

Main Netanyahu Challenger to Launch Election Bid

JERUSALEM - A former Israeli military chief regarded as the only serious challenger to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to formally launch his election campaign on Tuesday. Benny Gantz was to deliver a speech in Tel Aviv to "discuss all the issues at hand" and respond to claims made against him by political opponents, a source close to the retired general said. His party, Israel Resilience, is set to be the second largest in parliament in the

April 9 vote, according to a series of polls since its launch in December. The widely respected former military chief of staff, seen as a political centrist, has kept his cards close to his chest and made few public comments. In a rare remark, he committed to amend a contentious law defining Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people in order to accommodate its Druze minority, leading to Netanyahu calling him a "leftist". (AFP)

UN Rights Envoy at Saudi Consulate in Istanbul for Khashoggi

ISTANBUL — A United Nations human rights expert visited the vicinity of the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul Tuesday as part of an investigation into the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. She has yet to be allowed to enter the premises. Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard and her team of experts said they were waiting for permission from Saudi officials to go to the consulate and meet with Saudi authori-

ties in Istanbul. "We are respectfully calling on the authorities to give us access at some stage," she said with regard to her weeklong visit to Turkey. She said their request to enter the building had come "quite late" and that as a result "we need to give them a bit more time to process our request." Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist who wrote critically about

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, entered the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on Oct. 2 to obtain documents for his upcoming wedding. He was killed in what Turkish and U.S. officials have described as an elaborate plot. Also Tuesday, Callamard met with Istanbul's Chief Prosecutor Irfan Fidan who is heading the investigation. The team met with the country's foreign and justice ministers Monday. (AP)

Intel Announces Israel Expansion Government Values at \$10 Bn

JERUSALEM - Intel said Tuesday it is expanding its operations in Israel, where government ministers said the US computer chip-maker will invest some 10 billion dollars in a new plant. "Intel today announced it will submit a business plan to the government of Israel for continued investment in the company's Kiryat Gat manufacturing site," a

statement from Intel's Israeli representatives said. Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon said late Monday he was informed by Intel of their decision "to invest another 40 billion shekels, an unprecedented decision expected to bring thousands of jobs to the south." Economy Minister Eli Cohen said Intel had chosen to "build its

most advanced plant here in Israel." Last year, Intel had already decided on a \$5 billion upgrade to the site in Kiryat Gat, a small city in southern Israel. In 2017, Intel closed a \$15 billion deal to buy Israeli autonomous technology firm Mobileye, the country's biggest cross-border high-tech deal ever. (AFP)

Danish Minister Calls for EU-Wide Sanctions on Russia over Azov Sea

COPENHAGEN - Denmark's foreign minister called on Tuesday for European Union-wide sanctions on Russia over a stand-off with Ukraine in the Azov Sea. Anders Samuelsen will meet Ukraine's foreign minister, Pavlo Klimkin, on Tuesday and Wednesday and visit the city of Mariupol by the Azov sea, the foreign minister said in a statement.

"I believe the EU needs to react to Russia's aggressive behavior," Samuelsen said in the statement. The EU will issue a demarche - a formal diplomatic protest note - to Moscow as early as this week over Russia's continued detention of 24 Ukrainian sailors captured during the incident in November, diplomat sources told Reuters last week. (Reuters)

(1) Won't Stay in Afghanistan...

than necessary, Stoltenberg asserted. "But we will not leave before we have a situation which enables to leave or reduce the number of troops without jeopardising the main goal of our presence, and that is to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorists once again," he said.

To a question, he said it was a bit too early to speculate on the result of the negotiations. "We strongly support those efforts. Ambassador Khalilzad briefed all allies recently. We are in close contact with the United States. One of the issues we will discuss of course today is the peace efforts," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(2) Record Number of...

disability is more openly spoken about and Afghan authorities say addressing the issue is a priority. Still, prejudices and discrimination remain, as opportunities for social reintegration and jobs remain limited.

