Millions on brink of famine in Africa and Afghanistan, UN warns

MILLIONS are on the brink of famine in parts of Africa and Afghanistan as the rest of the world turns its back to focus on domestic responses to Covid, the UN and aid agencies warn.

The UN estimates that 41 million people will be on the edge of famine by the end of this month, facing starvation without emergency food assistance. Its World Food Program has launched a $5 (£3.6) billion appeal to support what it is calling the "biggest operation in its history".

Christian Aid has also launched an emergency appeal, focusing on South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia — particularly Tigray, Nigeria, and Afghanistan.

In South Sudan, 60 per cent to the country's population are struggling to get enough to eat, and 82 per cent are living in extreme poverty. Conflict is continuing in the country, despite a power-sharing deal in 2018 aimed at restoring peace.

The catastrophic food shortage in parts of Africa and Afghanistan has been worsened by Covid, but it is largely caused by ongoing conflicts, as well as the impact of climate change, the head of the humanitarian division at Christian Aid, Michael Mosselmans, said.

"So many people are suffering severe hunger in so many countries that we are operating in, how much we are going to be able to help depends on how generous our supporters and partners can be. The Covid situation is having a severe economic impact as well as a health impact."

South Sudan has suffered a 59-per-cent cut in aid since the UK Government reneged on its target of 0.7 per cent of GDP for overseas aid, citing the cost of Covid recovery.

Mosselmans said that the cuts were "disappointing and depressing", and that the G7 had also failed to "do what was needed, on Covid vaccines and on tackling hunger". The hunger crisis was being largely ignored as countries focused on their own response to Covid, he said. Funds raised from the Christian Aid appeal will pay for increased food and cash distributions, and nutritional support — especially to children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women, as well as access to water for drinking and for agriculture and livestock, and support for start-up businesses.

Analysis from Save the Children last month has found that Britain is to spend 80 per cent less on feeding children in poorer countries than before the pandemic. Tens of thousands of children will be at risk of starvation as a result, the analysis concludes. The World Food Program 2021 Global Report on Food Crisis finds that 135 million people around the world are in need of support, the highest figure in the report's five-year history. **The Kabul Times**

The regional threat of civil war in Afghanistan

From P3

Road Initiative (BRI) requiring peace in Central Asia for the success of the massive infrastructure and trade project, which runs from China's Pacific coast to the Indian Ocean and to the Mediterranean Sea.

China's leverage over these countries is considerable. But even if China can create a modus vivendi between President Ghani and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, it does not settle the deeper problems, such as the military weakness of Ghani's government.

Second, based on these governments' cooperation in the counter-terrorism process, the foreign ministers agreed jointly to tackle terrorist outfits that operate in Afghanistan and in its neighboring countries, such as the Turkistan Islamic Party or East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), ISIS, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Pakistan's government is troubled by the operations of the TTP, which operates along the borders of the two countries but is based in Afghanistan's Paktika province. China, meanwhile, is very concerned about ETIM, which operates in Afghanistan and Tajikistan and has been trying to destabilize the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

ETIM has close ties with the Taliban, which – while they have held discussions with the Chinese – understand that their use of ETIM gives them leverage against China.

Whether or not these three governments will actually be able to weaken these terrorist groups, incubated by the Taliban, is unclear.

Tangled web

It now seems impossible for the United States to remain in Afghanistan formally. There is simply no political will for the troops to remain in the country, even as the US will keep paramilitary and mercenary forces in Afghanistan.

Given the heightened US pressure on China, however, there is plenty of evidence that Washington is not unhappy with the possibility of instability that will come to the heart of Asia after the summer of 2021.

In 2003, the US designated ETIM as a terrorist group, but it removed it from that list in 2020. This is clear evidence of the US motives to destabilize China's Xinjiang province.

The Pakistani intelligence official suggests that if the Taliban take Kabul, groups such as the TTP and ETIM will be emboldened to conduct attacks in Pakistan and China respectively. These groups, he tells me, will fight alongside the Taliban to weaken Kabul's hold and to use the countryside to launch these attacks; there is no necessity for the Taliban actually to take control of Kabul.

