



Page 2 | NATIONAL  
The Last Special Forces Fighting the Forever War

**Two Decades in Afghanistan: Was it Worth it?**

It was 6am on September 12, 2001, when my phone rang and Gerry Brownlee said "turn on the TV, the U.S. is under attack" ...

Page 2 | NATIONAL

Page 3 | ECONOMY

APTTA Trade Pact Extended for Three Months



Kabul  
14 / 3



Herat  
17 / 4



Nangarhar  
23 / 12



Balkh  
16 / 9



# Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

Sunday, March 7, 2021

Issue No. 931

www.heartofasia.af

10 afs



**Afghan-Iran Online Conference on Trade to be Held on Monday**

An online conference is planned to be held on opportunities and strategies for trade between Afghanistan and Iran on Monday, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) published.

As per Tehran Times report, the online event will be attended by Hossein Salimi, the chairman of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce.

In this conference, the security and political situation of Afghanistan and the perspective of economic and political relations between the two countries, trade opportunities and goods and services needs of Afghanistan, investment opportunities in Afghanistan, how to participate in the Afghan market, Afghanistan and Iran credit lines and financial transfer will be reviewed.

Back in January, the director general of the Asia-Pacific Office of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) had said that a preferential trade agreement with Afghanistan was going to be signed in the near future.



**Massive Fire Breaks out at Farah Border Port**

Local officials in Farah province say a fire broke out at Abu Nasr Farahi customs in the province on the border with Iran and has not yet been contained. Traders say one of the traders' oil tankers caught fire and two of the traders' oil tankers have been burnt so far, but the fire has not been contained yet.

Farah Governor Taj Mohammad Jahed described the blaze as "severe" and said there were no facilities to contain it in the port of Abu Nasr Farahi.

According to Jahed, they are trying to ask Iran for help in controlling the fire. He did not elaborate.

Pictures posted on social media show that the fire is widespread in the port of Abu Nasr Farahi.

This is the second fire in Farah customs in the last two weeks.

## Ghani: Only Afghanistan's Constitution to Decide on the Future Administration



Amidst reports on Afghan politicians' access to a draft on a new format for the country's political future, President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday said the transfer of power will happen through an election as an unchanging principle for his government. Addressing a ceremony on the inauguration of the third year of the 17th legislative term of the National Assembly, Ghani said Afghanistan's Constitution will decide on the future administration, not plans made by "others."

"The transfer of power through elections is an uncompromisable principle for us. We are ready to talk about a free, transparent and countrywide election under the management of the international community. We can discuss and agree about its date," said Ghani. Ghani assured that no decision will be made in absence of continued consultation with the people as well as without the direct role and approval of all layers of Afghan society.

He emphasized the importance of expedition in peace efforts but said the process requires proper management and planning. "Our experience from the past has shown that achieving peace is not a mere dream. Achieving durable peace is possible but a peace in which violence ends and political, economic and social stability is ensured, requires commitment and sacrifice," he said, adding that he is ready for sacrifice for peace, but it will not lead to the loss of the last

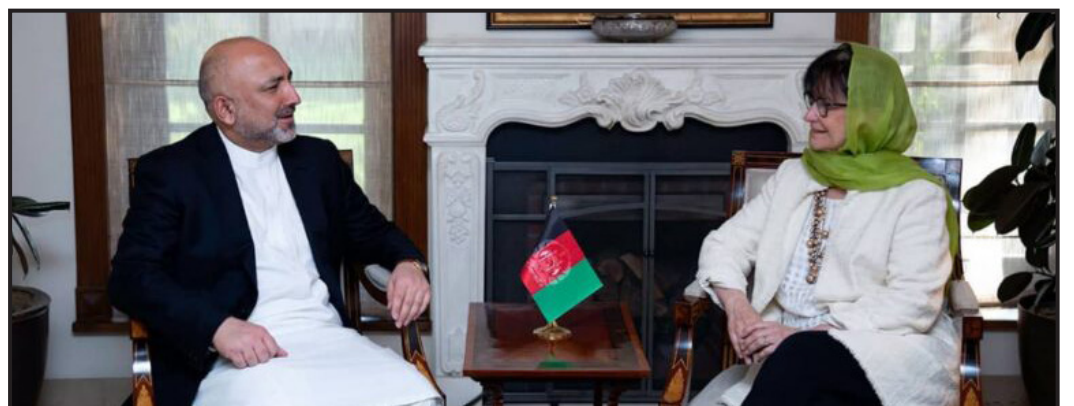
decades' achievements. He added: "By sacrificing, I mean that all personal and group interests should be put aside, and people's interests should be prioritized and peace should be seen as a sacred goal." Ghani reiterated that no one could decide on dissolving Afghanistan's institutions that are approved in the constitution. Calling the current opportunity for peace unprecedented and unique, Ghani said Afghans want an end to the war that has continued for 42 years and that they want peace, but not the peace of the graveyard. He reiterated that he will not allow the people's efforts for democracy, freedom and preservation of the system to be wasted. Ghani called on Pakistan to choose a "right path" and said, "let's accept each other as two independent countries." Referring to targeted attacks on religious scholars, government employees, activists and journalists, President Ghani said the attacks in fact are attack on Afghanistan's future, on Afghan children, and on any attempt for a brighter future in the country. He added that these attacks are aimed at creating fear among the people for their future.

