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# Heart of Asia

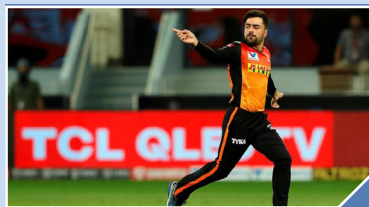
Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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## Rashid 'Ready' for Sunrisers Opening Match in IPL

Afghanistan's cricket star Rashid Khan is "ready" for Sunrisers Hyderabad's opening match of the Indian Premier League (IPL) against Kolkata Knight Riders on Sunday.

The 14th edition of the cash-rich league kicked off on Friday with a thrilling encounter between Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Sunrisers Hyderabad will begin their campaign in the third game of this IPL on Sunday.

Afghanistan's spinner Rashid Khan on Saturday shared pictures from Sunrisers' practice game played as the build-up to their tournament opener.

"All ready for tomorrow's game," Rashid tweeted.

This year, another Afghan cricketer Mujeeb Ur Rahman also joined Sunrisers with Rashid and Mohammad Nabi. Nabi and Mujeeb may have to wait for getting an opportunity in this IPL season. **P2**



## UNICEF's Afghanistan Representative Presented His Credentials to Mofa

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund on Sunday announced that Hervé Ludovic De Lys newly appointed UNICEF Afghanistan Representative presented his credentials to Hanif Atmar, Afghanistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"It is an honor to present my credentials to His Excellency, Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs; I look forward to serving the children of Afghanistan to the best of my ability," De Lys was quoted in the released statement.

"I would like to express my gratitude for the strong partnership shared by the Government and UNICEF in support of every child in Afghanistan, especially the most disadvantaged. I am excited to work with all partners to promote the rights of children, wherever they are, and make sure they have the best start in life so that they become productive citizens in the Afghanistan of tomorrow. I particularly look forward to ... **P3**

# Guiding Principles for Turkey Summit Shared with Negotiators



TOLOnews has obtained details of the guiding principles for the Turkey conference shared with the Afghan Republic and the Taliban negotiators by the US, Qatar, Turkey and the UN.

The document has nine articles

and the relevant parties to Afghan peace are expected to reach a unified stance on it ahead of the Turkey conference.

The guiding principles include a permanent and countrywide ceasefire, conducting joint efforts

for peace without mutual blaming, political participation under Islamic principles, transitional administration, equal rights for all citizens without discrimination, support for the rights of all Afghans, sincere efforts to achieve

real coexistence, implementation of balanced social and economic plans, allowance of humanitarian workers' activities, maintaining of Afghanistan's friendly relations with the region and the world, prevention of Afghanistan from becoming a source of threats to other countries, and protecting Afghanistan from external interference.

The document says that Islam, people's traditions and preserving Afghanistan form the basis of national unity in Afghanistan.

Regional and neighboring countries should prevent the infiltration of foreign fighters to Afghanistan.

Transparent and free elections should guarantee Afghanistan's political future and there should be a guarantee to prevent the repeat of a civil war.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Abdullah, head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, said he has received the final draft of the republic's peace proposal from the sub-committee of the Leadership Committee of the reconciliation council.

## Afghanistan, Iran Sign MoU to Build 2nd Cross-Border Bridge

A memorandum of understanding has been signed between Iran and the neighboring Afghanistan for the construction of a second bridge connecting Milak and Zaranj counties in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan Province to Afghanistan's Nimruz Province to facilitate trade interactions between the two sides.

"The 320-meter bridge will be built parallel to the other existing bridge and construction will begin by ... **P2**



## Afghan Schools Need at Least 50,000 Teachers: Ministry

The Ministry of Education on Saturday said that there is a need for at least 50,000 new teachers for the country's schools as the current number of instructors is not sufficient.

Afghanistan's schools have at least 220,000 teachers for 9.7 million students across the country.

"One of our priorities is to hire teachers on contracts to use them in areas where we face shortage of teachers," said Najiba Arian, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Education.

Among lack of school buildings, textbooks and other educational facilities, lack of teachers is also said to be one of the major challenges facing the education sector in the country.

Robina, a schoolteacher in Kabul said that lack of teachers is one of the major challenges in the way of education in Afghanistan.



Robina said she has not been hired officially as a teacher despite her years of experience in this field. "What is the difference between us and the permanent teachers. We both teach, but we are not given the same salary," she said.