"The disabled population suffers from a lack of job, educational and rehab opportunities, resulting in a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem", said Cairo, who began working with the ICRC's rehabilitation programme the year it opened. "Nevertheless, they are not rejected by community and family. Still, they need more opportunities to re-start life."

The ICRC facilitates the reintegration of disabled people into their communities through vocational training, micro-loans to start small businesses, and sports programs like wheelchair basketball, futsal and recreational activities. The ICRC also trains and employs people with disabilities in its physical rehabilitation centres; almost all 750 staff are former patients trained and employed as physiotherapists, nurses, orthopaedic technicians, administrators and logisticians. "These centres have become facilities for disabled people managed by disabled people", Cairo said.

Although the situation in Afghanistan today causes immense suffering for civilians, thousands of disabled people have seen their lives improve as a result of the ICRC's physical rehabilitation programme.

"I cannot imagine how my life would be without the assistance of the ICRC. My life is difficult, very difficult, but the ICRC's Home Care Programme has made

it bearable. I feel that my family and I we are not forgotten", said Abdul Razaq, a 45-year-old paraplegic patient. ICRC patients have become disabled from landmines, explosive remnants of war and gunshot wounds. ICRC also assists people with congenital conditions, diseases and those injured in accidents.

About 1.5 million people of Afghanistan's estimated 33 million population have some kind of physical disability, according to a national survey in 2015. The ICRC started assisting disabled people in Kabul in 1988 by providing them with limb-fitting services and physiotherapy sessions to help them regain their mobility.

Today the ICRC runs seven physical rehabilitation centres: in Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad, Gulbarhar, Faizabad and Lashka Gah. (Agencies)

(3) US, Taliban...

in reaching agreement on some new arrangements for governing Afghanistan. And thirdly, will that agreement be implemented. I don't think the US can leave until all of that has been accomplished."

Dobbins was Ambassador to the European Union and is a senior fellow and distinguished chair in Diplomacy and Security at the RAND Corporation.

He also served during the Obama administration's as a special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"We started negotiating with the Taliban in 2010 but it's been very intermittent," said Dobbins.

"Largely because we kept insisting that the Taliban needed to also talk to the Afghan government and they have consistently refused to do so. If they continue to refuse to do so then this agreement won't mean anything either." (Tolo news)

(4) Atta Noor Urges...

important issues. There is a lot more work to be done before we can say we have succeeded in our efforts but I believe for the first time I can say that we have made significant progress," Khalilzad said.

Presidential Palace did not comment in this regard yet. (ATN)

(5) 300 Women...

the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology stated, "I appreciate WIG for recognizing me. I will put my efforts toward further improving my skills and one day hope to

take on a Director position".

In addition to honoring the internship graduates, USAID also acknowledged more than 40 government agencies that have supported the internship program through on-the-job training and employment.

The Promote Women's Empowerment Program is comprised of four activities that are designed specifically for Afghan women. The activities include leadership development, government employment, economic participation, and civil society advocacy. To date, Promote has supported over 50,000 Afghan women in more than 30 provinces nationwide. (Pajhwok)

(6) Khalilzad Briefs...

the previous ones.

"We made progress on vital issues in our discussions and agreed in principle on a couple of very important issue," he claimed.

The US envoy said: "There is a lot more work to be done before we can say we have succeeded in our efforts, but I believe for the first time I can say that we have made significant progress." (Pajhwok)

(7) Russia's Envoy...

to sit down at the negotiating table with the official delegation from Kabul have failed despite the strong pressure exerted on the Taliban movement by the Americans, several Gulf States and Pakistan," Zakharova said at her weekly briefing last week, according to the text of the briefing posted online.

"Therefore, it is clearly premature to talk about the results of the US unilateral effort to launch the peace process in Afghanistan, which reaffirms the need to find a collective solution that would take into account the interests of all the neighbouring countries and main partners of Afghanistan," she said.