**India Committed to Connectivity with Afghanistan: Jaishankar**

India has reaffirmed its strong commitment to work together with all regional stakeholders to enhance connectivity in the region and to provide unhindered access to the sea to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries through the Chabahar Port. "The Chabahar Port has not only emerged as a commercial transit hub for the region but also facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance, especially during the pandemic. The port is part of our shared commitment towards peace, stability and prosperity of the people of Afghanistan," ... **P3**



## FM Atmar, Debora Lyons Discussed UN Role in Afghan Peace Process



The Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar has met with Deborah Lyons, the Special Representative of UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in a statement said that the two sides discussed the Afghan peace process, emphasizing the constructive role of the United Nations in strengthening and

facilitating peace talks. According to the statement, Ms. Lyons stressed the role of countries in the region and the international community in ensuring a lasting peace in Afghanistan, and reaffirmed the United Nations' continued efforts to expand regional and global consensus.

In the meantime, the two sides also called the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2513 important for reducing violence, securing ceasefires, non-use of Afghan territory by terrorists, pursuing meaningful negotiations, achieving a peaceful solution and ensuring a lasting peace in Afghanistan.



### Biden's \$1.9...

Senators rejected a proposal by Senator Bernie Sanders to more than double the \$7.25-per-hour federal minimum wage to \$15 across five years. Sanders called the current level a "starvation" wage that has been in place for more than a decade.

Democrats hold a slim majority in the Senate and House of Representatives. Congress is scrambling to complete work on the legislation so it can be signed into law before March 14, when some existing pandemic-related benefits are due to expire.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is walking a tightrope as he tries to steer the bill through the Senate, aiming to keep Senate liberals and moderates happy while not alienating House Democrats.

With no votes to spare, Senate Democrats must keep all 50 of their members on board, allowing Vice President Kamala Harris to cast the deciding vote if no Republicans support the bill.

Senate approval of the legislation would send it back to the House of Representatives which must approve the revised bill before sending it to Biden for his signature.

### Pakistani Premier...

most difficult struggle in my life as they [former rulers] destroyed the major institutions in the country," Khan said

Clashes near parliament

Ahead of the vote, a scuffle erupted outside the parliament between workers of the ruling party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and the opposition.

Footage on Geo News, a local broadcaster, showed some PTI workers throwing shoes at opposition leaders.

By Joshua Huminski

# The Last Special Forces Fighting the Forever War

on the 15th of January, five days before the inauguration of President-Elect Joe Biden, the Trump administration drew down American forces in Afghanistan to just 2,500. Given the chaos in Washington, DC after the election, the seditious attack on the Capitol building, and the ongoing conspiracy theories surrounding the election, one could be forgiven (but only slightly) for forgetting the American presence in that country. America's longest war may not be over, but it is certainly not on the minds of many in the United States.

Grand designs of transforming Afghanistan have given to achieving a modicum of stability by standing up the Afghan Security Forces, supporting the central government, and finding a negotiated settlement with Taliban representatives in Doha, Qatar. Yet, behind the scenes and away from the public's eye, American forces are still engaged in the frontlines in Afghanistan, waging a war against the Taliban, and now, the Islamic State.

In *Eagle Down*, Jessica Donati, the former Kabul Bureau Chief for *The Wall Street Journal*, shines a much-needed light onto the (potentially) last days of America's involvement in Afghanistan. In this exceptional book, she follows Special Forces' Operational Detachment Alphas, or "ODAs," on deployment to the country, the political machinations in Washington, and uniquely, the home front for these tip-of-the-spear soldiers.

