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Kabul
32° / 18°



Herat
36° / 22



Nangarhar
43° / 26°



Balkh
38° / 29°



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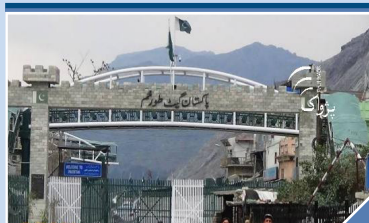
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Afghan Delegation's Visit to Washington Fruitful

Amrullah Saleh, the first vice-president, described the recent visit of the Afghan delegation led by President Ghani to Washington as fruitful. Saleh wrote on his Facebook page on Sunday that he explained the role of the region in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the United States and NATO, the strengthening of relations, bilateral cooperation, the discussion on the effective use of US aid, and ensuring accountability and transparency. The methods agreed upon by both parties were important aspects of this trip. "Explaining the complexities of the peace process, explaining and providing information... P3



Torkham Border To Be Opened On July 3-4 For Afghan Students

The Torkham Border will be opened next Saturday and Sunday (July 3 and 4) for Afghan students studying in Pakistani universities on scholarship for their entry into Pakistan. According to a statement issued by the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul, the permission has been granted to Afghan students currently stuck in Afghanistan to travel to Pakistan for continuation of their studies under Allama Iqbal Scholarship Programme. The statement further said that all the students will be required to provide negative report of the PCR Test from Afghanistan. It further said that antigen test for coronavirus will be conducted at the entry point and the students will undergo 10 days mandatory quarantine provided by government of Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health recorded 1,531 new coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and 80 deaths in the last 24 hours. The total cases now stand at 115,615 while death toll is 4,730.

'We Are Homeless Now': Fighting Displaces Thousands in Afghanistan's North



Since May, the Taliban have launched major attacks targeting government forces across the rugged countryside. Thousands of families have fled their homes after days of heavy fighting between the Taliban fighters and government forces in Afghanistan's northern region, officials said. The militia has seized villages and roads in far-flung areas in recent days,

triggering fierce battles with the Afghan National Army. As a result, thousands of civilians have reportedly fled their homes. "The situation is getting worse. There is no electricity or access to basic necessities. My family, including me, fled from Kunduz to Kabul but there are many families that are left behind and stuck in very difficult circumstances," Abdul

Rauf, a resident of Kunduz city, told TRT World. "If the fighting does not stop, we will be witnessing a humanitarian crisis in Kunduz. People there have no access to food or water at the moment." Heavy fighting also continues in Paktia, Baghlan, Khost and Kandahar province with Afghan officials saying the security situation of the country is "deteriorating".

"Last week Taliban captured around six districts in Paktia. Although the Afghan security forces pushed back the Taliban and cleared those areas, the insurgents continue to attempt to recapture them," Taj Mohammad Mangal, a member of Paktia's provincial council, told TRT World. "In the current situation, the presence and support of air force is very important." Sultan Shah, 42, a resident of Zazai Aryoub district in Paktia province, recalled the horrors of the fighting between the Taliban and the government forces saying everyone was "in a constant state of fear". "Many families left behind their homes and fled. Local market was shut for a few days and we didn't have access to enough food or water," Shah told TRT World. "Many families are still stuck there and mobile networks don't work there so we don't know what happened to them." Fashim Gul, a resident of Mosa Khail district in Khost province, said people who could afford to leave have fled the fighting. "There are many families who are stuck, they don't have enough to eat to survive. Many people were sick and could not be taken to hospitals. If this continues we don't have any hope... P3

More Residents Announce Support for ANDSF

Hundreds of residents of Injil district, Herat province, held a gathering to condemn Taliban's violence and attacks, and stated that they will support the ANDSF against the Taliban. District Governor Hafizullah Nab along with former jihadi commanders urged the public not to listen to Taliban propaganda, and added that they are responsible to support the current system and preserve the past achievements. Provincial Governor Abdul Saboor Qane said that the gathering and public mobilization sent a clear message to the Taliban that the war is illegitimate, and the... P2



Japan to Ask Athletes from Afghanistan, Five Countries for More COVID-19 Tests

Japan plans to ask Olympic athletes from Afghanistan and five other countries hit hard by the highly infectious Delta variant of the coronavirus to have daily virus tests for seven days before leaving for the Games, a Japanese newspaper said on Sunday. Currently, all overseas athletes are being asked to have coronavirus tests twice during the four-day period before their departure for the Tokyo Olympics, which are set to start on July 23 after a year's delay due to the pandemic. The Japanese government aims to put the new rule, which will be applied to athletes from India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, into effect on July 1, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported, without



citing sources. Olympics Minister Tamayo Marukawa said on Friday a member of the Ugandan Olympic team who tested positive for the

coronavirus upon arrival had the Delta variant, adding to concern the Games may trigger a new wave of infections.

