of influence, theft and falsification

of documents, obstruction of justice, overstepping of authority, treason, concealment of truth, delay in duty, lack of Observance of behavioral rules, transfer of titles or duties, among others.

Rasooli said that no one is above the law and that those involved in the corruption case, included five generals, three senators, four mayors and two members of the provincial council.

Iran Approves...

past one week about the likelihood of some key reformist and conservative figures facing disqualification from the Guardian Council, which recently came out with a directive setting new criteria for presidential hopefuls.

According to the directive, any candidate must be between 40 and 75 years of age, must possess a master's degree or its equivalent, must have at least a 4-year experience of management in state organizations, or should have served as a minister, or governor of cities with two-plus million population, or been a top commander of the armed forces with the rank of major general or higher. Hopefuls should also not have any criminal record or jail history.

The days leading up to registration saw public tiff between the Guardian Council and Rouhani's office over the new directive.

Pertinently, this year's election comes at a crucial time with Iran and world powers engaged in negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, which the conservatives in Iran have frowned upon.

With conservatives well-positioned to seize power from reformists, all eyes would be on how Rouhani's successor pursues the issue of negotiations and back-channel talks with countries in the neighborhood, including Saudi Arabia.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has called for a high turnout in the upcoming elections without backing any candidate. However, with top reformists facing disqualification, observers fear the voting turnout may be affected.

By Wang Huiyao

An Open China A Boon to Global Economy

Editor's note: "Roots of China's Growth" is a 10-episode series marking the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which has presided over the country's meteoric rise as a global power. The series focuses on 10 fundamental elements of the strategy that has led to China's transformation from an impoverished nation over the past 100 years. "Opening-up" is the second in the series. The article is part of a Special Series from CGTN and its international media partners.

A shopping expo in China made the headlines in May.

Some 1,300 global brands including Swatch of Switzerland, Swarovski of Austria, Shiseido of Japan, and America's Dell and Tesla gathered at the first China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, capital of south China's Hainan Province.

With a large host of business, trade, invention and innovation expos and fairs, access to foreign products is easy and convenient in China. The five major cities in the country - Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Shenzhen - collectively host about 140 such expos every year, according to the Japan External Trade Organization. But decades ago, it was a completely different story. Before the 1970s, many were struggling to fill their bellies, let alone pampering themselves with a shopping spree.

China's reform and opening-up policy is what altered the country's course of development.

Since the initiation of this policy, China has gone through three major waves of opening-up. The first began in 1978 and continued through the 1980s and 1990s. It saw an influx of foreign direct investment for infrastructure building

and industrial projects across the country. In the vanguard of this wave of opening-up was China's first Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen, which proved an early magnet for foreign investors and a test bed for policy innovation.

The second wave began in 2001 with China's accession to the WTO, which spurred another burst of foreign investment and much greater integration with the global economy. Now, as China embarks on a fresh chapter of development under its 14th Five-Year Plan, the nation is on the cusp of a new wave of opening-up marked by proactive initiatives to deepen integration even further.

The vehicles include the development of new free trade zones (FTZ) and the Hainan free trade port, the integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and new international trade and investment agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Agreement (RCEP).

This policy approach has proven extremely beneficial to China's development. It has driven reforms and expanded the market, enabling a more specialized division of labor. In addition, intense competition stimulated by trade liberalization and import tariff cuts forced domestic businesses to be more efficient. It has also led to the optimization of the allocation of resources and industrial upgrading.

More than 40 years of reform and opening-up have seen China's total imports and exports soar from \$20.6 billion to more than \$4.5 trillion, making the country the world's top trading nation.

Opening-up is not merely about



"bringing in" resources; it also paves the way for China to contribute to the global economy. Reform and opening-up has become an internal driving force for China to embrace globalization, both economically and in terms of people-to-people ties.

Today, China is both an engine for global economic growth and a contributor to global order. While pursuing its own development, China has never sought head-on confrontation with other countries and has remained consistently committed to world peace and development.