**THE TRULY QUIET PROFESSIONALS**  
*Eagle Down* is an uncomfortable read at times, but it's a book that is honest and fair to its protagonists, and one that demands to be read. Ms. Donati's extraordinary exploration of what for many is a forgotten war brings home the challenges and

complexities of America's longest war in sobering terms and through the eyes of some of America's most elite warriors—Special Forces. These are the truly "quiet professionals", waging counterinsurgency on the frontlines, but largely away from the public eye, both by intent and by consequence. Unlike their Navy counterparts, Army Special Forces receive considerably less notoriety and fewer book deals. Indeed, Ms. Donati recounts the challenges of getting access to these units early on in the book. Their mission, foreign internal defense, was largely subsumed into direct action, but as Ms. Donati explains, this core mission became the central focus in Afghanistan. The ODAs fought alongside their Afghan counterparts, or at least, were intended to do so. More often than not their "commando" partners were doing anything but direct action, often manning checkpoints, serving Afghan political VIPs, or other non-kinetic tasks. This is to say nothing of the "green-on-blue" incidents which undermined trust between the Americans and Afghanistan and resulted in considerable casualties.

The Special Forces ODA missions provided the political leadership in Washington a convenient fiction. American troops were not "boots-on-the-ground" and engaged in combat, rather they were merely advising, training, and assisting the Afghan Security Forces. As Ms. Donati illustrates, that was most certainly not the truth for the soldiers of the ODAs. The convenient fiction descended into farce with overly complex chains of command, careerism on the part of senior officers, exceedingly restrictive rules of engagement, and shifting mission sets that hamstrung the ability of the ODAs to achieve sustainable

success. **THE TRAGEDY OF AFGHANISTAN**  
The tragedy of this book is not just the losses, the injuries and the deaths, painful and horrifying though they are. It is that that these Special Forces soldiers were almost set up for failure from the beginning. Under President Obama, the policies were so oriented towards the withdrawal that they became exceptionally restrictive and prohibitive toward kinetic action, even when under fire. As Ms. Donati recounts, Susan Rice, the president's national security adviser, would not entertain any notion other than withdrawal, regardless of the conditions on the ground, until near the end of President Obama's presidency. Only then did the president change his course. Yet, even under President Trump, with the greatly loosened rules of engagement and increased troop presence, the likelihood of strategic success was extremely slim—tactical and operational success, certainly, but achieving a stable long-term political goal was a bridge too far.



success.

At no point in *Eagle Down* does the political leadership (American or Afghan), or anyone for that matter, articulate a political end state to Washington's involvement and commitment to Kabul. War is, as is so often said, a continuation of politics by other means and necessitates a political end. Yet, 20 years into the conflict any viable political solution that is achievable by kinetic means remains unarticulated. Tactical progress can and is made, operational progress is haltingly made, but strategic progress toward a political solution is nonexistent. Successive administrations from Bush to Obama to Trump, and as of writing, Biden, have singularly failed to articulate an achievable political end state for the conflict in Afghanistan and resource the mission accordingly. The administrations have either articulated vague goals akin to a Jeffersonian democracy in Afghanistan, or something attainable such as the defeat of al-Qa'ida and the denial of the country as a base for ...

At no point in *Eagle Down* does the political leadership (American or Afghan), or anyone for that matter, articulate a political end state to Washington's involvement and commitment to Kabul. War is, as is so often said, a continuation of politics by other means and necessitates a political end. Yet, 20 years into the conflict any viable political solution that is achievable by kinetic means remains unarticulated. Tactical progress can and is made, operational progress is haltingly made, but strategic progress toward a political solution is nonexistent. Successive administrations from Bush to Obama to Trump, and as of writing, Biden, have singularly failed to articulate an achievable political end state for the conflict in Afghanistan and resource the mission accordingly. The administrations have either articulated vague goals akin to a Jeffersonian democracy in Afghanistan, or something attainable such as the defeat of al-Qa'ida and the denial of the country as a base for ...

P3

By Wayne Mapp

## Two Decades in Afghanistan: Was it Worth it?

It was 6am on September 12, 2001, when my phone rang and Gerry Brownlee said "turn on the TV, the U.S. is under attack". The Twin Towers had fallen. Later that morning we talked about what it meant. Was it like Pearl Harbour? We decided no, in these circumstances, international terrorists could not start a world war. But we knew the world had changed. New Zealand would have to stand with its traditional allies and partners.