The question that remains is whether or not the Taliban can be divided. The group is a tangle of Afghan nationalism and patriotism as well as various forms of political Islam.

There are elements in the Taliban that are far more nationalistic and patriotic than they are committed to the Islamist currents. Attempts to peel the "moderates" away from the more hardcore sections have largely failed, which has been evident since at least former US president Barack Obama's failed plea to the "moderate Taliban" in 2009.

There is simply not sufficient strength in Afghanistan's society to resist the spread of the Taliban. Nor is there an organized capacity of Afghan citizens present yet to build a new bloc against both the failed US-backed governments (from Hamid Karzai to Ghani) and the Taliban.

But if Afghanistan's neighbors cut off their support to the Taliban, and if they are able to deepen an economic project (such as the BRI), then there is the possibility for this new bloc to emerge eventually. That is why dialogue among Afghanistan, China and Pakistan is central. It might, in fact, be more important in the long run than the conversations with the Taliban.

This article was produced by Globetrotter, which provided it to Asia Times. Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter. He is the chief editor of Left-Word Books and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. He is a senior non-resident fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China. He has written more than 20 books, including The Darker Nations and The Poorer Nations. His latest book is Washington Bullets, with an introduction by Evo Morales Ayma.

Cultural Room opened at Afghan Embassy in Beijing

From P1

countries in China, the mentality and perception of Afghanistan, the mentality and perception of war and other disorders are different," Javid Qaem said.

"We decided to change this negative thought and introduce to the Chinese people the authentic culture of Afghanistan, the great cultural heritage of Afghanistan, which includes the Buddhist era."

The ambassador added that the cultural room paid special attention to the historical relations between Afghanistan and China and displayed documents and photographs that reflect these historical relations.

"For example, Ahmad Shah Baba had sent some horses as gifts to the then Chinese King in a way of good omin," he added.

The historical course of relations between the two countries was shown in the form of pictures.

Photographs of the historical struggles and deeds of the Afghan people have also been displayed.

A section of the Cultural Room has also been dedicated to writers, poets, scientists and other known Afghan personalities and their works.

Paintings representing the art of painting in Afghanistan as well as Afghan gemstones such as Raham and Lapis Lazuli have also been displayed. Afghanistan's national clothing and handicrafts sector displayed at event drew attention.

The Cultural House also has a small cinema where films about Afghanistan are shown. Javid Qaem added that the Cultural Room will be permanently open and will focus more on regular visits by students from various Chinese universities, schoolchildren and others to get known about the Afghan culture from near. The ambassador said a number of Afghan businessmen living in China have also helped build the Cultural Room and donated art pieces to it. **The Kabul Times**

World knows what Pakistan has brought to Afghanistan: India

From P1

The spokesperson also referred to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's statement on Afghanistan at the UN Security Council, noting that it laid out India's concern at the upsurge in violence as well as its vision for the future of that country.

In a virtual address at the UN Security Council on Tuesday, Jaishankar said the intra-Afghan talks have not resulted in a reduction of violence in Afghanistan and called for immediate dismantling of terrorist safe havens and sanctuaries for enduring peace in that country.

The minister said India continues to stand with Afghanistan in ensuring restoration of normalcy through a legitimate democratic process that is essential for the long-term stability of Afghanistan and the region.

The Taliban and the Afghan government are holding direct talks in the Qatari capital city Doha to end 19 years of war that has killed tens of thousands of people and ravaged various parts of the country. Qatar has been playing a role in the Afghan peace process.

"I understand that there has been a quiet visit by Indian officials...to speak with the Talibans. Why? Because not everybody is believing that the Taliban will dominate and take over, because Taliban is a key component of, or should be or is going to be a key component of the future of Afghanistan," said Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani, Qatar's envoy for counter-terrorism and conflict resolution.

He made the remarks while replying to a question during a virtual discussion on the theme "Looking towards peace in Afghanistan after the US-NATO withdrawal."

Recently, Jaishankar made two stop-overs in Doha during his visits to Kuwait and Kenya.

In his talks with senior Qatari leaders in Doha, the issue of Afghanistan was discussed as the Gulf country is involved in the Afghan peace process. Jaishankar also held talks on the issue with US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad in the Qatari capital.

