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Kabul
37° / 18°



Herat
40° / 23°



Nangarhar
47° / 27°



Balkh
39° / 27°



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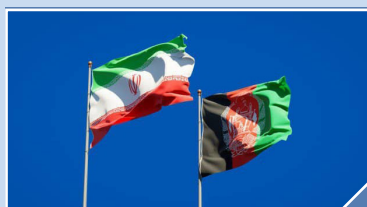
Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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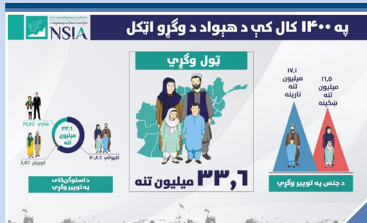
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**With Iran's Policy
Change, Afghan Refugees
Can Now Get Access to
Banking Services**

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has formalized access to banking services – including debit cards, for Afghan refugees in the country. Before the new policy was announced, banks around the country followed different practices, which meant that some refugees could access banking services but most could not. Now, all refugees will have a more secure means of managing their finances.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, spokesperson Babar Baloch at a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva said, "Without a bank account, refugees are... P3



**Afghanistan's
Population Estimated
to Be 33.6M: NSIA**

The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) announced on Tuesday that the country's population estimate in 1400 solar year is 33.6 million.

According to the NSIA, of the total population, about 17.1 million (51.0%) are men and about 16.5 million (49.0%) are women.

It added that of 33.6 million people, 23.8 million (70.8%) belong to the rural community, 8.3 million (24.7%) are urban population and 1.5 million (4.5%) are nomads.

The population of the country is estimated by administrative, urban, rural and gender units, which includes 34 provinces, including 364 main districts, 24 temporary districts and 34 provincial capitals.

It says that the publication of the population estimate shows the country's population status and provides easy access to population information to national and international institutions to build policies, programs and make big decisions.

Future of Kabul Embassy Depends on Invitation of Future Government



Emphasizing that the US and coalition forces and the international embassies supporting them are there at the invitation of the current Afghan government led by President Ashraf Ghani, CENTCOM's General McKenzie said on Monday, "We won't be there unless we're, you know, we are invited to be there."

He said the invitation may disappear if a new governing structure emerges that includes the Taliban. The United States is planning to keep an embassy in Kabul after US troops depart unless Afghanistan's next government tells US officials to leave, the head of US Central Command conceded on Monday.

Australia closed its embassy last month, citing the inability to guarantee security for its diplomats after withdrawal. In April, US Embassy-Kabul ordered all staff whose jobs do not require them to physically be in Afghanistan to depart.

Protection of staff who remain will fall primarily to the Afghan

government, McKenzie said. "It will be first and most important their responsibility to protect that embassy, although we will always take whatever measures are necessary to protect our diplomats in any embassy anywhere in the world," he said.

American consular staff who remain in country are flooded with requests to process Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans who have worked with American or coalition forces over the years to help them leave as well. On Monday, the Taliban issued a statement urging those Afghans to remain in the country.

To date, the State Department has completed processing about 20 percent of the 18,000 visa requests it has received from Afghans who worked for them over the last two decades. The vast majority of those applications are just in their beginning stages, with time running out.

But McKenzie suggested that even if the drawdown has largely finished, the military will be able to help get those allies out of the country – if they are tasked to do so. "We will have the capability to exercise whatever orders... P3

Dushanbe-Kabul Mayors Hold Talks in Tajik Capital

Dushanbe Mayor Rustam Emomali held talks with Kabul Mayor Mohammad Daoud Sultanzoy on Monday regarding expanding a multifaceted cooperation and expressed satisfaction with the process of development of friendly relationship. Emomali and Daoud Sultanzoy also discussed specific issues related to expansion of the mutually beneficial cooperation between the capitals of the two countries. Establishment of close ties and dialogue on the exchange of experience of in the field of urban management and infrastructure development, implementation of joint cultural and humanitarian programs and implementation of educational health, tourism and trade development projects, were also discussed.