More Residents...

Taliban must know that the people are opposed to the group. Qane called on the Taliban to stop violence, destroying roads and infrastructure, and extortion. Ministry of Interior also stated that residents of Samangan province took up arms in support of the country's security and defense forces. Hundreds of Paktia residents too rallied in support of Afghan forces and against the Taliban. They said that they have taken up arms in support of the security forces and will not allow the militants to seize territory and disrupt public services. Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) commemorated the 1st death anniversary of its two employees, Fatima Natasha Khalil and Ahmad Jawed Folad, who had been killed in an explosion in Kabul. The AIHRC stated that relevant government authorities are yet to identify the perpetrators, and provide a full response on the investigation. The AIHRC expressed its regret that authorities have failed to address complaints about targeted killings of other media and civil rights activists, and human rights defenders. The AIHRC added that the government must be accountable and effectively fight impunity, so that the human and citizen rights of all are fully protected. The AIHRC also called for an international fact-finding delegation appointed by the UN to investigate crimes against civilians, including targeted killings, attacks on ethnic and religious minorities, and educational institutions. The AIHRC urged the government to support the demand and cooperate in establishing this body and its investigation.

By: Mohammed Almezal

Global Powers and History Both Play in Taliban's Favour

Afghanistan was one of the few countries, probably the only one that survived the 19th century Great Game, the decades of landgrab competition between Victorian England and Tzarist Russia in central and east Asia. It is the only country in the modern world which no European power ever colonized or really ruled, a nation which has never been defeated by a foreign power, including the mighty Soviet Union which, invaded Afghanistan in 1979. But this proud nation has more than once been humbled by its own people, who since the withdrawal of the Soviets in 1989 waged what seems like a never-ending civil war that is expected to reach its climax once the last American soldier leaves on September 11 this year.

A Constant State of War

What is about Afghanistan that keeps it in constant state of war? And why the great powers of every era seem particularly keen on dominating this landlocked country with its unforgiving terrain? For a starter, Afghanistan is strategically and geopolitically important, neighbouring China, Pakistan, Iran and Central Asian countries. It lies in the centre of an area, that for long has been the focus of key players with conflicting interests such as England, Russia, India, China, Iran and more recently the United States. The Khyber Pass, located between Afghanistan and Pakistan, has for centuries been one of the most important trade routes and strategic military locations in the world. The Silk Road, the ancient network of trade routes, nearly 7,000 km long, also known as the cultural crossroads of the Indian, Persian and Chinese civilisations, passed through Afghanistan. Secondly, the country is also quite rich in untapped natural resources such as minerals, gas and oil. Some estimates put the country oil and gas reserves' value at \$1 trillion.

Sanctity of the Land

The Afghans will never show mercy to those who attempt to breach the sanctity of their land. Rudyard Kipling can attest to that. Most of the works of the colonial era English author focussed on India, where he was born in 1865,

but his most famous poem is the one that has over the years become a stern warning note for would-be Afghanistan invaders. The poem, The Young British Soldier, written more than a century ago goes like this: "When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains, And the women come out to cut up what Remains, Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your Brains An' go to your Gawd Like a soldier." Kipling is well known to be a colonial propagandist, someone who saw the non-English as lesser breeds, henceforth his verses in this poem seem awfully stereotypical and prejudiced. Nevertheless, they capture the humiliation of the British on the hands of the Afghans in the First Anglo-Afghan War. By the end of this campaign in 1942, and as the British army, their families and thousands of support staff retreated from Kabul, they were attacked by Afghans. By the end of the day, they were all dead except for one young British soldier. Yes, a single soldier managed to make it to Jalalabad, where the British commanders were stationed. Most probably, his life was spared by the Afghans to tell his superiors back in India of the horrors that await them if they attempt another campaign. After three failed campaigns, the British seemed to have learned their lesson. But another power, 100 years later, tried its luck, only to suffer a similar humbling fate. On December 24, 1979, at the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, which was at its prime, invaded Afghanistan to instil a friendly Communist government headed by Babrak Karmal, the exiled leader of the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