"We are faced with lack of classrooms. We combine two or three classes under one roof," said

Sonila, a teacher.

Roqia 11, who studies at a primary school in Kabul said that in many days she has left school because of the absence of their teachers.

"We ask the Ministry of Education to provide teachers to us," Roqia added. "We need a regular teacher to be present daily and teach us," said Zahra, a student.

## Rashid 'Ready'...

But Rashid is in tonight's squad.

Mujeeb was bought by Sunrisers in the IPL 2021 auction who played the last two seasons for Kings XI Punjab.

Rashid and Nabi have been playing for Sunrisers in the IPL since 2017.

"From the overseas perspective, having Mujeeb there (in the side). He is obviously a very very effective T20 bowler, and he has shown that throughout his franchise career and obviously playing for Afghanistan," explained Sunrisers' Director of Cricket, Tom Moody in a video released by team four days ago.

"I think he gives us greater depth and certainly, he is going to keep everyone on their toes to you know try and keep their spot in the eleven," he said.

Sunrisers Hyderabad ended as the third-ranked side in the IPL 2020.

The 2016 champions would be expecting to go miles in this upcoming season.

They will open their campaign against Kolkata Knight Riders on April 11.

## Afghanistan,...

June," Hossein Mirshafi, an advisor of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, was quoted as saying by News.mrud.ir.

The official noted that given the expanding volume of trade between the two countries, the construction of a second bridge, which would make commuting of more trucks possible, is necessary. The bridge will pass over the common river of Hirmand at the Milak border crossing.

By Mark Hannah and Adam Weinstein

# If Americans Want Lasting Peace in Afghanistan, We Should Leave by May 1

Afghan government officials and Taliban representatives are expected to arrive in Turkey this month to try to negotiate a path forward for their country: For two decades, the United States has struggled to gain the upper hand in Afghanistan's long-running conflict or successfully secure consensus among its factions. In recent days, Afghan and Taliban forces have exchanged strikes, trying to gain leverage ahead of the talks, which may or may not generate an alternative to the agreement reached last year between the Taliban and the Trump administration. That agreement calls for all American forces to leave by May 1 — weeks away. This violence doesn't bode well for the possibility of intra-Afghan compromise and reconciliation after the U.S. military leaves.

Those in Washington who want to keep American troops in Afghanistan past the May 1 deadline are likely to portray this latest fighting as a prologue to the violence they warn will follow a U.S. forces exit. But this view's premise is gravely flawed. Keeping American forces in Afghanistan isn't helping bring that nation's opposing factions closer together. Rather, continuing to stay actively harms the prospects for a meaningful and durable peace. As it stands now, the Taliban negotiates at gunpoint, while the Afghan government negotiates from behind a shield that Washington may remove at any moment. Meanwhile, Afghan soldiers and civilians suffer as the months and years pass with no end to the violence in sight.

The United States' ongoing intervention in Afghanistan distorts the country's balance of power: As long as U.S. troops are on the ground, the Taliban will try to wait them out, and the Afghan government will deploy alarmist rhetoric, warning of all-out civil war to convince American and coalition leaders to stay. Afghan government officials have equated the Taliban with the Islamic State, and Kabul dismissed a recently circulated U.S. peace plan.

As long as the Afghan peace process is backstopped by the U.S. military, the two sides may reach a deal that looks good on paper but will likely collapse promptly after American troops leave.

It's true that if U.S. forces are withdrawn before a settlement is reached, violence might intensify in the short term. The Taliban would likely claim victory, taking credit for pushing out the Americans and potentially subjecting more Afghans to its reactionary



rule. Promises of sanctions relief and aid from the United States and its partners could possibly entice the Taliban to some compromise — allowing it to pursue power through international recognition rather than armed dominance of what would become, once again, a pariah state.

There is, understandably, a temptation for the Biden administration to maintain a troop presence in Afghanistan to try to avert greater violence. But doing so could mean another escalation of deadly U.S.-led combat operations, and to little avail. The Taliban isn't going anywhere. It has a greater stake in the military and political outcome and is working with a very different — nearly interminable — timetable. Whatever chaos might follow after May 1 would likely also ensue if the U.S. military leaves in a year, or 10. Political scientist Barbara F. Walter outlines three distinct steps for successfully ending civil wars such as the one in Afghanistan: initiate talks; compromise on an agreement; and implement it. Afghans have found themselves stuck at the first step, which should not be surprising given the Taliban's strongly held ideology and battlefield advantage — an insurgency can "win" merely by continuing to fight, and Taliban recruits, and leaders, have a strong resolve to do just that. The upcoming negotiations are a long-shot attempt to

move the peace process forward to the second step — compromise and power-sharing. This will require trust between the Taliban, the government and Afghan citizens in a country traumatized by decades of war, foreign meddling and unpunished abuses.

