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Qatari FM Meets US Special Envoy for Peace in Afghanistan

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani met on Monday with the US Special Representative for Peace in Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, who is currently visiting the country. Relations of bilateral cooperation between the two countries were reviewed during the meeting, as well as the latest developments in the region, especially in Afghanistan. During the meeting, the two sides affirmed the State of Qatar's efforts and role in mediating to achieve stability in light of the ongoing developments in the field, as well as its commitment to encourage dialogue between brothers in Afghanistan... **P3**



Central Asian Governments Use Mercenary Groups Against the Taliban

Several Central Asian nations are ready to use mercenary groups to protect their borders threatened by the conflict in Afghanistan between the government army and the Taliban, reports the authoritative Russian newspaper Nezavisimaja Gazeta. In a July 10 article that most of the militiamen recruited by the governments of the region are refugees of Uyghur origin from China. The Uyghurs are allegedly being used against the Taliban by Tajikistan and other nations belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which emerged from the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s. As part of the CIS agreements, the Russian Federation's 201 military base is active on Tajik territory, but the Kremlin is only observing the situation for now. From the 201 base, however, the Russian military has begun various preventive manoeuvres with Tajik troops: perations have taken place in the mountain ranges of Lokhur and Sambuli. The Russian... **P3**

In Symbolic End to War Top US Commander to Exit Afghanistan Amid Taliban Surge



The U.S. general leading the war in Afghanistan, Austin Miller, will relinquish command on Monday, U.S. officials say, in a symbolic end to America's longest conflict even as Taliban insurgents gain momentum. Miller will become America's last four-star general on the ground in Afghanistan in a ceremony in Kabul

that will come ahead of a formal end to the military mission there on Aug. 31, a date set by President Joe Biden as he looks to extricate American from the two-decade-old war. While the ceremony may offer some sense of closure for U.S. veterans who served in Afghanistan, it's unclear whether it will succeed

in reassuring the Western-backed Afghan government as the Taliban press ground offensives that have given them control of more territory than at any time since the conflict began. U.S. Marine General Kenneth McKenzie, whose Florida-based Central Command oversees U.S. forces in hot-spots including

Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, flew into Kabul to underscore America's future assistance to Afghan security forces. "Admittedly, it's going to be very different than it was in the past. I'm not going to minimize that," McKenzie told a small group of reporters. "But we're going to support them." But he also cautioned that the Taliban, in his view, appeared to be seeking "a military solution" to a war that the United States has unsuccessfully tried to end with a peace agreement between the Taliban and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government. He cautioned that provincial capitals were at risk but noted that the U.S.-backed Afghan security forces "are determined to fight very hard for those provincial capitals." Even after Miller steps down, McKenzie will still be able to authorize U.S. air strikes against the Taliban through Aug. 31 in support of Ghani's Western-backed government. But after that, the Marine general said when it came to U.S. strikes in Afghanistan, his focus will shift squarely to counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda and Islamic State.

Rally Meetings Held on Peace, Security

President Ghani met with Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, former President Hamid Karzai, and jihadi leader Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, at the Presidential Palace on Sunday evening. They exchanged views about the current situation, and emphasized on a unified stance, strong political consensus in support of the ANDSF, the republic system, and lasting peace and stability, said the Presidential Palace in a statement. In fact, a Taliban delegation led by Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai traveled to Ashgabat at the official invitation of Turkmenistan, Taliban's political office spokesman Mohammad Naeem stated. The delegation met with deputy Turkmen foreign minister and discussed relevant political, economic, and security issues, Naeem added.



Pentagon Continue to Consult with Afghan Forces

Pentagon officials are watching the Taliban's sweeping advances in Afghanistan "with deep concern" and are encouraging its Afghan partners to "step up" and defend their country amid the pullout of US forces, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said on Sunday. Kirby told Fox News that the Pentagon was "not unmindful" of the situation. "We're certainly watching with deep concern the deteriorating security situation and the violence, which is of course way too high, and the advances and the momentum that the Taliban seems to have right now," he said. Kirby said officials are monitoring the Taliban's movements in the country and working with the Afghan military "to encourage



them to use the capacity and the capability that we know they have, and we know that they know how to defend their country." He said Afghanistan's capacity and capabilities included a "very capable" Air Force and "very sophisticated" special forces that can help defend the country from the Taliban resurgence. "This is a

time for them to step up and to do exactly that," Kirby said of their Afghan partners. With U.S. Central Command estimating that more than 90% of the withdrawal process is complete, Kirby said that even though U.S. troops won't be supporting Afghanistan on the ground, the U.S. will continue to support the country and its... **P3**

China...

and load shedding, particularly in the summer when demand is highest. However, problems occur in winter as well. In January of this year, the entire country suffered a blackout after a fault at a power station in southeast Sindh province caused the grid to lose its 50Hz frequency, which caused power stations throughout the country to close down. This makes the reinforcement of the grid, arguably, the single most important infrastructure scheme for the country's socio-economic development. Zhang Jianhua, head of China's National Energy Administration, told those present at the ceremony that the Matiari-Lahore line was the first large-scale transmission project of the CPEC, and would provide "solid assurance" for power transmission in the south and power supply in the north. Speaking about the economic corridor in general, Azhar added: "The CPEC is of utmost importance for Pakistan. It will enable the country to enhance industrial production, upgrade energy and communication infrastructure and improve connectivity within the region." Of Pakistan's 207 million people, roughly 58 million lacked access to grid electricity in 2018, including 46% of the rural population.

