

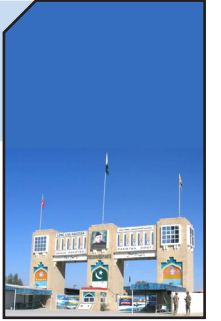


Page 2 | NATIONAL  
With Delay in Afghan Peace Talks, a Creeping Sense of 'Siege' Around Kabul

UK War Crime Revelations in Afghanistan Expose Justice Failings

A senior UK commander in 2011 feared a British military unit in Afghanistan had a "deliberate policy" of killing Afghan men, ...

Page 3 | ECONOMY  
China pushes Pakistan to open trade routes with Afghanistan



Kabul  
35 / 18



Herat  
37 / 24



Nangarhar  
39 / 28



Balkh  
40 / 27



# Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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## Afghan, Tajik presidents discuss ways to improve bilateral relations

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon have agreed that a working committee from Afghanistan will soon visit Tajikistan to explore ways to enhance further cooperation between the two countries. The decision was made during a telephone conversation on Saturday between the two presidents. They also discussed issues related to bilateral and multilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest and exchanged views on important areas of cooperation in the fields of economy and trade, energy, roads and transport, science and education, information and culture. In a statement issued by the Tajik president's office, Rahmon stated it was stressed that interstate cooperation is a foreign policy priority for both countries and that they are taking practical measures to further expand ... **P2**



## First Chinese doctor in Afghanistan's "Chinese hospital"

The Mirwais Regional Hospital in the city of Kandahar in Afghanistan was built by China in the 1970s, acquiring the moniker "Chinese hospital." It welcomed its first Chinese doctor in the summer of 2019. An Na, a Chinese gynecologist, went to work at the hospital in August 2019 as part of a foreign aid program run by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Besides being attached to the hospital's obstetrics and gynecology department, she helped train local medical staff. Working at a tertiary hospital in Beijing, An chose to become a foreign aid doctor in 2011. Before Afghanistan, she was stationed in several Asian and African countries, including Pakistan, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Ethiopia. The Mirwais Regional Hospital serves more than 5 million people in southern Afghanistan. "Working there, I have encountered many situations that I would not ever come across at home," An said. She once received a pregnant ... **P3**

# Pakistan, Afghanistan to hold key bilateral talks next week



Pakistani and Afghan officials will hold a wide range of talks early next week in Afghanistan's capital Kabul to review cooperation in various fields including security and trade, officials said. Both countries have agreed to hold the meeting of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), a bilateral mechanism of dialogue, on Aug. 31

after a break of more than a year, an official told Daily Times. The last meeting of APAPPS was held in Islamabad in June 2019. Tension in relations and the COVID-19 had delayed the physical meeting, the official, who wanted not to be identified by name, said. The APAPPS framework, which comprises five working groups focused on politico-diplomatic,

military-to-military coordination, intelligence cooperation, economy and refugee issues, is considered as the best forum to address each other's concerns and to enhance cooperation in various fields. The official said Pakistan and Afghanistan will also hold high level talks immediately after the APAPPS meeting to explore ways for increasing bilateral trade and removing hurdles

in transit trade. Both sides will also discuss amendments in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) that was signed in 1965 and revised in 2010. Afghanistan had invited the Adviser to Prime Minister of Pakistan for Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood for a visit that is also expected early next month to discuss ways to boost bilateral trade and remove problems in the Afghan transit trade, the official said. The Commerce Ministry had also sought suggestions from the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) its recommendations on behalf of the private sector prior to the expected government's delegation visit to Kabul, Zubair Motiwala, Chairman of the PAJCCI, says. Afghanistan had proposed some amendments in APTTA and Afghan officials say Pakistan has not opposed those proposals that will facilitate Afghan businessmen and also Pakistani exports to Central Asian states via Afghanistan. Sources said Pakistan is considering amendments proposed by Afghanistan in the APTTA. Pakistan has recently reopened its all major border points with ... **P3**

## Kuwait imposes temporary ban on arrivals from Afghanistan

Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced today (23 August) a temporary ban on those coming from Afghanistan to Kuwait until further notice. The move was taken at the direction of Kuwaiti healthy authorities, the DGCA said in a press statement. It added that the passengers arriving at Kuwait International Airport should obtain certificates of PCR valid for 96 hours, instead of 72 hours, from the date of taking the sample until the travel date. ... **P2**



