

## Taiwan President Calls for International Support to Defend Democracy

TAIPEI - Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen called on Saturday for international support to defend the self-ruled island's democracy and way of life in the face of renewed threats from China.

Tsai's comments came days after Chinese President Xi Jinping said nobody could change the fact that Taiwan was part of China, and that people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should seek "reunification". "We hope that the international community takes it seriously and can voice support and help us," Tsai told reporters in Taipei, referring to threats by China to use force to bring Taiwan under its control.



If the international community did not support a democratic country that was under threat, "we might have to ask which country might

be next?" Tsai added. Taiwan is China's most sensitive issue and is claimed by Beijing as its sacred territory. (Reuters)

### (1) Afghan, Indian...

efforts in Afghanistan in partnership with the Trump administration.

"Be it military supplies or the leadership role that India should take up in the region, Afghanistan has a wish list of what it wants India to do and help with," reported India Today.

Mohib was quoted as saying that Kabul should be able to ensure self-reliance in terms of security if the US troops pulled out of Afghanistan.

"The news leak of US troop withdrawal has in a way favoured Afghanistan. They (Afghans) are beginning to wake up to the fact that this bloated economy and aid will come to an end and so it is time to be self-dependent," a source told the daily.

India promised continued support for efforts by the government and people of Afghanistan to bring peace, security and prosperity to that country.

Doval said regional and international partners of Afghanistan needed to work in line with priorities, wishes and desires of the Afghan people.

India welcomed Afghanistan's faith in democratic governance and hoped the forthcoming presidential elections would further deepen the roots of democracy in the war-hit country.

Mohib invited Doval to visit Afghanistan. The invitation was accepted but dates will be firmed up through diplomatic channels. (Pajhwok)

### (2) WHO Director...

The newly developed package merges and updates the Basic Package of Health Services and the Essential Package of Hospital Services, and for the first time includes interventions for emergency trauma care and the prevention and provision of basic care for the most common chronic diseases.

Dr Feroz appreciated the continuing support from WHO and the international community, saying: "financing and implementation of this package will be a major step in addressing the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases and trauma. It is therefore essential that this package is sufficiently funded. We call for continued support of WHO and other international partners for technical and financial assistance".

Dr. Feroz also reemphasized the commitment for eradicating polio in Afghanistan. "Today, 90% districts of the country remain polio free. We had setbacks in the South and the East, but we are addressing those challenges by developing alternate strategies and implementing the new National Emergency Action Plan in 2019." Speaking with the Minister, Dr Tedros appreciated the extraordinary efforts the government of Afghanistan made in eradicating polio, saying that "Despite intense efforts, the current situation is not where we want it to be. We

recognize the unique challenges in polio eradication, and appreciate the initiatives and efforts of the government of Afghanistan in addressing the remaining challenges," Dr Tedros said. "At the same time as we work intensively to finish the job of polio eradication, WHO is committed to working with the government of Afghanistan to strengthen its health system on the road towards universal health coverage."

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari commended Afghanistan on the progress it has made in providing public health services over the past 15 years. "Due to a sustained focus on primary healthcare and smart investments in essential health packages, key health indicators have substantially improved. However, some indicators remain worrisome," WHO's Regional Director said. "It is good to note that the updated Integrated Package of Essential Health Services, being launched today, has an expanded scope and includes areas like non-communicable diseases and trauma care. WHO is fully committed to assisting the Government of Afghanistan in its implementation."

Dr Tedros and Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari plan to visit hospitals in Kabul later today to meet and interact with frontline medical workers and patients. They will witness first-hand the humanitarian health needs in Afghanistan and the assistance needed to develop the capacities of the local health system. (PR)

### (3) US Pullout...

Trump's point man on Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad assured the Taliban that the US would never abandon the Afghan government and that peace talks were therefore the only way to end the stalemate.

With no confirmation of the drawdown yet, a White House spokesman contradicted the reports on December 28, saying Trump had not ordered a pullout. The commander of US forces in Afghanistan has not yet received any marching orders.