China also takes the lead as an active participant in the Paris Agreement in addressing climate-related issues through various efforts. This reflects the nation's positive attitude towards - and competence in - participating in multilateral cooperation and global governance. It also demonstrates a sense of mission and responsibility towards joining hands with other countries to tackle challenges to human survival and development.

In the meantime, China has also proposed several approaches for global governance and development,

including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and building a community with a shared future for humankind.

Progress on these fronts highlights the need for institutional opening-up at a deeper level and on a broader scale. The 2021 Report on the Work of the Government also proposes the development of new systems for a higher-standard open economy in China, the promotion of high-quality development of the BRI, and the building of a globally-oriented network of high-standard free trade zones.

This not only taps into China's own economic potential, but also drives the growth of the world economy. Having moved the nation from times of scarcity to today's shopping spree experience, reform and opening-up is not only a recipe for China's success, but has arguably become an indispensable driving force towards a more prosperous world.

The author is Wang Huiyao, president of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG). You can contact him directly at huiyaowang@ccg.org.cn.

By Wang Yu, Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan

Off to A Good Start in 2021, China Poised to be Ballast for Global Economy

The Chinese economy continued to grow in the first quarter of 2021, with GDP reaching RMB 24931 billion, up 18.3% year on year and 0.6% higher than the fourth quarter of 2020, according to National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC. China, the world's second largest economy, has obviously managed to safeguard the lives and health of its people, and consolidate and expand its achievements in socio-economic development at the same time. Along with a series of law and science-based and orderly measures in pandemic response, the domestic economy has maintained a sound momentum of steady growth. The good start has made China a ballast stone for global economic recovery.

There were a number of highlights in the first quarter. First, market confidence and expectations improved significantly. The Purchasing Managers' Index for March was 51.9%, up 1.3% from the

previous month, while the Non-Manufacturing Business Activity Index was 56.3%, up 4.9%. Second, the market became more active and dynamic. There were 2.792 million new market entities nationwide handling tax-related matters, up 86%. Third, investment and consumption recovered steadily. Fixed asset investment rose 25.6% while retail sales of consumer goods rose 33.9%. Fourth, foreign trade and foreign investment increased significantly. The volume of exports and imports of goods denominated in RMB increased by 38.7% and 19.3% respectively. Foreign investment actually used rose by 39.9% as calculated in RMB. Fifth, industrial production grew rapidly. Added value of industrial enterprises above the designated size rose 24.5%, industrial power consumption and rail freight rose 23.9% and 13.9% respectively, and industrial capacity utilization rate was the highest Q1 level

since 2013. Sixth, new growth drivers gained a sound momentum. The added value of high-tech manufacturing increased 31.2%. Seventh, the people's living standard improved steadily. Per capita disposable income rose by 13.7% in real terms, 80.9% of the days were with good air quality nationwide, and the average concentration of fine particulate matter in cities at and above the prefecture level fell by 2.2%.

At present, the Chinese economy is still in recovery and development. We will steadily advance our priorities and maintain a strong growth momentum. First, we will continue loosening restrictions and reducing burdens for market entities, increase support for them with more equitable and inclusive policies, advance support for business startups and innovation, implement detailed and specific tax and fee reductions for small... P3

By Xi Meng

Originate in China, Belong to the world

Not long ago, I went to Linqi Town, Chun'an County in Zhejiang Province, and visited the local Chinese herbal medicine planting and processing bases. This little mountain town is rich of a variety of genuine medicinal materials, such as raspberry, polygonatum and so on. When I tasted the fresh raspberry fruits and drank the tea made from polygonatum, I couldn't help thinking that these traditional Chinese herbal medicines with obvious Chinese characteristics have played a unique and important role in the fight against the COVID-19 that is raging in the world. Traditional Chinese herbal medicine and Chinese tea are treasures of people all over the world. We should further understand and explore their potential values.