## UAE Foreign Minister, Afghan counterpart discuss bilateral ties, regional developments

H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Mohammed Haneef Atmar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, have discussed strategic and cooperation relations between the two countries in various fields. This came during a telephone call, wherein the ministers exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments, issues of mutual interest, as well as reviewing efforts made to enhance stability, security and development in Afghanistan. Sheikh Abdullah, during the video call, congratulated Atmar on the occasion of the anniversary of his country's Independence Day, expressing his wishes for continued progress, prosperity,



security and stability for the Republic of Afghanistan and the Afghan people. The UAE Foreign Minister and his Afghan counterpart hailed the historical relations between the two countries and their leadership, noting the sincere desire of both sides to further consolidate cooperation between them.

They also reviewed the efforts of the two countries to contain the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, Sheikh Abdullah and Atmar noted the importance of cooperation between the two sides in advancing ongoing international efforts to find a vaccine for the virus. ... **P2**

### Afghan, Tajik...

relations.

"A constructive exchange of views was held on the active participation of both countries in the implementation of small and large regional and international projects in various fields, including energy and the implementation of the CASA-1000 project," read the statement.

"The issues related to strengthening cooperation in the field of security, strengthening the capacity of the state border, the fight against international terrorism and extremism, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking in the framework of bilateral, regional and international cooperation were also discussed during the telephone conversation."

### Kuwait imposes...

Those who will stay abroad for only four days and get a Kuwaiti PCR certificate before leaving the country are not required to obtain another PRC certificate when coming back to Kuwait, it noted

### UAE Foreign...

The UAE Minister commended the commitment of the Afghan community residing in the UAE to the preventive measures implemented to contain the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Afghan Foreign Minister, in turn, praised the distinguished bilateral relations between the two countries and the continuous keenness to boost them in all fields, appreciating the support provided by the UAE to his country to help it overcome the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By Mujib Mashal, Fatima Faizi and Najim Rahim

## With Delay in Afghan Peace Talks, a Creeping Sense of 'Siege' Around Kabul

Mornings in the city begin with "sticky bombs," explosives slapped onto vehicles that go up in flames. With night comes the dread of hit-and-run assassinations in the nearby suburbs — government employees shot dead by motorcycle-riding insurgents who roam free.

As peace talks to end Afghanistan's long war face delays, the Taliban may be sparing Kabul, the capital, from mass-casualty attacks as part of an understanding with the United States. But the insurgents have instead shifted to a tactic that is eroding the Afghan government's standing with each passing day: frequent targeted assaults that the country's security forces seem unable to control.

The city has taken on an air of slow-creeping siege. At least 17 small explosions and assassinations have been carried out in Kabul in the past week, according to a tally by The New York Times. Three magnetic bombs went off within one hour on Saturday morning, and at least two more targeted attacks followed before the end of the day.

The evening before, insurgents had killed at least three soldiers in Paghman district, 10 miles west of the city, and another in Qarabagh district, 30 miles north. By the end of the day, the police chief of Kabul had been fired, an official acknowledgment that security efforts were not working. Mohammed Arif Rahmani, a member of the Afghan Parliament's security committee, said the Taliban had been emboldened since striking an agreement with the United States in February that began the withdrawal of American forces and largely ended the use of U.S. air power crucial to keeping the insurgents at bay.

But with repeated delays in the next steps of the peace process — a cease-fire and direct negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government — the Taliban have turned to smaller-scale operations meant to show a presence deep inside the capital and wide around it.

On important occasions, such as the presidential inauguration in March and independence day last week, barrages of mortar shells have landed at



the heart of the city.

"They have used the time since to increase their resources and complete the ring of siege around the city," Mr. Rahmani said.

While the Taliban were working to strengthen their hand in the negotiations, Mr. Rahmani said he was far more worried that the Afghan government appeared unable to do much in the face of the Taliban threats.

Direct negotiations were expected in March, according to the U.S.-Taliban deal, but the start has been delayed by disagreements over the swap of 5,000 Taliban prisoners for 1,000 Afghan security forces. The Afghan government initially opposed the plan, saying that they had played no part in the negotiations, but conceded after much pressure from the Trump administration.

The Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, said in early August that the government would free the last 400 prisoners, removing the final hurdle to the

talks. The Taliban said they would sit down for direct negotiations within three days of the release of the last prisoner.

But in the two weeks since, only 80 prisoners have been released. Afghan officials said France and Australia had opposed the release of several prisoners accused in attacks that killed their citizens. Hamdullah Mohib, the Afghan national security adviser, said the remaining prisoners would be released after the Taliban freed a number of Afghan pilots and commandos. Meanwhile, the Taliban continue to project strength through brutal violence around the country and increased activity in and around the capital.

Afghan officials acknowledge that in districts surrounding the capital the Taliban have a small presence to carry out hit-and-run attacks. Reports of government employees being targeted in outlying districts are an almost daily occurrence.

By Clive Baldwin

### UK War Crime Revelations in Afghanistan Expose Justice Failings

A senior UK commander in 2011 feared a British military unit in Afghanistan had a "deliberate policy" of killing Afghan men, even when "they did not pose a threat" — which the commander called "indefensible behaviour" that "could be criminal."

Nine years later, the UK government is doing its best to ensure it is almost impossible to prosecute such crimes.

This commander's concerns, along with other evidence about possible unlawful killings by UK forces in Afghanistan, came to light this week after being disclosed to a court and published in the Sunday Times newspaper.

The commander's legal assessment was correct — the execution of civilians, or indeed fighters who had surrendered and did not pose a threat, would be war crimes. But criminal liability under the principle of "command responsibility" also falls on senior

commanders and ultimately government ministers if they become aware of such crimes and fail to prevent or prosecute them. Despite a history of championing the laws of war, the United Kingdom has repeatedly failed to prosecute its own personnel when they commit war crimes. The 2011 allegations are not isolated incidents. Evidence has continued to emerge, in UK court hearings and public inquiries, of abuses, such as torture, by UK soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan that appear on their face to be war crimes. But hardly any UK national — and no senior military or political figure — has after 2001 even been prosecuted, yet alone convicted.

Successive British governments have repeatedly interfered in criminal justice, most blatantly by ministers shutting down criminal inquiries into UK forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The current government is

going even further, having a draft law before parliament creating a "presumption against prosecution" for alleged crimes committed by UK soldiers overseas more than five years ago. Rather than ensure justice for crimes like those alleged in Afghanistan, it would make it even harder to prosecute, even when the evidence had been withheld for so long.

Britain's failure to prosecute its nationals responsible for atrocities overseas has a long history dating back to the British Empire. The current bill risks entrenching impunity for some of the worst crimes committed by British nationals.

The government should drop the bill and ensure any UK national responsible for war crimes and obstructing justice, anywhere in the world, no matter how senior, is brought to justice

That would send the message that foreign lives also matter.

### Rohingya to...

return to their homeland with safety and dignity.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a statement issued on Monday urged Myanmar authorities to accept an international solution that provides for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Rohingya refugees.

"To demonstrate compliance with the order and readiness for Rohingya to return, the Myanmar government should amend the [1982] citizenship law in line with international standards," it added. Pointing to the discriminatory attitude toward 600,000 Rohingya still living in Rakhine state, the rights group added: "The authorities should immediately lift restrictions on freedom of movement, repeal discriminatory regulations and local orders, and cease all official and unofficial practices that restrict their [Rohingya] movement and livelihoods, such as arbitrary roadblocks and extortion systems." Discrimination in camps

The rights watchdog praised Bangladesh for hosting more than one million Rohingya. But due to some measures

implemented by the host country Rohingya have been facing troubles, the statement said.

"Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have faced tightened restrictions on rights to information, movement, access to education, and health, and have been unlawfully killed by Bangladeshi security forces."

After a peaceful demonstration in Kutapalong camp in Bangladesh by Rohingya in August 2019 to commemorate "Rohingya genocide awareness day," Bangladeshi authorities shut off all internet access in the refugee camps, directed mobile phone carrier companies to stop selling SIM cards to Rohingya, and confiscated thousands of SIM cards from them.

Meanwhile, Rohingya rights body, Rohingya Youth Association (RYA), in a statement on Monday declared Aug. 25 as "Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day".

"Today we remember and honor all those Rohingya men, women and children who have been killed as a result of the genocide violence perpetrated and led by Myanmar's security forces."