Later that day, there was a special debate in Parliament led by the deputy prime minister, Jim Anderton, standing in for prime minister Helen Clark who was overseas. When Jim Anderton said, "New Zealand will stand with other democratic nations to do whatever is necessary to prevent and remove ... the devastating scourge of terrorism," I knew that New Zealand would be going to war. Afghanistan was the base of the Al Qaeda terrorists who

had struck the United States. The SAS were the first soldiers to go to Afghanistan. They were deployed in December 2001, a few days prior to the formal United Nations authorisation of force. Over the next decade, the SAS were deployed to Afghanistan three times. Two of them lost their lives in 2011. Corporal Apiata was awarded the Victoria Cross for rescuing a severely wounded comrade and carrying him to safety through intense machine gun and rocket fire.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was deployed to Bamyan Province in September 2003 and left in 2013 after 21 rotations. Over 3000 New Zealanders served in the PRT during the 10 years it was in Bamyan. In one terrible 10-day period in August 2012, five members of the PRT were killed. Over the 20 years, 10 New Zealand service people lost their lives in Afghanistan and many more were wounded.

Many have asked, was it all worth it?

As Minister of Defence between 2008 and 2011, I visited Afghanistan twice. I also recommended to Cabinet that the SAS should be deployed for their third deployment to help secure Kabul and to protect the PRT. The Operation Burnham Inquiry was held into how the largest SAS operation, intended to protect the PRT, was carried out, and how it was reported back to New Zealand, including the responsibility of myself as minister.

On my visits to Bamyan, I saw an impressive level of progress. Schools and health clinics had been built throughout the province. The provincial capital, Bamian, had a new hospital and polytechnic. The major centres were linked by new sealed highways and there was a new solar electric system. Elections were held. The lives of the people of Bamyan were hugely improved. But material prosperity was not a ...

P3

## At Least 90 Afghans in Tajikistan Jails: Envoy



At least 90 out of 6,500 Afghan refugees in Tajikistan have been jailed on criminal charges and drug trafficking, Afghanistan's ambassador Zahir Aghbar said.

Talking to TOLONews this week, Aghbar said Tajikistan has grave concerns about reports of security threats on the borders between the two countries.

He said there are no obstacles for Afghans to get an education.

"Fortunately, over the past few years, some of them were exchanged and handed over to the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," Aghbar said. "There is no restriction in way of our migrants in Tajikistan to work," said Aghbar.

Some Afghans refugees expressed their satisfaction over their living condition in Tajikistan, but they hoped that peace will be established in the country.

Siros Majidi, 18, said he eight years old when he went to Tajikistan. He said security threats forced his family to leave Afghanistan.

"We came here because here we feel safe," said Siros.

Mohammad Rashid, an Afghan refugee, said he is in Tajikistan for the last four years, adding that he wants to migrate to Canada despite his love for his own country.

"Some people get depressed for being far from their own country," Rashid said.



# APTTA Trade Pact Extended for Three Months

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) was extended for three months, allowing the two neighboring countries to further discuss proposed amendments in the document and sign its revised version, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce said. The agreement that was signed in 2010 was expired in February. The decision to extend the agreement is aimed at preventing any disruption in trade and transit affairs between the two countries, said Fawad Ahmadi, spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. He said this will buy time for the two countries to further discuss the proposed amendments in the agreement.

“Work on technical issues of the agreement is underway by representatives of the two countries and it will be signed in compliance with World Trade Organization’s principles,” Ahmadi said. Afghanistan’s free trade to India via Pakistan and Pakistan’s cargo transit to Central Asia through Afghanistan is one of the five major issues that need to be revised in the APTTA. But the countries have not come up with an agreement on the amended issues after months of discussions. Naqibullah Safi, the CEO of Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the agreement should be signed within the next three months. Afghanistan Chambers Federation said the agreement has not proved



effective for Afghanistan and instead it has reduced Afghanistan’s exports. “Overwhelming challenges will remain if basic changes are not applied in the APTTA agreement and if the last decade’s problems in the trade affairs are not addressed,” said Khan Jan Alokozai, the deputy head of Afghanistan Chambers Federation.