However, the speculation has once again called into question the American leader's commitment to the 17-year-old war in Afghanistan.

In late 2001 American forces invaded Afghanistan to hunt for Osama bin Laden and aid the militias that had ousted the Taliban regime in enforcing security.

The American presence peaked in 2010, at more than 100,000 troops. But even then, The Economist said, America could not eradicate the Taliban insurgency.

As Afghan forces have formally been leading the war since 2014, the remaining US troops are mainly training their local partners, though a mini-surge allowed American advisers to be stationed on the frontline to provide more hands-on assistance.

"Even so, the Taliban and other insurgents are thought to have been killing perhaps 30-40 Afghan

soldiers and police a day in recent months. Many analysts wonder whether the Afghan army can sustain such punishing losses in the long run, let alone the higher casualties that would presumably follow if it lost American training and air support."

President Ashraf Ghani has dismissed concerns that security would plummet after an American pullout. But the insurgency is escalating. A recent oversight report found only 55% of the country's territory is under the government's control or influence. And the Afghan security services are 40,000 recruits, or 11%, below their target strength, the lowest level since 2012. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Second Candidate...

a full support from the people. "Based on my understanding from the people of Afghanistan, they (candidates) and Mr. (Ashraf) Ghani cannot compete with me," said Torsan.

Nader Shah Ahmadzai and Mohammad Shafi Qaisari registered as Torsan's running mates.

The presidential candidates' registration process was kicked off last week on Thursday, January 3.

"Right people will be assigned for the right jobs and employment opportunities will be provided for the people. In addition, in the first step I will try to fight against 'corrupt individuals, violators and spies," said Torsan.

The Independent Election Commission says at least 73 possible candidates, including President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, have received information packages from the commission.

The Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) meanwhile said votes will be divided among various candidates and none of them will be able to receive over 50 percent of votes if more candidates run for the elections.

"The presence of more candidates will cause the votes to be divided and that the elections ticket will be unable to complete 50+1 percent of the votes to win the elections. Unfortunately, this is an engineered move by government," said Naeem Ayubzada, CEO of FEFA.

The IEC officials meanwhile said a number of possible candidates have said they will register this week.

"It looks like (Mohammad Hanif) Atmar has almost completed his election team. Some other political and jihadi figures have promised to appear in the commission by the end of the week and register their names," said Abdul Aziz Ibrahim, the IEC deputy spokesman.

According to IEC, the candidates registration process will continue until January 20. (Tolo news)

### (5) Turkey to Host...

in mutual ties. "We do want to have a great relationship with Pakistan ... so, I look forward to meeting with the new leadership

## UN Envoy Arrives in Yemen to Push Hodeida Truce

SANAA - The UN envoy for Yemen arrived in the capital Sanaa on Saturday for talks to shore up a ceasefire in the country's lifeline port city of Hodeida, an AFP photographer said.

Martin Griffiths is scheduled to hold talks in Sanaa with Huthi rebel leaders and will later travel to the Saudi capital Riyadh to meet Yemeni government officials.

He will also meet in the rebel-held capital with retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert, who has been appointed by the UN to head the truce monitoring team.

Griffiths' visit comes as the ceasefire in Hodeida was generally holding, although there have been in-

termittent clashes with both sides blaming each other.

Yemen's government has written to the UN Security Council to accuse rebels of failing to comply with the ceasefire, while the rebels have accused the Saudi-led coalition of carrying out low-altitude flights over the city.

The United Nations is hoping to bring the warring sides together later this month, possibly in Kuwait, to follow up on the progress made at December's talks in Stockholm, diplomats have said.

The UN Security Council is expected to hear a report from Griffiths next week, but no date has been set for that meeting. (AFP)

in Pakistan. We will be doing that in the not too distant future."

Khan's two-day official meetings in Turkey ended Friday and it was his first visit to the country since taking power after the July elections in Pakistan. The two Muslim nations enjoy close relations.