# China pushes Pakistan to open trade routes with Afghanistan

As peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban progress, China is pushing Pakistan to open its five key border crossings with Afghanistan to allow bilateral and transit trade and the resumption of Afghan exports to India.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country and relies on Pakistani land routes and seaports to conduct international trade. The two countries share 18 crossing points, of which the most commonly used are Torkham in Pakistan's northwest and Chaman in its southwest. The border points were closed by Pakistan in March to limit the spread of coronavirus.

Several other border points have also been closed at various times since 2014 because of the tense relations between the two countries as each accused the other of supporting Islamist and separatist militants fighting.

Experts and officials believe that Pakistan's recent steps to open key five borders are the result of China's ongoing efforts to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship Belt and Road Initiative project, to Afghanistan.

In the past two months, Pakistan has not only reopened the Torkham and Chaman crossings but also opened three other crossings. Ghulam Khan, Angoor Adda and Kharlachi in Pakistan's northwest are now operating around the clock, six days a week to increase the volume of trade and facilitate business activities between the two countries.

U.S. special representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad in recent meetings has asked Pakistan to open the Torkham and Chaman borders, but Pakistani officials admitted

that the opening of the three other crossings were decided in the Beijing-initiated China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Vice Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, which was set up to ease tensions between Kabul and Islamabad.

In their recent virtual meeting in July, senior officials of three countries discussed the Afghan situation and agreed to explore "new ways of deepening cooperation, including advancing connectivity under the [Belt and Road Initiative], and other regional economic initiatives."

Despite the escalation of tension with India, Pakistan also announced in July it would resume Afghan exports to India through eastern Wagah border crossing to "facilitate Afghanistan's transit trade."

"With this step, Pakistan has fulfilled its commitments under Pakistan-Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement, referring to a bilateral agreement initially signed in 1965 to allow the transit of Afghan exports through Pakistan to the Wagah border with India.

Traders from both sides of the border are hailing the moves. Daru Khan Achakzai, leader of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is one of those who expresses hope that the initiative will help to improve trade between the two countries.

"The volume of bilateral trade was around \$3 billion [in 2011] and we were expecting that it would rise to \$5 billion in 2015," Achakzai said. "But for several reasons, mainly the tense relationship between the two countries, the overall volume of trade declined to around \$2

billion, which is worrisome."

The development of the new trade routes is getting international support. With financial assistance worth \$460.6 million from the World Bank, Islamabad in July approved the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor, a project that includes a 48km four-lane expressway between Peshawar and the Torkham border crossing.

China has applauded Pakistan for opening its borders with Afghanistan. "China supports the CPEC's extension to Afghanistan so that the Afghan people can benefit from the BRI," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying during her regular briefing in July.

However, China's plans to expand the Belt and Road to Afghanistan left India with limited options while adding to economic, political and security concerns. India officially opposes any projects under the name of Belt and Road, as part of the route passes through Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, over which New Delhi claims sovereignty. When Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 inaugurated the Belt and Road Initiative, which is eventually to comprise a vast network of infrastructure projects spanning more than 60 countries, it largely excluded Afghanistan, moving through Central Asia and Pakistan instead. But when most NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan in 2014, Beijing revised the policy and started considering the country as a primary link between the Central Asian republics and the CPEC. Beijing has deepened its involvement in Afghanistan partially due to the stability in the region.

"China wants to ensure that after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from

Afghanistan, any contact between the Afghan Taliban and ethnic Uyghur Muslim militants, particularly the [East Turkistan Islamic Movement], a group seeking independence from China, will be blocked," a senior Pakistan Foreign Ministry official, who requested anonymity, told the Nikkei Asian Review.

In fact, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the July trilateral dialogue "agreed to strengthen counter-terrorism and security cooperation, combat the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, and all other terrorist forces and networks posing threats to the common security," according to a statement released by Pakistan's Foreign Office.

Despite the opening of the borders however, things are not improving as expected.

Traders on the borders complain that slow customs clearance and complicated regulations and procedures have been irking the Afghan traders who are now opting for alternative routes, such as Iran's Chabahar, a port that has already been functional for trade with Afghanistan.