The Kabul Times

US Senate Republican Leader seeks delay in Afghanistan withdrawal

From P1

In meeting with President Ghani at the Capitol, McConnell said he hopes President Biden will delay the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan.

"President Biden's decision to withdraw US forces leaves our Afghan partners alone to confront threats that his own top advisors acknowledge are grave and growing worse," McConnel said, according to a statement released by his office.

"The Taliban, emboldened by our retreat, is rolling back years of progress, especially for the rights of Afghan women, on its way to taking Kabul," he said, adding that "increasing indications that this collapse could come soon after US withdrawal is complete are as tragic as they are avoidable."

He said that in the Taliban's wake, al-Qaeda is already preparing for an ambitious resurgence of its own, which the President's own Defense Secretary warns could lead to direct threats to the US homeland in as little as two years.

"Without a reversal of US policy, I suspect this threat will come much more quickly," he said.

"President Ghani and the people of Afghanistan are entitled to wonder why the Biden Administration has chosen to abandon the fight and invite even greater terrorist threats," McConnell said. "They are right to expect answers about how the United States will honor its commitments to brave Afghans who have helped US forces, and how we will assist in mitigating the security and humanitarian fallout of a Taliban takeover.

McConnell said that he hopes the Biden Administration will delay the withdrawal, address these concerns, and reconsider its misguided retreat.

"As President Ghani and the Afghan people know, the threats we face from terrorism and tyranny have not been defeated," he concluded.

The Afghan delegation also met with US Senator Jim Risch, ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"I have deep reservations about the decision to withdraw all American forces from Afghanistan by September 11 without a plan to ensure critical counterterrorism operations can still take place – there are options in-between departing Afghanistan entirely or remaining there forever. I am concerned this decision severely hampers any chances of a negotiated peace, and puts our hard-fought counterterrorism gains at risk," Risch said.

He said that their discussion was useful but said that "it's unfortunate that we must discuss how to avoid a worse outcome in Afghanistan."

During his two-day official visit, the president also met with 'Friends of Afghanistan Group' at the Afghan Embassy in Washington DC. The meeting was attended by key former and incumbent US officials, diplomats and politicians, including Gen. Petraeus, Nicholson, Campbell and other dignitaries. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and other related issues, a statement from the presidential palace added.

The Kabul Times

Afghan Advertisement

Specific Procurement Notice

AA873

NCB

Procurement Entities	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock(MAIL/ EATS)
Funded By	Grant No.: TFOB3535/IDA Grant No. D7120/AF, World Bank
Item Description	Procurement of Improvement Works of Ghering Irrigation Scheme in Keti – Diakondi- Province
Ref. No	NPA/MAIL/1400/W-2733/NCB(AF/MAIL/EAT-214423-CW-RFB/B102)- Rebid
Bid Security	*A bid security shall be required* The amount and currency of the bid security shall be: 250,000 ***Afghani***. **Bid security** from a reputable bank from employer's country or bidder's country. If it is from bidder's country, it shall be confirmed by a corresponding bank in Afghanistan. In case of JV, the bid security should be issued on the name of the JV members. **The validity of the bid security shall be 118 days from the deadline for bid submission. Bids accompanies with bid security validity less than the mentioned above shall not be considered**
Deadline for Bid Submission	**28 July 2021 at 10:00 AM hrs (Local Kabul Time),** Electronic submission of Bid is not allowed. Late bid will be reject.
Address for Bid Submission	For **bid submission purposes** only, the Employer's address is: Attention: Bidding Facilitation Secretariat Bfs-npa@npa.gov.af Street Address: Secretary of Bid Opening, Deputy of Operation and Resources, National Procurement Authority(NPA); Administrative Office of the President(AOP), Pashtonistan Watt, Kabul- Afghanistan
Website	A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be obtained by interested bidders free of cost by downloading from the NPA website http://tenders.ageops.net Or may be obtained in a CD/Flash from the NPA office (Address given above). In case of any difficulty in downloading from website, interested bidders may contact at e-mail address pfd_d_01@npa.gov.af, hikmatullah.asad@npa.gov.af,