Chinese herbal medicine has a long history of thousands of years, which is accompanied by the birth and growth of Chinese civilization. Many ideas advocated by the culture of traditional Chinese herbal medicine, such as the harmonious unity of human and nature, the comprehensive treatment of diseases and the intervention before the occurrence of diseases, are still advanced, scientific and full of vitality. In

fight against COVID-19, Chinese herbal medicine treatment has also played a more important and extensive role. Take Beijing as an example. In February 15th, Beijing Ditan Hospital reported that the Chinese herbal medicine treatment had achieved good results in mild, ordinary and heavy cases. The effective rate of single use of Chinese medicine treatment was 87.5%, and the effective rate of integrated traditional Chinese and Western medicine was 92.3%. In February 24th, a press conference said that the overall treatment rate of Beijing by Chinese medicine was 87%, the proportion of the use of Chinese herbal decoction accounted for 82%, and the total effective rate was 92%.

There is also a concept in Chinese medicine culture that is the homology of medicine and food. Many foods of our daily lives can be used as medicines at the same time. The most common thing is tea leaves. Tea originated in China which is known as the magic oriental leaves. It is said that Chinese ancestors ate poisonous things when they tried hundreds of plants, but fortunately, the magical tea leaves fell into their boiling water. After drinking the tea soup, ... P3

Afghan Truck Drivers Collect Funds to Repair Roads

Afghan truck drivers, faced with roads that have not been repaired by the Ministry of Public Works, have taken the matter into their own hands by collecting 500 Afs from each driver to pay for the road repair themselves.

The campaign began on the Kabul-North highway following attempts to rebuild the destroyed parts of the Kabul-Kandahar highway in Maidan Wardak's Shaikh Abad area.

Officials of the Land Transport Organizing Affairs Council—a truck drivers' trade group—said that drivers who are a member of the council should pay up to 500 Afs for the reconstruction and renovation of the damaged roads in the country's north highways.

Meanwhile, several transportation companies said that within a month's time at least 20 traffic accidents occurred on the Kabul-Kandahar

highway due to the deteriorating roads, and that several vehicles were overturned.

"The Salang Road is not ready for our vehicles to cross at all. These roads are not safe for our cars to pass through, only Chaglas (old Russian trucks) can pass through this road. We have no one to hear us," said Jan Agha, the manager of a transportation company.

"The gravel and stones that the Russians threw on these roads to strengthen them were also removed from these roads because they (government officials) make money under the name of repairing and reconstructing roads," said Hessamuddin, a transport company official. "They deprived us of everything just for their own interests," he said.

The transportation companies willing to repair the highway with

their own funds say their work methods are not much different than the Ministry of Public Works.

"The Ministry of Public Works is asleep now. They are paving the way for embezzlement, and they are deemed as exempt from doing anything. Therefore, we have put this task on ourselves," said Tala Mohammad Atmanzai, director of the Land Transport Organizing Affairs Council. "We have taken this responsibility to repair the Salang Road's ditches and damaged areas to prevent future accidents, and possible damage to our vehicles as well," he added.

"If any road was asphalted or covered with concrete before, it was just short term. The roads that were asphalted in winter were destroyed in a year—by the next winter—because of poor quality," said Gholam Habib, in charge of a

transportation company.

The Ministry of Public Works is apparently not engaged in any major work to repair the Kabul-Kandahar and Salang highways.

Ashraf Haqshenas, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Works, said: "The 30 kilometers of road, which was identified as vulnerable in the previous year, will be concreted in the new plan that we have designed." "Construction work is ongoing on the several parts of the Dushi-Bamyan Highway—an alternative to the Salang Highway—which is 152 kilometers long, and the rest is addressed in the future plans of the Ministry of Public Works," he added. The Ministry of Public Works says that if an alternative is not built for the Salang highway, and the highway's traffic is not stopped, the reconstruction of the highway will not be feasible.

Germany wants...

of the judiciary and the police, according to the constitution. The agreement will last till 2023.