Educational Institutions in 16 provinces to Be Closed for 2 More Weeks

Osman Taheri, deputy spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health, announced on Tuesday that the closure of universities, schools and courses has been extended for another two weeks in 16 provinces to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Ministry of Public Health had on May 29 announced closure of universities, schools and courses in Kabul, Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Logar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Parwan, Maidan Wardak, Panjshir, Balkh, Laghman, Badakhshan, Kapisa provinces, to prevent the spread of the third wave of the coronavirus.

Taheri added that all sports clubs, pools and wedding



hotels in the provinces have been closed for two weeks. Previously, the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission, got leave

for government employees. Such government employees include the elderly, pregnant women, and employees with chronic illnesses.

US is...

has been changing, too. Whereas before China sought tight cooperation with Russia without seeking very close relations or the creation of a military-political union with Moscow, lately Beijing has demonstrated its readiness for a greater rapprochement with Moscow. In January, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi with great elegance transformed three "nots" into three "no's". "Our relations have no end, no taboos for strategic partnership and no caps that might restrict them," he said. This sounded very much like an open invitation to concluding a military-political alliance. The more so, since the Xinhua news agency widely published precisely this extract from the Chinese Foreign Ministry' annual report. This must have sounded like a surprise to the West," Dynkin said. "But, as is known, for every action there is a reaction. It is rather strange if anybody expected something different."

India to...

Grappling with acute shortages, several states imposed strict curbs, including wholesale lockdowns, in recent weeks. Several vaccination centres also shut down within days of the widening of the campaign to include everyone above the age of 18. "We will increase the speed of procuring vaccines and also increase the pace of the vaccination programme," Modi said.

By: CGTN Insight

West's 'Alien' Fixation Against China, An Unfortunate Bias

In 2015, the Little Red Book made the headlines in the UK. The then Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell sparked a storm after using the Quotations of Chairman Mao – or the Little Red Book – to criticize then Chancellor George Osborne's attempt to sell off state assets to China. The daily ritual of making "morning requests, evening reports" has long gone in China. But why is there still a fuss over the Little Red Book? It is a sad fact: Decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, the West still views the Communist Party – thus Communist Party-led China – as an alien. Even in the 21st century, Western countries, despite their close economic ties, insist on aversion and hostility against countries ruled by communist parties. Reading out the Little Red Book in parliament seemed an easy but effective way to embarrass Osborne, though much of the criticism was ultimately directed at McDonnell. China's efforts within the international community cannot be denied. But Western pursuit of global dominance determines that China, as an influential non-Western civilization, is an "alien." With totally different political systems, China, since the 19th century, has been a target of countries seeking to spread Western values across the world. The country's successful resistance against Western aggression in the era of imperialism has further angered those who arrogate to themselves the right to determine the destiny of humankind. This is the context of today's West-China ideological fight. Western politicians and media outlets demonize China and the Communist Party of China (CPC) on all fronts, even seeking to split the CPC from the Chinese people. But this does not mean the CPC is a monster. A few years ago, China Against the Tides was a bestselling college textbook on Chinese political history. Interestingly, the author Marc Blecher depicts China in a way that contradicts the book's title: The CPC-led socialist state has never attempted to be an alien to the rest of the world. It is not a challenger

to the current model of international relations.

Market Economy

Yes, China is led by communists. But this does not conflict with people's interests or mean opposition to modern ideas. Since the 19th century, several ideas – market mechanisms in economics, representative systems in politics, mutual respect as sovereign states in international relations and scientific thinking – spread across the world. If these are the tides of modernization, CPC-led China is conforming to, not opposing, them. In this context, the People's Republic of China was officially recognized by the UN in 1971, permitted access to the WTO in 2001 and became the world's second largest economy.

For the People, By the People

It has come this far because a CPC-led China blazed a development path that suits the country's national conditions. First, it is a path based on China's realities. Refusing to blindly follow others' footsteps, China has adapted to the changing times, drawing on the wisdom of its civilization and lessons from other countries.