Russia also intends to continue holding Moscow meetings together with its partners and look forward to the United States actively joining them as a full participant, to facilitate the early start of a peaceful dialogue between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban movement, she added.

"We remain confident that the Moscow format is optimal for consultations on Afghanistan. During the most recent meeting the participants achieved greater success than the United States alone," she further said. (Tolo news)

(8) Taliban...

Later on, he was appointed as police chief for Kunar.

According to the source, Najmuddin joined the Taliban after he was sacked from his position. Subsequently, he started anti-government activities.

A resident of the area, who did not want to be named, told Pajhwok Najmuddin had recently joined the Islamic State, also known as Daesh. (Pajhwok)

(9) Italy Preparing...

the Afghan conflict have gained momentum in recent weeks. Last week, US and Taliban representatives held a series of meetings in Doha on ending the war. (Pajhwok)

(10) T20 World...

Australia will take on India at Sydney Showground Stadium on February 21. The women's tournament will also feature double-header semi-finals at SCG on March 5.

In the men's edition, the tournament will start off with a week-long qualifying stage, following which the Super 12 group stage will get underway on October 24.

For the Super 12, Australia, Pakistan, West Indies, New Zealand and two qualifiers will make the first group. The second group will be composed of India, South Africa, England, Afghanistan and two qualifiers.

ICC chief executive David Richardson hoped Australia putting up a great show in hosting the two events. "Whenever we host an event in Australia, we know we can guarantee the one billion cricket fans around the world a great show..."

He praised Australian players, outstanding venues and passionate fans. "This is the perfect combination for a T20 World Cup and in 2020 we go one step further with two T20 World Cups in one year." (Pajhwok)

(11) Cricket Changed...

Like the meteoric rise of Afghanistan as a force in the sport, Khan was ranked No.1 in the MRF Tyres T20I Bowlers' rankings, No.1 in ODI all-rounders' charts and No.2 in the ODI bowlers' rankings.

He has been in demand for various T20 franchises the world over. The side-effect is that he spends a long time away from home every year. It can be hard, but he gets by with good support from the family.

"They are just watching it, it doesn't matter whatever the time

is back home in Afghanistan," he said. "Everyone gets together and watches in one room. It feels really good and special, having good support from the family. They just keep following me.

"When I was playing in the West Indies and the time difference was too much - matches were starting at 3am in Afghanistan - my mom was waking up and watching my game and praying for me. That is really special for me.

"Before the game, she was telling me not to worry, just go there and enjoy yourself. Our support is with you. That gives you a lot of energy and motivation. It's needed as a player." (Pajhwok)

(12) First Positive...

makes them more susceptible to the virus.

Polio vaccination has also been strongly endorsed by national and global Islamic scholars.

Currently, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria are the only three remaining polio-endemic countries in the world. There were 21 cases reported in Afghanistan in 2018. Of these, 15 cases were in the Southern region, while 6 cases were in the Eastern region. There is a polio vaccination campaign carried out in the Southern and Eastern Regions of Afghanistan, parents should ensure their children are hom and available to be vaccinated. (Pajhwok)

(13) Torkham Border...

other officials and arrangements to ensure 24/7 crossing may take another six months.

PM Khan tweeted: "I have tasked relevant government stakeholders to make necessary arrangements for the Torkham border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan to remain open 24/7 within the next six months."

A task force will be set up to ensure completion of related work within next six to 12 months. "It was a good suggestion and all the stakeholders including those from the defence wholeheartedly supported and endorsed it," Arbab said.

The volume of Pakistan-Afghanistan trade slipped to \$1.5 billion from an all-time high of \$2 billion after the diversion of transit trade to the Iranian port of Chabahar.

But the advisor told Dawn: "We expect the volume of trade will rise to \$3.5 billion if we are able to commission round-the-clock trade with Afghanistan." (Pajhwok)