The APTTA agreement was signed in 2010 between Afghanistan and Pakistan governments by the United States mediation. However, Afghanistan’s private sector continues to raise its concerns about the closure of trade and transit routes by Pakistan more than a dozen times in the last 10 years.

### Two Decades in...

sufficient inducement for everyone. The Taliban insurgency became worse and worse, resulting in the death of eight members of the PRT between 2010 and 2012. The 50 nations who committed forces to Afghanistan essentially forgot why they went in the first place. Jim Anderton had identified the key issue on the day of the attacks on the United States, which was to defeat terrorism. Instead, the goal became to build Afghanistan into a modern state, on the basis this was the best way to defeat terrorism in the long run, that the terrorists would find no safe haven in Afghanistan. It was a laudable goal. However, the last two decades have shown it is not possible to impose a new style of state upon a people without their virtually universal consent. Yes, the material lives of the people of Afghanistan have been substantially improved, with hundreds of billions spent on infrastructure and improved social systems. Yes, there is a democracy of a sort. However, a substantial minority of the Afghan people have always wanted us gone and have fought for many years to send the international forces home. New Zealand forces are leaving Afghanistan, as will most of the other international forces over the next 18 months. The original intention of ensuring Afghanistan is not a safe haven for international terrorists has largely been achieved for the time being. In the recent peace agreements, the Taliban has accepted the importance of keeping Afghanistan free from international terrorists. However, the real proof will emerge over the next decade. Only then will we know if Afghanistan has been able to resolve its internal differences, and whether the wider world will be able to think about Afghanistan without a sense of anxiety.

### India Committed...

external affairs Minister S Jaishankar said. He was addressing the ‘Chabahar Day’ celebration yesterday hosted by India on the margins of the ‘Maritime India Summit’ to showcase the business potential of the strategic port located in Iran. Senior ministers from Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Uzbekistan virtually participated in it.

### The Last Special...

terrorist operations, but then hamstrung the mission by competing mission-sets: i.e. Iraq. At one point in the book one of the Special Forces officers, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, suggests that the United States merely buy off the warlords and tribal leaders to ensure their quiescence and support for the government in Kabul. That is as close as one gets to a political end state throughout the book. At one point the author recounts a conversation in which President Trump’s national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, questions another staff member asking, “What, you don’t like winning?” Yet, what “winning” looks like remains unarticulated, even during his tenure. The tragedy is not limited to the soldiers themselves, as through a series of catastrophic missteps and failures, a Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Kunduz was struck by an AC-130 gunship supporting an ODA attempting to recapture the city. Ms. Donati deftly explores the incident, its impact on both the MSF doctors and their Afghan colleagues, and the ODA ground force commander who was relieved of command for the incident, but later brought back to aid the campaign. ABSENT PARTNERS & HALF-MEASURES The complete and utter absence of the government of Afghanistan is readily apparent on every page. While the Special Forces teams are embedded with Afghan commandos, their utility is limited, the efficiency and effectiveness wanting, and their value questionable. At best they were an obstacle to progress and at worst they were treacherous green-on-blue attackers. In the events described by Ms. Donati, the civilian authorities of Afghanistan were nowhere to be found. There was no follow-on action in any of the cities retaken by the Special Forces teams, no development in the provinces, and no commitment by Kabul to the long-term stability of these regions. The Special Forces

teams were temporary band-aids to a strategic wound—they could staunch the bleeding, but could not heal the injury. Special Forces are, much like covert action, not a solution to the absence of a comprehensive strategy. The ODAs and their counterparts are highly effective and efficient tools for narrow mission sets: direct action, foreign internal defense, counterterrorism, etc... They can do many things exceptionally well, but they cannot overcome the absence of a strategy or clearly defined political goals. Yet, out of political expediency, these units have become the tip of not only the military spear, but the foreign policy spear as well, and this is a dangerous trend. In the absence of a strategic appreciation of the situation on the ground and what is possible, without the mobilization of all elements of American power, and with an increasingly wary public, the White House and Pentagon have shifted to more clandestine capabilities such as the Special Forces. Smaller footprints with opaque mission sets and little public oversight (by Congress or the media) are a half solution to a full problem. Rather than define an achievable end state, communicate it to the American people and Congress, resource it accordingly, and mobilize all elements of national power, Special Forces ODAs were left fighting fires while Washington failed to stop the arsonists or change the building codes. Ms. Donati follows the diplomatic course of the late stages of the conflict as Washington sat down with Taliban representatives in Doha and Qatar and eventually signed an agreement to withdraw U.S. forces from the country in exchange for Taliban guarantees. The efficacy of the deal, which is in implementation stages now, remains to be seen. It is unlikely that the Taliban will live up to their agreements to recognize the government in Kabul, end their support of al-Qa’ida or reduce violence. Kabul, for its part, remains riven by politics and corruption