The Mujahidin Take-Over

They seized Kabul in a matter of hours but for the next 10 years, they suffered countless attacks by the resistance fighters, then called 'Mujahidin', heavily armed by the US, Pakistan and other countries fearful of the spread of Communist ideology in this part of the world. With their guerrilla tactics and armed with US-supplied anti-aircraft Stinger missiles, the 'Mujahidin' inflicted heavy losses on the Soviets. After 10 years and more



than 15,000 of their soldiers dead, the Soviets decided it was time to get out of Afghanistan. The last Soviet soldier crossed back across the border on February 15, 1989. For the next five years, and with no foreign threat at the door, the Afghans were back in their own traditional feud, fighting for power and resources. In 1994, a small zealous group of religion's students, calling themselves the Taliban, with their twisted mix of tribalism and a rigid interpretation of Islam, and fed up with the in-fighting among the ruling Mujahidin, began its march from the south of the country with the aim of establishing their own Islamic state. By 1996, the extremist Taliban captured the capital Kabul. As they established their religious emirate, the Taliban opened the vast country to all those willing to fight against the western hegemony, especially the former Arab fighters who fought along the Afghans against the Soviets. Osama Bin Laden was one of them and he set up one of the most notorious terror shops there - Al Qaida, from which he plotted the 11 September 2001 attacks on American which led to the US invasion of Afghanistan. The Taliban government quickly tumbled. Its leaders became on the run and a pro-US government was installed. The Americans didn't learn the Kipling lesson too. After 20 years of war, thousands of dead and injured soldiers and hundreds of billions

wasted, the Americans, like the British and the Soviets before them, have finally resigned to the 'Afghan factor' and decided it was time to get out. They failed to bring peace to the war-scarred country. History repeats itself they say. The Taliban, who inherited the Soviets more than two decades ago, are doing it again. They are likely to inherit the departing Americans. The Wall Street Journal few days ago quoted a confidential government report as saying that the US intelligence community has concluded recently that the government of Afghanistan "could collapse as soon as six months after the American military withdrawal is completed." The Taliban are poised to take over the country, again, it noted. A Taliban rule is therefore likely. They have swept large parts of the country in the past few months. Their previous experience at the helm wasn't an inspiring one. Yet, they may have perhaps evolved in thinking and approach. Few can claim they have sufficient knowledge of what their reclusive leaders think and plan. Will the ruthless and intellectually rigid student movement bring peace that Afghanistan has for 200 years been yearning for? That remains to be seen. One thing is clear- the concerned global players are giving them the chance this time. They don't have a choice, do they?

By: Rachel Zhang

Could Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Help Stabilise Afghanistan After US Pull-Out?

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation may play a more active role in Afghanistan's security after the planned US military withdrawal prompted an upsurge in violence that threatened to spill over into neighbouring countries, analysts believe. Led by China and Russia and created in 2001, the SCO also includes India, Pakistan and four other former Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It has four observer states - Afghanistan, Mongolia, Belarus and Iran - and six dialogue partners. As a Eurasian security grouping focusing on anti-terrorism cooperation, member states have conducted multiple joint military exercises. China has blamed a surge of attacks in the country on the abrupt withdrawal of US and Nato troops after two decades of deployment. Its embassy in Afghanistan warned its nationals to

strengthen emergency preparedness and to leave the country as soon as possible. Beijing also fears that the resulting instability will pose a security threat to its Belt and Road Initiative projects around the region and in Xinjiang, which borders the country. Three other SCO members - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan - also border the war-torn country. "The SCO will definitely play a greater role in regional security in the future against the backdrop of the US pulling out its forces out of Afghanistan. The grouping has conducted anti-terrorism military drills in areas including Xinjiang and the border of Tajikistan in the past," said Ma Bin, a research fellow at the centre for SCO studies at Fudan University. "China hopes that such cooperation can be enhanced in the future as it can directly aid counterterrorism and extremism efforts in northwest China." Ma also

said the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and heavy losses - a defeat that may have contributed to the eventual break-up of the USSR - would make Russia and the other ex-Soviet states wary of getting involved. But he said that because of their geographical location "the instability of Afghanistan will directly affect the security of Central Asian countries and Russia" and they may be forced to act in some form. "Historical issues determine how they will participate, not whether they will participate at all. Furthermore, what we are talking about is helping Afghan reconstruction through diplomatic and economic means, the nature of which is totally different from the Soviet Union military invasion in the 1980s," Ma continued, adding that the exact role played by the SCO was yet to be determined. At an event to mark the grouping's 20th anniversary last week, Chinese

Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for closer cooperation, saying: "We should build a strong shield for regional security, unite our efforts in fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism." A liaison office between the SCO and Afghanistan was set up in 2005, three years before Afghanistan was given observer status, to discuss security, peace talks and post-war reconstruction. "It is time to beef up the role of the liaison office and strengthen coordination between each side to seek a peaceful solution to the Afghan issue," said Pan Guang, director of the centre of SCO studies at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. He also said members may consider joint counterterrorism operations in future if any SCO member was attacked by terrorist groups based in the country. Tajikistan and China have staged joint anti-terrorism drills in recent years under the framework of the SCO near Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan - exercises the Tajik defence ministry said were targeting groups based across the border. The SCO announced in March that

member states would hold an anti-terrorism exercise this year without disclosing the specific date and place. The meeting also approved plans to cooperate "combating terrorism, separatism and extremism" from 2022 to 2024. Pan added that Beijing had also tried to tackle terrorism in Afghanistan through economic means, such as inviting the country to take part in belt and road projects. Earlier this month Wang spoke to his counterparts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and said the three countries had agreed to support the "substantial expansion" of the project to Afghanistan. "China proposes expanding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan, so that the Taliban can also participate in the country's peaceful reconstruction, thus reducing the risk of turmoil," said Pan. He also said the China Rail Express, an international freight route, which links China and Europe and passes through Central Asia, could help improve economic ties between the SCO countries. "One of the important reasons why... P3

Afghan Exported Goods Worth '\$450M' So Far this Year

Figures show that nearly 32,800 (metric) tons of goods and products have been exported through air routes. Afghanistan has exported \$450 million worth of goods so far this year, a slight increase compared to the previous year, officials said, adding that they hope to achieve the target of over \$1 billion by the end of the year. At least 30 tons of Afghan goods and products are sent out of the country through air routes every week, according to figures by the Chamber of Trade and Investment. The figures show that nearly 32,800 (metric) tons of goods and products have been exported through air routes in the last five months. The country's exports in 2020 were \$776 million, according to

the National Statistics and Information Authority. Our target is \$600 million to \$700 million in the next five months," said Mir Zaman Popal, head of the exports department at the Chamber of Trade and Investment. The private sector meanwhile said that the exports by land are beset with obstacles. "Many borders were closed in 2020, but the situation is a bit better this year as COVID-19 vaccination has started and countries are starting to open their routes for trade," said Hujjatullah, a private sector representative. Afghanistan's exports declined last year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Carpets, handicrafts and dry and fresh fruits comprise most of the country's exports abroad.



'We Are Homeless...

for our future," Gul told TRT World. The Afghan Defense Ministry said in a tweet that they have killed about 193 Taliban in the last 24 hours. The Taliban group, which has been waging an armed rebellion since it was toppled from power in a 2001 US-led invasion, briefly captured Kunduz city in recent years but were pushed back. Last week they captured the surrounding districts of the city and a nearby border crossing with Tajikistan. Violence across the country escalated after the US forces began withdrawal of its last remaining 2,500 troops from Afghanistan, as part of an agreement signed between the Taliban and the US in the Qatari capital, Doha, in February 2020. The troops withdrawal was slated for May under the agreement that was sealed under former President Donald Trump, but Trump's successor President Joe Biden extended the deadline to September 11, which would coincide with the 20th anniversary of attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001. Last week, Biden pledged US support to Afghan leaders in a meeting with President Ashraf Ghani but said Afghans must decide their own future. The agreement also called for intra-Afghan peace talks, but it has made little progress and has been hampered by differences. "We don't have any hope for peace and our future when we look at the continuing violence, the next generation will suffer more than us," Gul said. The 20 year war in Afghanistan has killed 241,000 people, including Americans, according to Brown University and Boston University's Costs of War report released in April.

Could Shanghai...

economic cooperation among the member states is rocky is the issue of transportation. The post-Soviet countries and China do not even use the same track gauge. The CR Express can solve the problem," said Pan. But Ma said its value was more symbolic. "In terms of economic and trade cooperation, it ... shows China is willing to make great efforts to promote cooperation with other countries. But the current transportation volume of the express is rather low."