Manawi said, "This agreement signifies that international community continues to work with the Afghan government despite the troop withdrawal. Afghanistan is now making good progress in various sectors, especially the military sector. We have to be more serious in providing services to the people, and that is why we are working harder than ever before, especially in the area of rule of law."

"We hope to act more decisively after this and increase the people's access to justice," he added.

Meanwhile, Head of the Rule of Law Office of GIZ, referring to the German cooperation with Afghanistan, said that Afghanistan is now witnessing military and political developments and the decision of the German Foreign Ministry was to withdraw foreign troops and continue its cooperation with Afghanistan in various fields.

"We also work in the field of women's rights, especially in remote parts of Afghanistan, and the agreement will establish bilateral cooperation between the Ministry of Justice and the GIZ, which we hope will be implemented," Schmidt said. The GIZ agreement with the Ministry of Justice includes a 30% increase in the handling of legal cases involving women, the preparation and implementation of development plans for the directorates of justice, the preparation and publication of legislation on women and capacity building for law enforcement officials. The purpose of better handling of cases is set as an indicator.

Troop withdrawing:...

The US and coalition forces started withdrawing from the country on May 1. Some bases have been handed over to Afghan forces. US forces have started scrapping equipment that can neither be repaired or handed over to Afghan forces in its current state. The scrapping of vehicles and other equipment is taking place at the country's largest air base, the Bagram Airfield.

Off to A Good...

and micro enterprises, and put new structural tax reduction measures in place. Second, we will improve business environment and promote fair competition. The reforms to streamline administration, delegate powers and improve regulation and services must be advanced by reducing the procedures, documents and expenses required in the review and approval of enterprise-related matters, innovating and strengthening interim and ex-post oversight, carrying out business environment evaluation in some localities, drawing up action plans for building a high-standard market system, publishing anti-monopoly guidelines in the field of platform economy and seeking positive progress in the reform of factor market allocation. Third, we will promote high-level opening-up. We will implement various policies to support foreign trade and investment, consolidate the existing foreign trade and investment flows, make solid progress in the construction of the pilot free trade zones, accelerate the construction of the Hainan free trade port with one milestone

after another, get ready for the implementation of RCEP and produce remarkable results in the joint effort for the Belt and Road Initiative and other international economic and trade cooperation.

Besides, China will also make solid efforts to promote a new type of urbanization, thoroughly implement major regional strategies, further strengthen its capacity for scientific and technological innovation, constantly promote high-quality manufacturing development, make new strides in rural revitalization as well as agricultural and rural modernization, and actively work for carbon peaking and carbon neutrality.

The world is seeing diverging trends in the epidemiology of COVID-19 in different regions. The slow progress of vaccination in developing countries has made it more difficult for them to recover their economies. There is also good news. On May 7, the inactivated COVID-19 vaccine by Beijing Institute of Biological Products, China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm), was listed by the World Health Organization for emergency use. As the first

non-western COVID-19 vaccine officially certified by the WHO of its safety, efficacy and quality, it will provide developing countries with a new reliable option, significantly contribute to reducing global vaccine shortage and effectively promote vaccine accessibility and affordability.

As a friendly neighbor and strategic partner, China has all along closely followed and been deeply involved in Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction, and economic development and people's livelihood improvement. China has pledged to provide 700,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine for Afghanistan and is doing its best to bridge the 'immunity gap' between developing and developed countries. On the basis of effective epidemic control, China's huge domestic market and consumption potential will be an endless source of growth momentum for global economy. It will also strengthen cooperation with the rest of the world, especially countries cooperating under the BRI framework such as Afghanistan, so as to play its due role in shaking off the impact of the pandemic and achieving peace and development.

Originate in...

their bodies gradually recovered. Maybe it is just a beautiful legend, but now there is no doubt about the health benefits of tea drinking. Many tea fans even say that it is better to have no meal in three days than without tea in a day.