"Trucks and containers loaded with all sorts of goods, including perishable commodities like fruits and vegetables, are held up for days and weeks because of the slow process of customs clearance," said Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, head of an association of custom clearing agents working at Pakistan-Afghan borders. "On the other hand, shipping companies have been charging the hefty detention fee from Afghan traders."

If policies are not reviewed immediately, the renewed trade momentum between the two countries will "completely end," Sarhadi said.

### Pakistan, Afghanistan...

Afghanistan to facilitate transit and bilateral trade. Besides, Afghan traders have also been allowed to use Gwadar port in Balochsiatn province for import and exports under the APTTA.

Pakistan has also decided to ease congestion at Torkham border crossing, trade and transit traffic will be diverted to Kharlachi in Kurram district, Angor Adda in South Waziristan and Ghulam Khan border crossing in North Waziristan, Prime Minister's special representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq has said.

Chaman crossing is also reopened on Friday.

A parliamentary delegation was scheduled to visit Karachi Port on Saturday to look into the businessmen complaints there as Afghan traders have long been complaining about delay in clearance of their containers at Karachi ports.

Meanwhile, sources said that Pakistan plans to announce a comprehensive visa mechanism for Afghans especially for traders, students and patients. A long-term and multiple visa will be issued to businessmen, students and patients.

### First Chinese...

woman with severe preeclampsia who needed an emergency C-section, while her husband was admitted in the trauma ward for amputation of both feet and one hand due to a landmine explosion. She helped the family apply for financial aid and rehabilitation programs by the ICRC.

"While working in Afghanistan, I not only treat patients, but also work with the ICRC to help their families," she said.

The Mirwais Regional Hospital is not the only "Chinese hospital" in Afghanistan. The Jamhuriat Hospital in Kabul was also built with China's aid.

Over the years, China has

also provided material and financial assistance to help Afghanistan develop its education and infrastructure sectors. After the spread of COVID-19 in Afghanistan, China started donating anti-epidemic materials and sharing its experience of epidemic prevention. During the pandemic, An decided to stay there in March to support the normal functioning of the hospital, helping the obstetrics and gynecology department establish its COVID-19 prevention mechanism.

An recalled treating a pregnant woman with acute fatty liver, who lost her twins because she was not treated in time due to

the COVID-19 pandemic.

"So it is very important to keep hospitals functioning normally during the pandemic, especially in areas with scarce medical resources," An said. "Though I was under a lot of pressure at the time, it was all worth it." As the only Chinese doctor in town, An was surprised by local people's love for China. "They told me they appreciate China's help, and hope Afghanistan will be as developed as China one day," she said.

Starting as a foreign aid doctor out of her love for travel, An has become inseparable from her job. Just over a month after returning home, An is already planning her next trip.

### Kremlin hopes...

any case. "We criticize those who do it, we consider it wrong and we are not going to do it ourselves. At least, not now, during this so-called 'hot phase,'" he said.

According to Peskov, Belarus' opposition has scant intentions to maintain friendly ties with Russia.

"We saw some texts, some text drafts which were accessible in the media outlets, they are still accessible where the intentions to continue friendly relations

were declared in the least degree," the spokesman said answering a reporter's question whether there are those among the Belarusian opposition who expresses serious anti-Russian views.

The Kremlin representative noted that the Coordination council of the Belarusian opposition is a somewhat informal structure and its "position on various issues is mobile, it changes." "There is no clear position, thus it is difficult for us to make a judgement in

this case," he added.

The spokesman refused to comment on the actions of security structures during rallies in Belarus. "This is the internal affair of Belarus, we are not going to interfere," he said. The Kremlin spokesman also declined to comment on the footage of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko arriving at his residence in a bulletproof vest carrying a machine gun. "I will not answer this question," the Kremlin representative said.

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# WHO says 172 countries engaging with global COVID-19 vaccine plan

Some 172 countries are engaging with the COVAX facility designed to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, the World Health Organization said on Monday, but more funding is needed and countries need now to make binding commitments.

Countries wishing to be part of the global COVAX plan have until Aug. 31 to submit expressions of interest, WHO officials said, with confirmation of intention to join due by Sept. 18, and initial payments due by Oct. 9.

WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the facility was critical to ending the COVID-19 pandemic, and would not only pool risk for countries developing and buying vaccines, but also ensure prices are kept "as low as possible".