and is unable to provide even a modicum of public service to the people of Afghanistan. The progress and improvement in the daily lives of many Afghans made at great cost in blood and treasure is far from solidified. THE HOME FRONT & PAIN OF RECOVERY Ms. Donati also offers readers a much needed and exceptionally compassionate look into the home front and human toll of America’s longest war, treating the wounded and killed and their families with honor and respect. Ms. Donati follows Caleb through his severe injury in an explosion while on operation through to his recovery at home, including the madness that is the government’s medical and health care bureaucracy. She follows Hutch, the ground force commander in the MSF incident through his command dismissal, investigation, and eventual return to Afghanistan after evidence supporting his account of events was discovered. She also follows the families at home as they attempt to navigate the absence of boyfriends, fathers, and husbands on deployment and, tragically, when they are lost in combat. Ms. Donati’s conduct towards the families is warm and respectful, treating their pain neither as journalistic convenience nor as a bridge to some broader commentary. It is real and it is important that Americans read their stories. Eagle Down is a gripping story of a war most Americans had thought was over or had wrongly forgotten about entirely. It is an exploration of what happens when political and policy failures meet the realities of modern conflict, and when those on the ground are charged with attempting to overcome these shortfalls. It is a story of the consequences of these failings both for those fighting the war and those at home. Ms. Donati’s book is another reminder, after 20 years at war, Americans—civilians and service members alike—should expect and demand more of their leadership, anything less is unworthy of the sacrifice of those who took the oath and serve their country.

### Exchange Rates


|       |     |       |
|-------|-----|-------|
| 77.4  | \$  | 77.5  |
| 92.2  | €   | 92.3  |
| 106.1 | £   | 106.2 |
| 485   | Rp. | 486   |
| 20.9  | ₹   | 21    |
| 1055  | ₹   | 1065  |

### Contact Numbers

- Kabul Police - 119
- Kabul Ambulance - 112
- Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital  
0202301360
- Ata Turk Hospital  
0202500312
- Corona call center - 166



**Aksos**  
اکسوس کتابپلورنگی  
**Aksos Book Store**



Add a Book  
to  
Your Life

Dehbori Crossroads in front of Park Kabul  
0798 98 9696, 020 250 46 52  
aksosbookstore@gmail.com  
www.aksosbookstore.af  
Aksos Book Store  
Aksos Book Store



**WAYGAL Printing Co.**

**If You Can Think It, We Can Ink It.**

**OFFSET PRINTING**

- Logo Design
- Business Card
- Books
- Letterheads
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- File Folders
- Brochure
- Flyers
- Calendars
- Posters
- other...

+93 (0) 704 734 984  
+93 (0) 782 98 9696  
+93 (0) 202512626  
Dehbori Crossroads in Front of Park Kabul  
waygalprinting.co@gmail.com

## Heart of Asia

**Chief Editor: M. Hamid Hamdard**  
**Reporters: Safiullah Nasary, Shafiq Amirzay, Jawad Temori & Hameedullah Hamidi**  
**Graphic & Design: Arman**  
**Phone: +93-202502100 - +93-777989696**  
**Website: www.heartofasia.af**  
**Email: heartofasiadaily@gmail.com**  
**Address: Behind Rahman Baba High School - Opposite to 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Kabul - Afghanistan**  
**Print: Waygal Printing .Co - +93 - 202512626**



# Libya's Premier-Designate Names 27-Member Unity Gov't

Libya's Prime Minister-designate Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh has proposed a unity government of 27 members, his office said on Saturday. The government lineup will be debated by the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (parliament) on Monday. "The government's priorities will include improving services, unifying state institutions and ending the transitional period by holding elections," Dbeibeh's office said in a statement. The statement added that the

House of Representatives will convene on Monday in the coastal city of Sirte for a vote of confidence on the Cabinet lineup. On Feb. 5, Libya's rival political groups agreed during UN-mediated talks to form an interim unity government to lead the country to elections this December in which Dbeibeh was designated as prime minister and to form a new government. Libya has been torn by civil war since the ouster of late ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.