And any deal that comes out of peace talks in Turkey will likely be an interim one, vulnerable to the same violence and recalcitrant politics that have stymied the peace process up to now. Keeping American troops in Afghanistan while this unfolds will thwart progress toward a mutually acceptable compromise while making those troops vulnerable to a fragile peace. One car bomb, raid, assassination attempt or inflammatory public statement and everything could fall apart. President Biden would then find himself pressured to keep troops in Afghanistan in an effort to stabilize the country, further tanking the prospects for a lasting settlement. A self-perpetuating cycle of violence would continue.

For Biden, either option in Afghanistan — stay or go — presents political risks. And whatever he decides, history will not judge him in a vacuum. Like his two predecessors, the president inherited this imbroglio, and just as no serious historian blames President Gerald Ford for the fall of Saigon, the war in Afghanistan won't become ...

P3

By Saeed Naqvi

## Can US Ignore 'Moscow Format' On Afghanistan?

THE 'Moscow Format' for Afghanistan spelt out by foreign minister Sergei Lavrov in New Delhi is straightforward. Russians want all the Afghan ethnicities, religious groups, political parties, plus neighbouring countries to participate in a process for an all-inclusive Kabul. Americans on the other hand would like to yoke president Ashraf Ghani and Taliban into a power sharing arrangement in Kabul. From this arrangement will flow a new constitution and an invitation to broad base the stakeholders.

Too much should not be read into the fact that Lavrov was not given time by prime minister Narendra Modi, something that foreign ministers from Washington, London or even the Gulf states take for granted. American exceptionalism, particularly when its underlying basis is being persistently questioned, has to be sensitively handled. Holding back on symbolic signs of upgradation of rising power centres will be noticed in capitals

New Delhi habitually clubs with: The Quad, for instance.

An almighty fly in the American ointment for Afghanistan is there for all to see. Ghani, like Barkis, may be willing to sup with the Taliban. But the Taliban are obstinately opposed to such a feast. Should anyone still anchor optimism on Zalmay Khalilzad's capacity to pull a diplomatic rabbit out of the hat should glance at the Peace Agreement Khalilzad coaxed out of the Taliban in February last year in Doha. So eager was he to flourish an agreement that he harmed his own credibility.

The headline or the title given to the 'agreement' only amplifies disagreement.

'Agreement for bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States etc.' Obviously, the Taliban threw a ginger fit when they did not see their definition of themselves as the 'Islamic Emirate'

in the draft proposed by Khalilzad. He was, in other words, compelled to include the phrase even though it made the US envoy look like a diplomatic eager beaver.

Russians, in their Soviet avatar, have actually administered the country during the period of their occupation from 1980 to 1989. Soon after 9/11, the US found reasons to bomb their way into that strategic real estate. Both know the terrain.

For announcing initiatives and not being able to implement them, Barack Obama holds something of a record. Remember how demeaning of the American image, in his oft repeated utterances, was Guantanamo Bay? That dehumanizing torture center and prison would be shut down the day he entered the White House, he promised. That facility remains in operation.

With what fanfare he announced that US troops would start withdrawing from Afghanistan 'from July 2011'. Even then this reporter had predicted that the Americans were not going to

leave 'now nor tomorrow'. A super power enters a major theatre with one set of interests but, over a period of time, develops multiple compelling interests.

The US entered Afghanistan in its very heady sole-superpower moment. Reality dawned with the end of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, signaling the climax of the subprime mortgage crisis and the subsequent free fall of capitalist economies; hence Obama's urgency to cut costs and withdraw. Trump's sidekick Steve Bannon during his spell of glory, even encouraged Erik Prince, former US navy seal officer and founder of the world's largest military company, Blackwater, to dream dreams of privatizing the war in Afghanistan. In his 100-page project report, studied by the White House, Prince envisaged a 'Viceroy', exactly as the British had in India. After going through a series of gyrations, the Trump administration set May 1, 2021 as the date for final troop withdrawal. Qualifications attended even these intentions: 'interests' would be left behind to be quickly mobilized, should a post-US Afghanistan be gripped in need.