During the period of COVID-19, the global demand for tea increased significantly, which not only provided a new impetus for building a sustainable and resilient tea industry, but also showed that tea always has a unique charm of gathering people's

hearts. This is an important message conveyed by the high-level online activity of "international tea day 2021" recently held by FAO. In addition, the cultivation of Chinese herbal medicine and tea also has important value in the process of rural economic development and rural revitalization. Linqi Town, where I visited this time, just has benefited a lot from the cultivation and processing of many Chinese herbal medicines, and the local government is also planning a grander development strategy.

The traditional Chinese herbal medicine and tea I mentioned above have distinctive Chinese characteristics, which are derived from China's long history and cultural heritage. But at the same time, they belong more to the world. It comes from the idea of worldwide great harmony in Chinese culture. In other words, all mankind shares a community of common destiny. (Xi Meng, Senior Researcher, Research Center for the Belt and Road of Lanzhou University)

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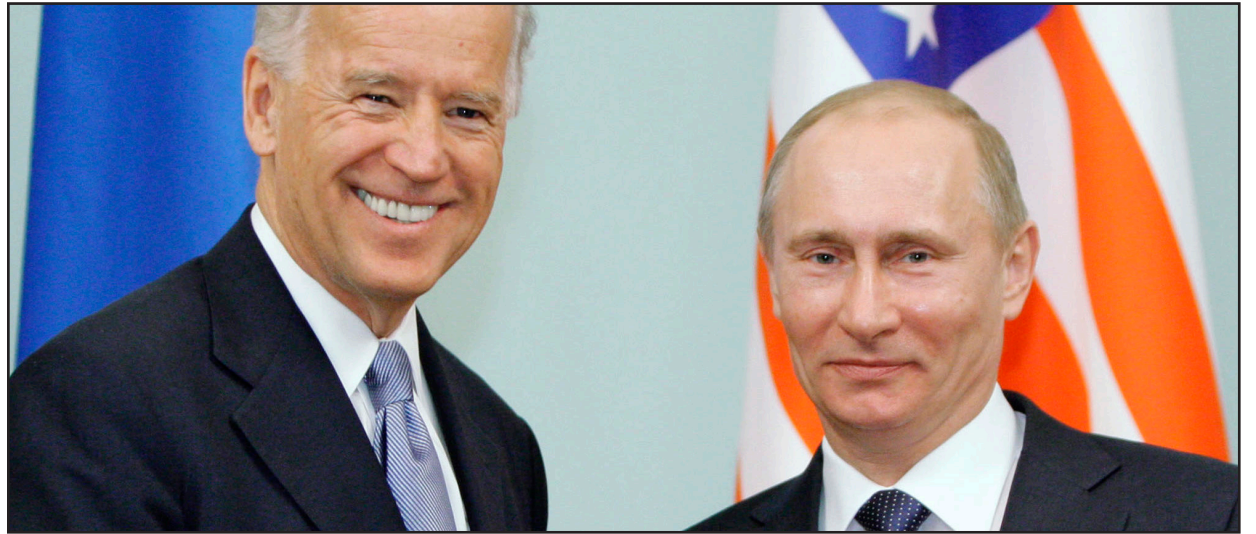
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Putin, Biden to Meet in Geneva on June 15-16, Sources Say

A meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Joe Biden is expected to take place on June 15-16 in Geneva, CNN said citing sources in the Biden administration on Tuesday. "The officials said Geneva has emerged as the final contender as a host city for the long-discussed meeting between the two leaders, who are expected to come together on June 15-16 at the conclusion of Biden's first international trip since taking office," the TV channel

reported. The US president will be in Europe to participate in G7 and NATO summits in mid-June. The G7 meeting will be held on June 11-13 in the UK and the NATO meeting will be on June 14 in Belgium's capital. On April 13, at Washington's initiative, Putin and Biden had their second phone call since the US president took office, during which he proposed to the Russian leader to meet in person in a third country in the coming months.