### A look at the world

#### Biden's \$1.9 Trillion COVID Aid Bill Stalls in U.S. Senate

U.S. Senate Democrats' effort to advance President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 aid bill stalled on Friday as senators jostled over how long to extend enhanced unemployment benefits and how much to offer during the pandemic. After the Senate defeated a last-ditch attempt by some of Biden's fellow Democrats to raise the federal minimum wage, work on his first major legislative package ground to a halt for hours as senators met behind closed doors to find a way forward. "We're completely stalled out," number-two Senate Republican John Thune told reporters. Unemployment compensation was the focus, although it was just one of many battles ahead on the sweeping bill, as the Senate braced to deal with dozens of amendments and a debate likely to extend into the weekend.



The legislation calls for providing \$400 per week in federal jobless benefits through August to help Americans who have lost jobs amid the pandemic. Liberal and moderate senators agreed on a compromise that would set the federal benefit at \$300 per week, on top of existing state benefits, through September. Republican Senator Rob Portman is advocating a competing plan with the support of business groups that would put the benefit at \$300, but only through mid-July. Moderate Democratic Senator Joe Manchin, a pivotal vote in the closely divided Senate, had been pushing to lower the benefit from the bill's present \$400. Republicans said Manchin was being pressured by Democrats to stick with their compromise and not support Portman's plan. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said the delay in the Senate was "to break somebody's political arm" and that Biden's promise of bipartisanship was ringing hollow. "To President Biden: Is this the new way of doing business?" Graham said to reporters. Senator Dick Durbin, the chamber's number-two Democrat, told reporters there were efforts under way to find "some common ground" between the Democratic and Republican proposals. ... **P2**

#### China, India Agree to Achieve Peace, Tranquility in Border Region



Officials from China and India on Friday agreed to achieve peace and tranquility in the border region and bring bilateral relations back on the right track. In the meeting between Chinese vice foreign minister Luo Zhaohui and Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri, the two sides also agreed to adhere to the important consensus reached by their leaders and grasp the general direction of China-India relation. "The two sides agree to maintain the momentum of diplomatic and military consultations, achieve peace and tranquility in the border region and put bilateral relations back on the right track," Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the officials' meeting. China and India have finished a tenth round of corps commander level meeting in late February and had "candid and in-depth exchange of views" on other issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector. Meanwhile, a "smooth completion" of the disengagement of the two countries' frontline troops in the Bangong Lake area was completed in February, China's Defense Ministry said last month. Days after the conclusion of the 10th round of military talks, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for a "right path" of mutual trust and cooperation between China and India in a phone call with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Wang said the two countries need to handle their border issues appropriately to prevent bilateral ties from being trapped in a vicious cycle.

#### Pakistani Premier Wins' Vote of Confidence in Parliament

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday won the vote of confidence in the lower house of the parliament. Khan won 178 votes in the 341-seat National Assembly, well above the 172 votes he needed to survive. Announcing the results, Speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser said Khan has secured 178 votes, more than those garnered in the 2018 general election. "178 votes recorded in favor of resolution and Imran Khan, prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has obtained vote of confidence," Qaiser said. On Wednesday, Khan announced to seek a vote of confidence from the parliament after his party's unexpected defeat on a key Senate,



upper house, seat from the capital Islamabad. Yousaf Raza Gilani, a joint candidate of the opposition alliance, won the seat in an embarrassing upset. The ruling party candidate, Hafeez Shaikh, lost despite having majority in the National Assembly -- which indicates the prime minister's own aides voted for the opposition candidate. Members of the National Assembly choose senators from Islamabad for a period of six years in a secret ballot. The 11-party opposition alliance, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), boycotted the vote. Later addressing the National Assembly, Prime Minister Khan thanked his party members and allies for the vote and accused the opposition of "buying" Senate seats. "The opposition tried to blackmail me to get concession in their corruption cases but I will never come under any pressure," Khan said. A number of leading opposition leaders are jailed or embroiled in lengthy corruption cases as part of Khan's election promise of "bringing back looted money to the country." He urged the election commission to investigate the unlawful exchange of money in the recent Senate election. "The last two-and-a-half years were the ... **P2**



# Shigal

English Academy

## AMERICAN ENGLISH FILE



Western Street of  
Kabul University Close to  
Dehbori Park.



+93 (0) 789 98 9696



shigal.edu@gmail.com



Shigal English Academy