Afghan...

on the strategy of the Taliban and its supporters, and the extent of military operations by terrorists were also discussed during the visit," he added. According to Saleh, the leaders of the two major US parties, one now in power and the other in opposition, jointly welcomed the Afghan delegation and stressed on their continued support for the country. "President Joe Biden, in a cordial and respectful atmosphere, said that "the people of Afghanistan should know that I am their friend in the White House. The narrative of escaping from our obligations is baseless and wrong. We do not turn away from our friends and allies. The United States continues to provide security, defense, economic, humanitarian and diplomatic assistance to Afghanistan", wrote Saleh. The first vice-president said that it was not possible to achieve anything bigger than this in a day and a half, and it was perhaps one of the most successful trips in the history of foreign travel. President Ghani headed a high-level government delegation to Washington on Thursday to meet with President Joe Biden, Speakers of the House and Senate, and other US officials. This comes even as

the Dutch military presence in Afghanistan will come to an end this month after almost twenty years. To commemorate this moment, the Ministry of Defense has handed over two Dutch mission flags to the National Military Museum in Soesterberg. "We are leaving with mixed feelings. We see the images of Taliban progressing," caretaker Dutch Defense Minister Anke Bijleveld said in a speech. "The security situation is worrying and some of the progress may be lost," said Bijleveld. Dozens of people attended the flag ceremony, but 25 chairs were left empty to represent the 25 Dutch soldiers who died in Afghanistan. There was also a moment of silence observed for the "many Afghans who have died, the soldiers and colleagues", said Bijleveld. After twenty years, all 10,000 foreign soldiers are withdrawing from the country, including the 160 Dutch soldiers who were still on the ground there. The Dutch soldiers had been in Afghanistan since 2002, mainly in the province of Uruzgan. Later, the Netherlands helped train the Afghan police force in Kunduz with the aim of improving security and stability of the region. Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Sigrid Kaag emphasized that the Dutch have a lasting

relationship with Afghanistan. "We have entered into a long-term relationship with the Afghan people. A relationship that we do not want to break 20 years later," she said. Meanwhile, Rustaq, the northeastern district of Takhar province, collapsed to Taliban on Saturday night as per sources who told Hashte Subh. There were more than 2,000 forces in Rustaq when the district fell as per the sources and only Hakim Baloch commander and his men held the line and were forced to leave their stronghold after other forces retreated. Other sources added that the fall of the Rustaq district was a tactical move. More than 2,000 different forces defending Rustaq have retreated to Kishm district of Badakhshan. The fall of Rustaq will make the situation extremely critical not only beyond Takhar, but also in Badakhshan. On the other hand, Taliban's reacted to the US drone strikes in northern Afghanistan and said, "We condemn in strongest terms bombings by US invaders in some provinces. Such provocations open the door for a response. Invaders should focus on withdrawal, not embroil themselves in war nor prolong tragedy for Afghans. Else, they will be responsible for consequences."

Pakistan...

Pakistan's progress and efforts to come out of its grey list. Pakistan was included in FATF grey list during the tenure of previous government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as it did not make any proper legislation in that regard, he added. He expressed hope that Pakistan would not be included in FATF black list. The whole nation was well aware about those who were involved in money laundering, he concluded.

In fact, Pakistan Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry has said that stability in Afghanistan is very important for Pakistan. "Pakistan urges the Taliban to hold talks with the US and Afghan government," Chaudhry said on Saturday, while speaking to the media about Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent interview to an American newspaper. In his interview, PM Khan described a new dimension of relations with the United States, where he emphasized

on economic, rather than security ties, Chaudhry said. Khan believes that if the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates, they may consider sealing their border, Chaudhry said, adding that Pakistan has fenced off 90% of the Durand line. "We are in a position to seal the border with Afghanistan completely," he said. The minister said that the solution to the Afghanistan problem must come out in such a way that all the warring factions are involved.

Exchange Rates

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Pakistan Hopes Taliban Will Not Allow Militant Outfits to Operate Against Pakistan

Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed expressed hope on Saturday that Taliban will not allow militant outfits to conduct terror activities against Pakistan. He added that Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had clearly said that Pakistan will not give any military bases to US for operations against militants in Afghanistan. Sheikh Rashid further said that the government has taken concrete measures to make the borders with Iran and Afghanistan fully protected. He said 88 percent work for fencing on Durand line has been completed to prevent any illegal entry into Pakistan. Earlier this month, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan reiterated that Pakistan is ready to be a US partner for peace in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan

Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Saturday said that Pakistan was taking all solid decisions in its larger national interest and always desired for political settlement of Afghanistan peace process. He said that a stable, peaceful and sovereign Afghanistan was imperative and mandatory for Pakistan and the entire region. Farrukh Habib said that Pakistan had rendered unprecedented and supreme sacrifices in war against terrorism to eradicate it completely. He said Pakistan was hosting Afghan refugees in its soil from many decades and it would give importance to facilitate its people rather than Afghanis. Replying to a question, the minister said the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) had recognized... **P3**



A look at the world

Russian Government Approves List of Unfriendly Countries

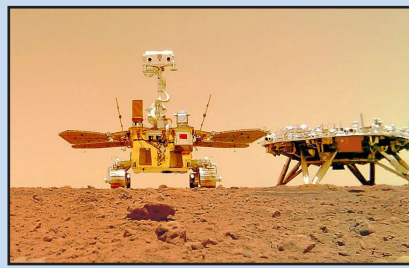
The Russian government has approved a list of unfriendly countries. There are two names on the list - the United States and the Czech Republic. The instruction was uploaded to the official portal of legal information on Friday.

"To approve the attached list of countries that commit unfriendly actions towards Russia, Russian citizens or Russian legal entities," the instruction says. There are two countries on the list (the United



States and the Czech Republic) to which measures will be applied in accordance with President Vladimir Putin's decree of April 23 imposing restrictions on hiring people living in Russia by diplomatic missions of unfriendly countries. The Czech Republic will be allowed to hire no more than 19 Russian nationals to work for its embassy, and the United States, not a single one. The United States has repeatedly imposed anti-Russian sanctions in the recent years. The latest batch of anti-Russian sanctions was adopted in mid-April. The Czech authorities said on April 17 that Russia had been allegedly behind the blasts at munitions depots in the village of Vrbetice in the east of the Czech Republic in 2014 and expelled 18 Russian diplomats who, it claimed, were officers of Russian intelligence services.

China Releases New Video, Images From its Zhurong Mars Rover



China National Space Administration releases new footage captured by the country's Mars probe Tianwen-1 launched in mid-May. The China National Space Administration has released new footage captured by the country's Mars probe Tianwen-1 that was launched in mid-May. The videos and photos taken by a camera installed on the Zhurong rover of the Tianwen-1 spacecraft and released on Sunday show the lander deploying a parachute before touching down on the Mars surface and the rover driving away from its landing platform onto the land. State broadcaster CCTV said the Mars rover Zhurong, named after the Chinese god of fire, has been working on the red planet for 42 days and has moved 236 metres in total. China landed a spacecraft on Mars for the first time on May 15, 2021, in the latest step forward for its ambitious goals in space. A remote-controlled rover drove down the ramp of its landing capsule on May 22 and onto the surface of Mars, making China the first nation to orbit, land and deploy a land vehicle on its inaugural mission to the Red Planet. The probe sent back its first photographs of the Red Planet days after its historic landing. The six-wheeled rover is surveying an area known as Utopia Planitia, especially searching for signs of water or ice that could lend clues as to whether Mars ever sustained life. Powered by solar energy, the 240kg (530 pounds) Zhurong will also look for signs of ancient life, including any sub-surface water and ice, using a ground-penetrating radar during its 90-day exploration of the Martian surface. Zhurong will move and stop in slow intervals, with each interval estimated to be just 10 metres (33 feet) over three days, according to China's official SpaceNews. China is the second country to land and operate a spacecraft on Mars, after the United States. The former Soviet Union landed a craft in 1971, but it lost communication seconds later.

Iran Says Nuclear Deal Can Be Revived, But 'Will Not Negotiate Forever'

Foreign Ministry spokesman says he 'still believes deal is possible, if US decides to abandon Trump's failed legacy'. Iran on Saturday said the 2015 nuclear deal can be revived during Vienna talks, but ruled out indefinite negotiations. "Out of a steadfast commitment to salvage a deal that the US tried to torpedo, Iran has been the most active party



in Vienna, proposing most drafts. Still believe a deal is possible, if the US decides to abandon Trump's failed legacy. Iran will not negotiate forever," Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said on Twitter. Former US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew Washington from the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2018 and went on to re-impose sanctions on Tehran lifted under the agreement in a failed push to bring Iran back to the negotiating table for a more extensive agreement. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the pact is formally known, placed sweeping constraints on Iran's nuclear program and created a robust inspections regime in exchange for the lifting of biting international and US sanctions.



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