Second, it is a path that puts people's interests first. Following a people-oriented development philosophy, the CPC is committed to improving people's livelihood. It insists that the government should be of the people, by the people and for the people. Ensuring the people are the top priority has been the key to the CPC's success in revolution, construction, and reform. Scientific Thinking Third, it is a path that pursues innovation with scientific thinking. Challenges are common in China's way forward. But under the CPC leadership, the country has actively sought innovative solutions, while reforming the ways of both thinking and acting. Following the principles of science, CPC-led China has unleashed tremendous social vitality, accelerating its development.



China is on a path to building an open economy. China opposes trade protectionism and has been adhering to democratic and rules-based principles in trade with other countries. In doing so, it has become an important participant and contributor to global economic governance. China's endeavors in these regards flow with, not against, the tide. This explains China's developmental miracle. It is also China's contribution to global governance. Despite Western biases against communism and communist parties, the CPC has sought common interests among different countries. China's vision of a community with a shared future for mankind features extensive consultation, joint contributions, and shared benefits in global governance. These are what are

required in our times.

Looking forward, China, under CPC leadership, will continue to coordinate its domestic policies with global rules and work to safeguard fairness and justice on international occasions. If China is still seen as against the tide just because it is led by a communist party, then it is time to question this criterion in reaching this conclusion. Ideology cannot be grounds to convict a country as an evil state. Xia Lu is an associate professor at the School of Marxism Studies, Renmin University of China. The article is part of the special series of the China Global Television Network (CGTN) and international media partners for the 100 years anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

By: Hamzah Rifaat Hussain

What's Missing from the U.S. Strategic Calculus on Peace?

Much has been written about how future scenarios in Afghanistan will play out in the post-U.S. withdrawal era, where relentless fighting, the absence of sustainable peace and an uncertain future cloud any optimism. Additionally, basic preconditions for peace with all sides endeavoring towards mitigating civilian casualties and making concessions towards transitions, are missing. If the Bamako Agreement of 2015 on Mali despite its implementation hurdles taught us one thing, that is that disarmament is the prerequisite for peaceful transitions in conflict zones. In Afghanistan however, the relentless pursuit of territories across the country by Taliban fighters laying claim to four additional districts taken away from government forces on June 5 continues to be an affront to peaceful transitions. Was this expected in the post-withdrawal

scenario under the Joe Biden administration? Probably. Should this be happening? Probably not. The rule is that without an orderly transition towards a power-sharing agreement between all stakeholders in a war-weary country, territorial expansion from one entity sets a dangerous precedent. In conflict-torn regions across the world, the foremost priority for all stakeholders is to neutralize militancy and set an inviolable precedent that all parties to the conflict must disarm prior to successful rehabilitation or negotiations. The absence of this has resulted in the Taliban charting a different course characterized by exploiting power vacuums and consolidating territorial gains. A premature declaration of victory in the absence of an agreement with the federal government has resulted

in the Taliban claiming to arrive as "conquerors" in Kabul. Such claims undermine peace. While truly an internal Afghan dynamic, subjects such as disarmament, rehabilitation, cessation of violence and the Afghan National Defense Forces' inability to deal with the assertiveness of the Taliban are variables missing from Washington's strategic calculus on peace in the country, which is beyond mere troop withdrawals. The Taliban are adamant that disarmament is not an option, as exemplified by the spike in attacks across the country. In June, government control over certain districts in the southern provinces of Zabul, Uruzgan and the central and eastern provinces of Ghazni and Nuristan, is missing. Also missing is an understanding that the unfolding events are eerily

similar to the situation in the 1990s, after the U.S. intervened to thwart the Soviet invasion. After the U.S. departure, the Taliban seized power in the aftermath of a brutal civil war by imposing their writ and their puritanical forms of governance on the Afghan people. The Lead Inspector General Report to Congress titled "Operation Freedom's Sentinel" details how the Taliban doubled their expansion in 2018, and as of February 2021, they had managed to surround five provincial capitals including the second largest city of Kandahar. Critically, this was happening when U.S. forces were stationed in the country and as withdrawal plans materialize, the purchase of mortars, surface-to-air missiles and heavy artillery is also taking place. The fundamental question thus confronting the Biden administration is whether these dynamics fit into the wider goal of sustainable peace in Afghanistan, which has been marred with disagreements,