President Biden is abiding by the May first deadline but there

are sufficient statements, from Washington that the deadline is not cast in stone. President George W Bush, vice-president Dick Cheney, surrounded by the 'neo-cons' saw an American century right there, within grasp when the occupation began. And now the US is contemplating withdrawal from its 20-year involvement at a time when its plummeting self-esteem is being maliciously watched globally. Is this the right psychological moment for it to pick its chips and walk away from the game?

Why then would the US military industrial complex not sketch a posture of greater aggression, quite the opposite of withdrawal? After all, the Obama-Kerry team had brought Iran into a West Asian balance of power by signing the nuclear deal, because the 'pivot-to-Asia' was beckoning the White House for a more hands-on engagement to manage China. Alarm bells on that count have reached a deafening pitch. Harvard professor Graham Allison's Thucydides Trap is only one of the dreadful images being cited. Allison's thesis based on the Greek historian's insights is not to be trifled with: when an established power is challenged ...

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## Formal Dairy Sector Tops 2 Million Liters of Milk For 1399

Afghanistan hit a milk production record in 1399, the last solar year, which reducing the amount of milk needed to be imported.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the total volume produced was 2,170,973 liters.

The top dairy province last year was Faryab, which produced 200 metric tons of milk, followed by Baghlan with 184; and Takhar with 182.

Maidan Wardak, Herat, Balkh, Kandahar, Kunduz and Samangan provinces also produced large quantities of milk, MAIL officials said.

According to MAIL data, there are currently 1,819 dairy farms in the country.

Kandahar province has the most dairy farms, with 618; while Herat,



Kabul, Nangarhar, Paktia, Ghazni and Laghman are also growing in terms of dairy farm numbers.

In other provinces, dairy farming is done more on a subsistence basis –

and in a more traditional way.

According to MAIL officials, Afghanistan needs 2.9 million liters of milk annually and is currently importing about one million liters to meet demand.

Afghanistan is a farming country with a high capacity for raising cattle and currently has about four million cows and nearly twenty million goats and sheep.

### If Americans Want...

“Biden’s War” — unless he prolongs it. He should, then, choose the least bad option: withdraw all American troops by the U.S.-Taliban agreement’s May 1 deadline or soon thereafter.

No doubt, Biden will factor public opinion into any decision. And recently, giving cover to any potential decision to remain in Afghanistan, more than one think-tanker has tried to counter the conventional wisdom that Americans are war-weary and want the troops to come home. Some of them may be right when they note that there’s no visible groundswell of support for withdrawal — no campus protests; no antiwar pop anthems topping the charts.

But a lack of mass protests hardly suggests a popular mandate to continue trudging along in Afghanistan. A Eurasia Group Foundation survey released in September found substantial bipartisan support for the details of the U.S.-Taliban agreement that brings troops home by May 1. More than 60 percent of Americans support the terms of the deal, compared with only about 8 percent who oppose them. And if, in fact, the American public has become indifferent to the longest war ever fought in its name, it speaks as much to how Washington sells war as to how or whether the public buys in.

For the Biden administration to hold out hope for a more favorable, U.S.-orchestrated political settlement is an understandably tempting, if unduly rosy, response to a nearly intractable problem. A hole-in-one solution to Washington’s Afghanistan woes in the form of a negotiated settlement followed by a swift U.S. withdrawal would be ideal. But the peace deal that Afghanistan needs cannot be masterminded by an outside broker and, historically, most settlements fail before they are fully implemented. In order for peace talks to generate a sturdy compromise, they can’t take place under conditions of armed coercion. Some might claim that the presence of American troops simply creates leverage for the Afghan government, a benign thumb on the scale in favor of the “good guys.” But by exerting outside and temporary pressure, the United States distracts Afghans from the urgent work of their domestic statecraft with the more expedient work of international stagecraft. Ironically, it is the presence of U.S. forces — not their departure — that ultimately hampers the prospects for peace in Afghanistan as Biden looks for a way out.

### UNICEF’s...

promoting innovative programming including 21 st century skills, such as digital learning and problem solving, and environmental protection.” De Lys said. According to the UNICEF statement, De Lys has more than 30 years of professional experience, he has worked in complex socio-political, development, and security environment.