Prime Minister Khan assured Turkey of his country's support to defeat Islamic State, saying the terrorist group "already has emerged in various parts of Afghanistan" and threatens the security of Pakistan. Erdogan also praised a recent ruling by Pakistan's supreme court, which declared exiled Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen's organization, FETO, a terrorist group. The highest Pakistani court also handed over schools being run by the outlawed organization in the country to a Turkish government foundation.

Turkey accuses Gulen of orchestrating a failed coup in 2016. (VoA)

### (6) Sources of Trump's...

Afghanistan and Syria — is really straining for causation here."

Trump's bizarre rant has been widely lampooned by American journalists and historians. On Friday, Trump's retelling of history was brought up by a US journalist with two experts, former FBI assistant director for counterintelligence Frank Figliuzzi and Gen. Barry McCaffrey (R).

McCaffrey called the presidential astonishing. "It sounds as if the talking points are written by the GRU... This is a truly astonishing, ignorant statement by the president."

American counterintelligence networks would like to know where Trump got his warped notions about the subject, Figliuzzi said, adding: "The counterintelligence side is going to take a look at why our president is siding with a communist regime..."

"There's another option, the president has deliberately chosen to regurgitate the Putin line, the Russian line on this, because he somehow needs to paint Russia in the most favorable light?" (Pajhwok)

### (7) Afghanistan...

the financial and administrative deputy minister of industry and commerce, said there is a high demand for Afghanistan pine nuts in the world markets.

Based on statistics by Ministry of Agriculture, Afghanistan's pine nuts products have reached 23,000 tons last year.

The ministry says Khost, Paktia and Paktika produce the highest amount of pine nuts in the country. (Tolo news)

### (8) NDS Special Forces...

The anti-government armed militant groups including Taliban have not commented regarding the operations and release of prisoners so far.

Helmand is among the relatively volatile provinces in South of Afghanistan where Taliban militants are actively operating in some of its districts and often attempt to carry out attacks against the gov-

ernment and security forces. (KP)

### (9) Herat Officials Call...

Habib Hashimi, member of the council.

Civil society activists in the province said increase in insecurity in Herat's districts will make Herat city vulnerable in terms of security.

Herat officials said military operations were launched in insecure areas of the province recently in which 35 Taliban fighters were killed and wounded, including seven key commanders who were killed in the operations.

Security forces will launch clearance operations in some districts of the province, said Herat governor's spokesman Jailani Farhad.

"We launched joint operations in vulnerable areas aimed at suppressing and eliminating disruptive elements from the area. The operations will continue in order address people's concerns," said Farhad.

This comes after two Afghan soldiers opened fire on foreign advisors in Herat last week. (Tolo news)

### (10) Militants' Overnight...

Taliban outfit over control of a security outpost in Spinboldak district left seven police personnel and 16 insurgents dead.

According to the statement, four security personnel and 11 insurgents were injured in the overnight firefight which lasted for a while. (Xinhua)

### (11) Government to Improve...

livelihood opportunities for the paramedics and allow refugees communities to benefit from their services.

The minister said, "We will ensure that refugees' health is reflected on the agenda of various thematic months."

United Nation Representative for Pakistan Ruvendrini Menikdiwela said UNHCR has been providing health assistance to refugees and their Pakistani host communities for around four decades. "In the past five years, we have contributed US\$ 38 million to support healthcare for both refugees and refugee-hosting communities," she said.

She said, "We will invest resources in the government's healthcare system to enhance quality and coverage of primary, secondary and tertiary care health services in districts hosting refugees," she said.

In addition to its regular healthcare programmes which includes a provision of health equipment to hospitals in refugee-hosting areas, the UNHCR has recently procured office equipment for the health ministry. (Monitoring Desk)

### (12) Taliban Kill...

in the ensuing clash lasting eight hours.

The remaining policemen retreated to the Kushanda district of northern Balkh province. Without going into details, he added the insurgents also suffered casualties. (Pajhwok)