plagued with hostilities and remains elusive due to conflicting narratives. Territorial expansion and the Taliban assuming a more assertive role with commanders openly claiming that arriving in Kabul entails punishments meted out to those not pledging allegiance is not conducive towards peace. Based on empirical evidence alone, the U.S. strategy has resulted in one stakeholder gaining supremacy over the other, with the Afghan National Defense Forces and the Federal Government having to confront an emboldened Taliban as openly defiant in imposing their writ of the state. As is the case with conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq, the absence of disarmament, reintegration and demobilization strategies will not result in everlasting political solutions. In Afghanistan's case, with peace remaining elusive, territorial expansion will not result in tangible peace either.

Ariana Airlines' Flight Returns to Kabul After 100-Day Stoppage in Russia

The Civil Aviation Authority announced on Saturday that the Boeing 737 belonging to Ariana Airlines, which had stopped in Russia 100 days ago, landed at Hamid Karzai International Airport on June 5.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority, the plane was acquitted by a court in Russia following the efforts of the agency and diplomatic authorities.

The agency added that under Russian customs law, unlicensed flights from that country's airports could result in millions of dollars in fines. The plane had been stopped on suspicion of leaving Russian airspace without permission.



Future...

we're given," McKenzie said.

Meanwhile, NATO is still figuring out how it can continue to train Afghan forces after NATO troops depart Afghanistan, the alliance's top official said on Monday. "The drawdown is on track and we're drawing down our troops in a coordinated way," said Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General. He was in Washington to meet with President Biden – who very publicly pledged to pull out US forces by 9/11/2021 – and with key members of Congress ahead of next week's NATO summit in Brussels. Preserving the safety of NATO troops as they withdraw is "our main concern," he said, but it's also important to "preserve hard-won gains."

Stoltenberg emphasized that a NATO civilian presence will remain, helping build capacity at Afghan institutions. NATO will also continue to fund the Afghan National Security Forces, which depend on foreign money to meet payroll.

It's still to be determined, however, how NATO will continue training Afghan troops. The idea is to bring Afghans to other countries for training, but it sounds like most of the details are yet to be determined. "We are looking at how we can provide training outside Afghanistan," said Stoltenberg. "We can train Afghan forces in other countries. We are ending our military mission in Afghanistan, but we are not ending our support for Afghans," he emphasized.

China...

has shown toward Taiwan."

Asked about Blinken's comment, a spokesperson for the US Trade Representative's (USTR) office said it has "no meetings to announce at this time. It added, however, that "the United States believes it is important to continue strengthening our bilateral trade relationship with Taiwan".

"China also will see such talks as part of a Biden strategy to strengthen ties with Taiwan and what they see as a diminishing US commitment to One China," she said, referring to the longstanding US policy of recognizing Beijing rather than Taipei.

With Iran's...

compelled to keep large sums of money at home and travel with cash when making or receiving payments – increasing their risk of losing savings due to security incidents like fire or theft. In Iran, as elsewhere, there has also been a growing preference for digital payments instead of cash to avoid unnecessary physical transactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Salary payments, online purchases, university registrations, and reimbursements of healthcare fees are now also mostly made via online bank transfers. This makes the issuance of bank cards a very important and welcome step that can greatly benefit refugees in their daily lives."

Under the new policy, UNHCR hopes to channel its assistance through bank transfers, giving refugees a more dignified and flexible choice in how they use their cash. "Financial inclusion can contribute to refugees' resilience, empowering them

to meet their needs in a safe, sustainable and dignified manner, and helping them avoid negative coping mechanisms," Baloch said. For over 40 years, Afghan refugees have been welcomed and generously supported by the Government of Iran. Recognizing this contribution, UNHCR continues to call for more equitable international responsibility and burden sharing with Iran. As of today, the US\$97.9 million needed to assist Afghan refugees in Iran during 2021, is only 8 per cent funded.