De Lys’s experience in humanitarian affairs and development includes humanitarian diplomacy, capacity building, community development, peace and security, strategic planning, and managing change for the benefit of children.

This comes as The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has reported the completion of 89 school constructions under the chamber of national citizen charter project in Herat

province.

Thousands of children are expected to be given access to high quality education facilities, MRRD said.

The head of the development council for Ghorian district, Mohammad Nader hailed the completion of the projects and stressed that this means that children in the suburbs will not study outdoors.

117 other schools are under construction and planning stages to be built under the AQRA project in the region. Students wherein new schools were built, studied in unfavorable and harsh conditions but with the construction of these educational facilities, their problems were “solved”, Nader told media.

Out of 206 schools, 89 have already been built, 62 are under construction and another 55 are in the planning and development stage.

It is expected than over one

million students will enrol in the schools of the country this year. The government has planned to establish 1800 new schools and appoint 1100 new teachers across the country during the year 1400.

The devastating effects of war and conflict in the country have deprived many children of gaining knowledge, especially for girls, completing their primary learnings remain a dream in the rural areas.

UNICEF indicated an estimated 3.7 million children are deprived of educational facilities in Afghanistan, and girls make 60% of them.

Lack of schools, transportation, cultural and traditional believes, and insecurity is reported to be the main reasons to prevent girls from going to schools.

Meanwhile, worsened economic conditions of Afghanistan have also caused many families not to send their children to schools for gaining knowledge.

### Three Shootings...

Missouri, was arrested about four hours later in neighboring Howell County, King said. Authorities do not believe anyone else was involved.

The suspect and at least one of the victims knew each other, the sheriff said. Three of the victims, including the person who died, were from out of state.

#### Utah

In Utah, two deputies were patrolling a complex that includes the Salt Lake County Metro Jail, when the shooting occurred.

They encountered a man on the grass near the north parking lot, and as they

approached him, he pulled out a handgun and shot at them. Both deputies were shot in the face and taken to the hospital. One shot back and killed the suspect. The motive for the shootings is unknown.

One deputy was hit in the cheek and is in stable condition. He sustained “quite a bit of damage” to his face, Sheriff Rosie Rivera said Saturday afternoon, but he is expected to be released from the hospital soon.

The other, who got shot in the eye, was a critical condition. He will remain in the hospital for surgery, but is expected to survive.

Gun violence in U.S.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday announced new measures to tackle gun violence across the country in what the White House has described as a first step to curb mass shootings and suicides.

In March, the New York Times reported on the relationship between gun violence and gun availability in the United States.

“It’s not just that every other high-income country in the world has many fewer guns and many fewer gun deaths. It’s also that U.S. states with fewer guns – like California, Illinois, Iowa and much of the Northeast – have fewer gun deaths.”

### Can US Ignore...

by a rising power, war takes place. According to Allison, in the past 500 years, there have been 16 cases in which a rising power threatened to displace a ruling one. Twelve of these ended in war.

Against this perspective, why would the hawks in Washington not salivate at China’s

vulnerabilities in Xinjiang. What better launching pad to insert Islamic militants, freshly flown from Syria, for instance, to mingle among the restive Uighurs? Again, the might of the US will be pitted against the consolidated power of China and Russia. Even during the sole superpower days, when the US tried to sideline

the Russians in Kosovo, the Russians defiantly barged in and occupied Pristina airport in 1999. In 2015 Russians again spoilt America’s game in Syria. And now when not just Xinjiang but even the Caucasus can be exposed to imported Islamism, will Moscow, backed by China, allow the US to do as it pleases in Afghanistan?

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# China Administers Nearly 165m COVID-19 Vaccine Doses, 2nd Highest in World

China has administered 164.47 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines as of Saturday, becoming world's second most-vaccinated country, said Wu Liangyou, deputy director of the National Health Commission (NHC)'s disease control bureau on Sunday in Beijing, China.

The U.S. had administered 183,467,709 doses of COVID-19 vaccines and distributed 237,791,735 doses as of Saturday morning, said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

China is undertaking vaccination in an orderly manner, prioritizing key groups, high-risk groups and other groups, thereby steadily improving vaccine coverage, according to Wu.

