

## International

# Recognize the Taliban? World powers face Afghan dilemma

## World powers open up channels of communication

**PARIS:** The international community faces a growing dilemma over whether to recognize the Taliban as the rulers of Afghanistan, weighing distaste on the vision of the Islamist group with the need for stability. Since the August 15 takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, which dislodged the pro-Western government, world powers have opened up channels of communication with the group but made clear this does not mean recognition.

The Taliban themselves have begun to indicate impatience on the issue of recognition, which would allow its officials to represent the country in international organizations, funds to be unblocked for the cash-starved economy. The debate burst into the open at the UN General Assembly where the Taliban have asked to speak on behalf of Afghanistan, but the ambassador of the former ousted government claims to represent his country. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas rejected the demand of Afghanistan's new rulers, saying a Taliban "show" would serve no purpose and "concrete deeds" were needed.

"At some point, the Taliban will have to make a choice between money and normalization, or absolute isolation," added a European diplomat, who asked not to be named. "We will see if it works. As of now, it is not working." Even countries far less troubled than the West by the ousting of the former government, or even supportive of the Taliban, have been in no rush to recognize Kabul's new rulers. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the

Taliban needed to be more sensitive and take account of international opinion, an attitude shared by Qatar, which has long served as a mediator.

Even China, which has expressed a willingness to work with the Taliban and could scent an advantage by being among the first to recognize them, has yet to do so. Western countries are alarmed that the first weeks of Taliban rule have not augured well for life under a group notorious for its brutal, oppressive rule from 1996 to 2001. There is particular concern for the rights of women and girls who have not yet been allowed back to school although the Taliban have vowed this will be "as soon as possible".

### 'Camouflage powerlessness'

But after its "painful defeat" in Afghanistan, the West is in no position to dictate conditions, said Markus Kaim, Senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "Western statements about how many levers they have on the Taliban and how effective they are only camouflage their own powerlessness and perpetuate the imperial hubris that has been part of the problem in Afghanistan," he said.

The West, however, is not without tools to put pressure on Kabul. Many Afghan bank accounts held abroad have been frozen. And from August 18, the International Monetary Fund suspended disbursements to Afghanistan due to the "lack of clarity within the international community regarding recognition of a government".

The issue is all the more acute as the country



KABUL: A Taliban fighter stands guard along a street near the Zanaq Square in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

risks humanitarian disaster this winter - the Taliban themselves were surprised at their swift victory and key central functions of the Afghan state have still not been restored. Amina Khan, director for the centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, told AFP that the immediate priority for the Taliban was recognition by powers in its part of the world. "The Taliban are putting their bets more on regional countries, for development, aid and political recognition. They want to work with China,

Russia, Iran," she said.

She added that in contrast to the Taliban's previous spell in charge in the 1990s, there was now more strategic convergence among neighbors and nearby countries on the issue of recognition. "The region has an appetite to play a larger role in Afghanistan and engage with the Taliban," she said. But she added that the group will have to "deliver on their promises", notably pledges that Afghanistan will not become a base for forces hostile to neighboring countries. —AFP

## Facebook ordered to release anti-Rohingya content

**WASHINGTON:** A US judge has ordered Facebook to release records of accounts linked to government-backed violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar that it had shut down, the Wall Street Journal reported. In his ruling on Wednesday, Washington DC district court Magistrate Judge Zia Faruqui criticized the social media giant for refusing to provide the records to countries pursuing a case against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice, the Journal said. Facebook had resisted releasing the information on the grounds of US privacy law. But the judge ruled that the deleted posts would not be covered under the protections for users' personal communications.

"Locking away the requested content would be throwing away the opportunity to understand how disinformation begat genocide," Faruqui wrote in his ruling, as quoted by the Journal, saying Facebook "taking up the mantle of privacy rights is rich with irony." Facebook has been accused of being slow to respond to abusive posts portraying Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims in sub-human terms, helping to drum up support for a military crackdown that forced more than 740,000 of the stateless minority to flee the country in 2017. —AFP

## US special envoy to Haiti resigns, slams migrant deportations

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** The US special envoy to Haiti resigned yesterday two months after his appointment, denouncing the Biden administration's deportation of Haitian migrants from the US-Mexico border back to their poverty-stricken homeland. "I will not be associated with the United States inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees and illegal immigrants to Haiti," State Department envoy Daniel Foote said in a scathing letter of resignation. In the letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Foote described Haiti as a place where US diplomats "are confined to secure compounds because of the danger posed by armed gangs in control of daily life."

"Mired in poverty, hostage to the terror," Foote wrote, the Haitian population "simply cannot support the forced infusion of thousands of returned migrants lacking food, shelter, and money without additional, avoidable human tragedy." "More refugees will fuel further desperation and crime," he wrote. The resignation came after the administration of President Joe Biden began last weekend loading Haitian migrants who crossed into the country from Mexico onto aircraft and flying them back to Haiti. Many of

the thousands who crossed the border actually travelled from South America, where some said they fled to years ago from the grinding poverty and violence of Haiti.

### Thousands at the US border

Well over 10,000 migrants, the largest part of them Haitian, flowed into the Texas border city of Del Rio in recent weeks seeking to remain in the United States. Footage of the migrants, many of them families, massing under a highway bridge and moving back and forth to Mexico for food, have stunned America and sparked a fresh crisis over migrant policy.

Biden came under strong criticism after photographs and videos showed mounted Border Patrol officers using their horses to try and control the migrants, with some appearing to threaten migrants with their horses' long reins. That has led to calls from Biden's own Democratic party to give the Haitians asylum rather than fly them back to Haiti. On Wednesday Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said he was in talks with Brazil, Chile and other South American countries to send the migrants back to them. Tens of thousands of Haitians fled to South America after the massive 2010 earthquake wreaked heavy damage across the Caribbean nation. Foote said in his letter that Haiti needs more assistance and a democratically chosen government, after the July assassination of president Jovenel Moise. "What our Haitian friends really want, and need, is the opportunity to chart their own course, without international puppeteering and favored candidates but with genuine support for that course," he said. —AFP