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan according to a report released on Tuesday by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the healthcare system is ill-adapted to the challenges faced by the Afghan people. The report, The Continued Struggle to Access Medical Care in Afghanistan, brings together medical data, interviews and questionnaires from patients, their caretakers and staff in MSF's projects in Helmand, Herat, Kandahar

and Khost provinces. It clearly shows a healthcare system that is failing the population, and echoes the findings of previous MSF reports released in 2014 and 2020.

Over the years, MSF has continued to expose the discrepancy between the promises of the donor-promoted model of public healthcare delivery and the reality on the ground. "Poorly functioning health facilities, unaffordable costs, and patients who undertake long and dangerous journeys. These all reduce people's ability to access timely medical care," says Filipe Ribiero, MSF Afghanistan country representative. Last year, international donors cut funding for services in Afghanistan increasing pressure on an already fragile public health system and on health partners. The emphasis needs to be on Afghans receiving quality treatment closer to home, in line with their needs and financial circumstances.

Harris...

that would root our corruption networks in the country. Non-governmental organisations placed Guatemala's widespread corruption at the top of their list of concerns before Harris's visit. Last month, two lawyers who are outspoken critics of Giammattei's administration were arrested on what they say were trumped-up charges aimed at silencing them.

When asked by a journalist on Monday whether Giammattei would be a reliable partner for the US to combat corruption, the president denied charges that his government is involved.

"How many cases of corruption have I been accused of? I can give you the answer: Zero," Giammattei said.

William Lawrence, professor of international relations at the American University in Washington, DC said the US is hoping to find ways to stem

migration in the short term as well as address the structural issues that have led to people seeking to migrate to the US. "You have to simultaneously both deal with the border issues – where there have been some improvements despite the surge – and the systemic issues that send so many migrants heading for the border," Lawrence told Al Jazeera television.

In an effort to tackle the "root causes" of migration, the Biden administration has pledged a \$4bn plan to boost development in the region and \$310m in humanitarian aid.

Al Jazeera's Manuel Rapalo, reporting from Tecun Uman on Guatemala's border with Mexico, said the US aid and funding to programmes in the region and Guatemala in particular, are not new. And making meaningful advances on corruption is going to be the nation's responsibility. "Ultimately it is up to the

government of Guatemala that foreign aid isn't lost to corruption," Rapalo said, adding that without making structural changes "no amount of foreign aid will prevent people from fleeing north".

Harris is scheduled to meet civil society leaders and entrepreneurs in Guatemala and then fly to Mexico where she will meet President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on Tuesday.

Harris also announced that the US would supply half a million COVID-19 doses to Guatemala.

Shortly before meeting Giammattei Harris said her trip to the country demonstrated the Biden's administration focus on re-establishing ties with allies around the world and was "a reflection of the priority President Biden placed on this region".

"It is in our collective interest that we work together," Harris said.

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Harris Message to Migrants: 'Do Not Come, Do Not Come'

United States Vice President Kamala Harris kicked off a three-day diplomatic trip to the Northern Triangle on Monday focused on stemming migration to the US. During a joint news conference with Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei held, Harris said that it is important to discourage people from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras – the three countries where the majority of migrants hail from – from making a journey to the US border. “The United States will continue to enforce our laws and secure our borders,” Harris said. “If you come to our border you will be turned back.” “Do not come, do not come,” she said. The administration of US President Joe Biden, which took office in January, is under pressure

to stem a surge in migrant arrivals from Central America fleeing poverty and corruption. Harris also announced new steps to combat human trafficking, smuggling and corruption in Guatemala. “The President and I agreed to continue our work to manage migration at Guatemala’s northern and southern borders,” she said. “We also discussed illicit drugs that are being smuggled and humans who are being trafficked across these borders undermining the security of both Guatemala and the people of the United States.” She said the US would help create a smuggling and human trafficking task force as well as an anti-corruption task force, charged with supporting and training local prosecutors to create an independent judiciary... **P3**