A look at the world

Iran Approves 7 Candidates for Presidential Elections

Iran's powerful election-vetting body, the Guardian Council, has approved seven candidates for the June 18 presidential elections. In an announcement on Tuesday, the government body tasked with supervising the vote and vetting candidates, said only seven candidates out of 592 who had registered last week passed the week-long vetting process. Abbas Ali Kodkhodaie, a spokesperson for the Guardian Council, said the list has been sent to the Interior Ministry, which will make an official announcement. He, however, did not specify the names of the approved candidates.



On Monday, the semi-official Fars News Agency published a leaked list of the approved candidates, which included judiciary chief Ebrahim Raeisi, former top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, former IRGC chief Mohsen Rezaei, head of Iran's Central Bank AbdolNaser Hemmati, Deputy Parliament Speaker Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh, former vice president Mohsen Mehralizadeh, and former lawmaker Alireza Zakani. The list, however, did not include the names of key reformist candidates, including Ishaq Jahangiri, the first deputy of President Hassan Rouhani. Other heavyweight candidates including former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and former IRGC commander Saeed Mohammad have also been disqualified. Iran will go to polls on June 18 to elect a new government as Rouhani's reformist government completes two terms in office. A sitting president cannot run for a third time in succession, according to Iran's constitution. A total of 592 candidates had earlier this month registered to run in the polls, before their nominations were sent to the Guardian Council for vetting. Speculation had been rife over the ... **P2**

Denmark Expects Highest GDP Growth in 15 Years



Denmark's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to grow 2.4 percent in 2021 and 3.6 percent in 2022 in the wake of the economic downturn triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's Ministry of Finance said on Tuesday. Based on Denmark's economic performance in the first quarter (Q1) of this year, the ministry's Economic Survey said that by the end of 2021, the country's GDP growth will surpass the pre-pandemic level. Private consumption is projected to increase 4.3 percent in 2022, its highest level since 2004. Denmark's exports will also benefit from the recovery and are estimated to rise by as much as six percent in 2022, the biggest jump in over a decade. The ministry also anticipates that economic growth will act as a catalyst for employment. It foresees the creation of 46,000 new jobs in 2021 and 2022, following the loss of 22,000 jobs in 2020. Accordingly, "growth in 2022 is expected to be the highest in 15 years." "Together with the vaccine rollout and the gradual reopening, we now see the result of the government and the Folketing (Danish Parliament) holding the hand of Danish employees and companies with a historic fiscal policy effort throughout the crisis," said Minister for Finance Nicolai Wammen in a press release. The ministry also expects to see increased investment in green climate initiatives. The report noted that the recovery of Denmark's economy is moving at two speeds. "We must not forget that some companies continue to be hit hard. This is especially true in the tourism and experience industries," Wammen said. According to the ministry, Denmark "remains among the countries that have coped best socioeconomically with the coronavirus crisis and stronger signs of growth are expected in Q2 and onwards." The Ministry of Finance publishes three Economic Surveys a year -- in May, August and December.

U.S. State Secretary in Israel, Vows Support to Rebuild Gaza

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged that the United States would rally support to rebuild Gaza, as he began his Middle East tour in Jerusalem on Tuesday. In a televised statement after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Blinken said the United States will work to rally international support and make its own "significant contributions." But it will be ensured that " Hamas does not benefit from the reconstruction assistance," Blinken said about the Islamist Palestinian



group that runs the besieged Palestinian enclave. Netanyahu, speaking alongside Blinken after their meeting, warned that his country will launch a "very powerful response" if Hamas will renew rocket fire at Israel. A ceasefire was reached recently between Israel and the militant groups in Gaza, after 11 days of conflict that killed 248 people in Gaza and 12 people in Israel. Blinken landed in the Ben Gurion airport outside Tel Aviv earlier on Tuesday. He is also expected to meet Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi before meeting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. However, Palestine said on Tuesday that the truce between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which was reached last Friday, has to include the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas made the remarks during a meeting with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi in the West Bank city of Ramallah, according to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA.



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