"Vaccine nationalism only helps the virus," he told a media briefing. "The success of the COVAX

facility hinges not only on countries signing up to it, but also filling key funding gaps."

COVAX is co-led by the GAVI vaccines alliance, the WHO and the CEPI Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and is designed to guarantee equitable access globally to COVID-19 vaccines once they are developed and authorised for use.

It currently covers 9 candidate COVID-19 vaccines and its aim is to secure supplies of and deliver 2 billion doses across countries that sign up by the end of 2021.

"Initially, when there will be limited supply (of COVID-19 vaccines), it's important to provide the vaccine to those at highest risk around the globe," Tedros said. He said this included health workers on the front lines of the pandemic, who were "critical to saving lives and stabilising the overall health system".



## A look at the world

### Kremlin hopes wave of violence in Belarus to be avoided

Moscow notes that the Belarusian protesters' actions do not lead to clashes with the law enforcement, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday, expressing hope that clashes will also be avoided in the future.

"So far, we note that no provocation from the protesters took place. We note that the law enforcement agencies perform their duties correctly. [...] We hope that any provocations in this regard will be successfully avoided and prevented in the future," Peskov told journalists.

The spokesman noted that various rallies in Belarus do not lead to riots.

"Consecutively, there is no need for any



harsh measures from the law enforcement," he said.

Peskov also said that Russia is not in talks with the Belarusian opposition's coordination council.

"No, we have no channels of contacts. No talks are underway," Peskov said, while answering media questions if Moscow tried to establish contacts with the oppositional forces in Belarus.

Moscow prefers politicians that advocate cooperation between Russia and Belarus, but Kremlin has no intention to meddle in the situation in the neighboring country, according to the Kremlin spokesman.

"Of course, we prefer those politicians in Belarus who advocate consistent movement towards allied relations, who advocate mutually beneficial partnership between our two brotherly nations," he said.

In the meantime, the spokesman underscored that making any contacts with the opposition would fall into meddling in Belarus's internal affairs category in ... **P3**

### Rohingya to mark 3rd 'genocide' anniversary on Aug. 25



Three years on, the Rohingya Muslim minority on Tuesday will commemorate the crackdown by Myanmar's military forces which drove away hundreds of thousands from their lands.

The crackdown in Myanmar's western Rakhine state which began on Aug. 25, 2017, saw the rampant displacement, killings and rape of the world's most persecuted community triggering an international outcry.

In the face of the pandemic, campaigns to raise awareness about their plight will be held online.

"Rohingyas and those who stand in solidarity with them, will mark the 3rd anniversary of Myanmar's genocide, in the first-ever worldwide multilingual online rally," said the Free Rohingya Coalition, a global network of activists, in a statement on Friday.

"The event will bring together more than four dozen international supporters including UN officials, human rights activists, genocide scholars, international law experts, and concerned journalists from all continents.

"They will join Rohingya survivors and refugees to memorialize and honor the thousands of victims slaughtered, raped, and tortured in the violent purge by Myanmar government troops, that began on 25th August 2017," it added. Return with dignity

Meanwhile, Rohingya people as well as rights organizations across the globe have urged Myanmar authorities to ensure a conducive environment in the country's Rakhine state so that the persecuted people, who have taken shelter in different countries largely in neighboring Bangladesh, can ... **P2**

### UK says suspension of W.Bank annexation 'essential step' for peace

Britain on Monday said Israel's suspension of plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank is an "essential step" towards a more peaceful Middle East.

"It is important to build on this new dynamic, and ultimately only the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority can negotiate the two-state solution required to secure lasting peace," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement.

Raab's remarks came ahead of a visit "this week" to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Raab will meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, according to a



statement by Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

"Dominic Raab will emphasise the UK's strong and enduring commitment to Israel's security and stress the necessity of a negotiated two-state solution to realise justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians," it said, without specifying the date of the visit.

"He will also stress the need for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and wider cooperation on development, trade and coronavirus," it added.

Raab will "press for renewed dialogue between their governments and reinforce UK commitment to preventing annexation and pursuing a negotiated two-state solution."

The FCO also said: "The visit comes following the announcement that the UAE and Israel would normalise relations; a move the UK welcomed as a much-needed boost for peace in the region.

"The UK has consistently encouraged a solution that allows justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians."



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