A look at the world

China Warns US Against Trade Deal with Taiwan

China has warned the United States against pursuing a trade deal with Taiwan after Washington signalled a possible resumption of economic talks with the self-ruled island. Zhao Lijian, spokesman for China’s foreign ministry, urged Washington on Tuesday to “stop any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, handle the Taiwan issue cautiously, and refrain from sending any wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces”. China claims democratic Taiwan as its own



territory, to be taken by force if necessary. In recent months, Beijing has increased the pressure on Taiwan, including sending fighter jets into the island’s air defence zone. The US has meanwhile stepped up support for Taiwan, approving new arms sales, sending high-level delegations and most recently pledging to donate 750,000 doses of vaccines to bolster its fight against COVID-19 – all moves that have drawn Beijing’s ire. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken added fuel to the fire on Monday when he told a congressional hearing in Washington, DC, that discussions would soon begin on a trade deal. “I know we are engaged in conversations with Taiwan, or soon will be, on some kind of framework agreement,” Blinken said when he was asked about the position of President Joe Biden’s administration on a bilateral trade agreement with Taiwan. The diplomat also said the US was “committed to the proposition that Taiwan must have the means to defend itself”. “We’ve continued to provide significant equipment and sales to Taiwan for that purpose,” he added. “We have real concerns about the increased aggression that the government in Beijing... **P3**

India to Give Adults Free COVID Shots After Surge in Infections



India will provide free COVID-19 vaccines to all adults, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, in an effort to rein in a pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and led to the world’s second-highest tally of infections. Modi’s announcement came on Monday after weeks of criticism of a bungled vaccine rollout that has covered fewer than 5 percent of India’s estimated adult population of 950 million. Health experts have warned that vaccination is the only way to protect lives from a feared third wave of infections after a surge in April-May overwhelmed hospitals in the big cities and in the vast hinterland. India is the second worst-hit nation after the United States with just below 29 million confirmed COVID-19 infections. Modi said the federal government would take over the vaccination programme from the states from June 21, reversing a policy under which states were partially running it. “Whether it is the poor, the lower middle class, the middle class, or the upper middle class, under the federal government programme, everyone will get free vaccines,” he said on national television. Under the earlier policy, the federal government gave free vaccines to the elderly and front-line workers, and left state governments and private hospitals to administer doses for a fee to people in the 18-45 age group. State governments were also competing against each other to procure vaccines from local manufacturers as well as foreign firms.... **P2**

US is Calculating Risks, Begins to Doubt “Dual Containment” of Russia, China

The United States is calculating current risks and probing into whether it will be feasible to push ahead with the policy of ‘dual containment’ of Russia and China, the president of the Russian Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) under the Russian Academy of Sciences, Alexander Dynkin, told TASS in an interview. “Washington is obviously trying to end the steep decline in Russian-US relations,” said Dynkin, a member of the Russian International Affairs Council’s Board of Trustees. “Firstly, the New START treaty was prolonged two days before its expiration date. Secondly, a Putin-Biden summit is being prepared for. Thirdly, intensive work is underway on resolving the controversy over the Iranian nuclear program. The US has eased its stance on the Nord Stream 2 issue. That gas carrier’s first pipeline has been finalized technologically. There were no signs of confrontation at the meetings of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russia’s Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev and US presidential national security adviser Jake Sullivan. Also, the trade war between the United States and China is being eased without much commotion. During the 2020 pandemic, their trade was up 8.4%. This is a lot,” Dynkin said. “It looks like the Americans are gauging the risks and beginning to doubt whether the ‘dual containment’ tactic is realistic enough. Is this really so? We will know in a week’s time, after the presidents meet in Geneva.” Alongside this, Dynkin said, Beijing’s policy towards Moscow... **P2**



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