The key groups include people at high risk of virus exposure at work, people at risk of infection from abroad, people who work at key positions that maintain the basic operation of the society, individuals aged over 18 who are in border regions or work in services or labor-intensive industries, and elderly who are in good physical condition and need to be vaccinated for special reasons. Meanwhile, China's National Health Commission also encourages more people to get vaccinated against COVID-19 on a voluntary, informed basis instead of a compulsory one, said Mi Feng, a spokesperson for the commission, at the Sunday press conference.



### A look at the world

#### Three Shootings in U.S. Within 24 Hours; Two Dead, 10 Injured

Three incidents involving gun violence have taken place in the United States within 24 hours.

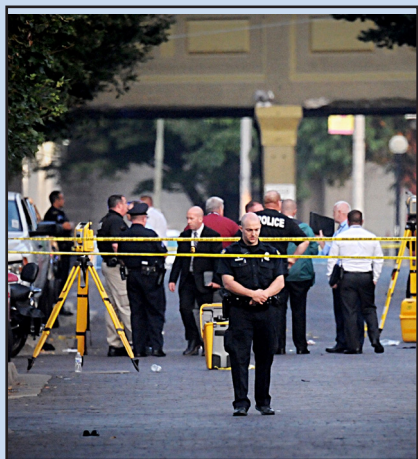
One person was killed and at least five others were injured on a Fort Worth freeway in Texas on Friday night.

Hours later, on Saturday morning, one person was killed and three others were critically injured in a shooting at a convenience store in southern Missouri.

At around the same time, two deputies were shot in South Salt Lake, Utah.

#### Texas

In Texas, two vehicles, which police said



each had several occupants, were traveling eastbound on the Southwest Loop of the 820 freeway just after 10 p.m. local time when people began shooting for unknown reasons, according to police.

Stray bullets hit a woman driving an unrelated vehicle and a man who was inside his house, police said.

CNN reported that a 19-year-old male died early on Saturday in the ICU, according to the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's records. At least five other people were shot and taken to hospitals, police said, where they were being treated for gunshot wounds that were not life-threatening.

#### Missouri

The Missouri shooting occurred at a Snappy Mart convenience store in Koshkonong, a town of about 200 people on the Missouri-Arkansas border.

Officers were alerted when a clerk inside the store called 911. The suspect walked into the store and started firing with a handgun. Several witnesses inside the store escaped without injury, Oregon County Sheriff Eric King said.

A 28-year-old suspect from Thayer, ... **P3**

#### Turkey Successfully Tests Its 1st Hybrid Engine for Moon Mission



Turkey has successfully tested its first hybrid engine that will be used in the Moon Mission, the country's technology and industry minister said on Sunday. Mustafa Varank received information about the system in the Sile district of Istanbul.

The country is planning to send the unmanned spacecraft to make a hard landing on the moon in 2023, within the scope of the country's National Space Program.

Varank told Anadolu Agency that they made two successful firings, both the Probe Rocket System (SORS) ignition and the first ignition of the hybrid engine planned to be used in the lunar mission.

Underlining that there was a targeted time of 50 seconds in the tests, Varank said: "This 50-second ignition has successfully completed. As of today, we can say that the first tests of the engine that can be used in the lunar mission have been successfully done."

"We have carried out the first fire of the hybrid rocket motor that can be used on the lunar mission at the same time today," he said, adding that a sample of the rocket engine will be launched from the northern Sinop province in May.

#### Erdogan Tells Zelensky Turkey Will Not Recognize 'Crimea's Annexation'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday he told his visiting Ukrainian counterpart, Vladimir Zelensky, that Ankara will not recognize "Crimea's annexation."

"We stand for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We reiterated our principles decision not to recognize Crimea's annexation. We said we support Ukraine's initiative of the Crimean Platform geared to consolidate the international



community around Crimea. We hope this initiative will yield positive results for all Crimean peoples, including Crimean Tatars, and for Ukraine," he told a news conference after talks with Zelensky that was televised by TRT TV.

The Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, a city with a special status on the Crimean Peninsula, where most residents are Russians, refused to recognize the legitimacy of authorities brought to power amid riots during a coup in Ukraine in February 2014.

Crimea and Sevastopol adopted declarations of independence on March 11, 2014. They held a referendum on March 16, 2014, in which 96.77% of Crimeans and 95.6% of Sevastopol voters chose to secede from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the reunification treaties on March 18, 2014. The documents were ratified by Russia's Federal Assembly, or bicameral parliament, on March 21. Ukraine keeps on refusing to recognize Crimea as part of Russia.



# Shigal

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