By: Sacha Pfeiffer

What Might Happen to Guantánamo Now That U.S. Troops Are Leaving Afghanistan

The war in Afghanistan has lasted nearly 20 years. One of its key architects, former U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, died last month. And this week, President Biden said the U.S. military operation there will end on Aug. 31, just shy of the twentieth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. So, what does that mean for Gitmo? After all, the U.S. military prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, was created to hold enemy fighters captured in Afghanistan and the so-called War on Terror. If the Afghanistan conflict ends, what happens to its prisoners of war? Here are five questions — and answers — for what might happen to the prison at Guantánamo as the conflict in Afghanistan ends.

First, remind me: How many prisoners are left at Gitmo?

Over the years, Guantánamo has held nearly 800 people, but now just 40 men are imprisoned there, and almost three-quarters of them have never been criminally charged. They're known as "forever prisoners" and they're being detained indefinitely. Some have been there for almost two decades.

How has the U.S. government justified holding them without charging them with any crimes?

The legal foundation of Guantánamo is that after 9/11, Congress passed an "authorization for use of military force" in 2001 to go after whomever was responsible for those attacks, like al-Qaida and the Taliban. That law gives the president sweeping powers during wartime, and the government claims that includes the ability to detain prisoners without charge or trial. But it's unclear when those powers expire and what the parameters of war are. It's also not clear whether the U.S. can justify holding prisoners forever due to a larger, amorphous global war on terror. As a result, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan raises complicated legal questions, such as whether a war can still be considered ongoing once fighters leave the main battlefield, and whether prisoners must be freed following a troop withdrawal. "Without having troops in Afghanistan, it's going to be harder for the government or deferential courts to say, 'Well, yeah, you said the war was over, and also there are no troops in

the field, and also nobody's shooting, but the war remains ongoing," said Guantánamo defense attorney Ben Farley. "It's just going to be harder to say that with a plain face."

Have any courts weighed in on this?

Yes, lawsuits have been filed over these issues, and courts have generally avoided specifically addressing whether these vast presidential war powers are specific to a certain geography. Instead, courts have been able to point to the war in Afghanistan as justification for holding detainees. But human rights activists and detainees' lawyers say a war must have defined boundaries so we know when it's over and time to release prisoners.

"One of the fraught questions for the past 20 years has been whether or not the war on terrorism extends beyond the borders of Afghanistan and nearby Pakistan," said Guantánamo defense attorney Michel Paradis. "Is the war a war against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan? Or is it a war against terrorism broadly? Is it a war against al-Qaida and anything that shares al-Qaida's ideology, any organization that splits off from al-Qaida?" Or has the war on terror become a "rhetorical war," he added, one similar to the war on drugs, war on poverty and war on cancer, which do not convey prosecutorial powers such as jailing people indefinitely? "There are these pretty major questions," said Paradis, who also teaches at Columbia Law School, "but those debates have largely been able to be sidestepped, if only because the war in Afghanistan has been ongoing." Guantánamo's critics say it's nonsensical to argue that the war is over for purposes of bringing troops home, but the war continues for purposes of detaining people captured by those troops. Yet several Senate Republicans say releasing these prisoners would endanger the country, and the Justice Department continues to argue that the U.S. has authority to indefinitely detain accused terrorists. "We have been and remain at war with al-Qaida," said DOJ attorney Stephen M. Elliott at a May hearing in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., in a case involving a former Afghan militia member who has been held at Guantánamo since 2007. Al-Qaida is "morphing and evolving," Elliott



said, and the U.S. "war on terrorism" continues. Now that the U.S. is leaving Afghanistan, Paradis said, he assumes Guantánamo prisoners are preparing new legal motions that will eventually land before the Supreme Court. "I can imagine there'll be at least a few detainees saying that you can no longer hold me because the whole reason you've been holding me all this time, all these decades now, has been the claim that if I'm released, I will be a danger in the war in Afghanistan," he said. "And without that, why are you still holding me?"

What happens if the prisoners win that argument? That's tricky because the U.S. has to find countries to take them, and some of the prisoners are from collapsed countries like Yemen. But since President Biden entered office, at least six Guantánamo detainees have been cleared for transfer to other countries. Still, Guantánamo defense attorney Wells Dixon points out that just because transfers have been approved does not mean they're imminent: "There are detainees in Guantánamo today who've been approved for transfer for more than a decade and they're still in Guantánamo," he said.

Still, does clearing prisoners for release lay the groundwork for emptying Gitmo's prison and shutting it down? Yes. As Paradis notes: "The more individuals who are cleared to be released, the easier it is to close

Guantánamo, because the detainee population gets smaller and smaller every day." Yet the Justice Department is at cross purposes with the Biden administration by opposing legal motions filed by Gitmo prisoners, said Dixon, who is also a senior staff attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights. "Why does the United States government continue to reflexively fight detainee cases, given the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and the declarations from the president that the conflict is ending?" Dixon asked. "If you consider the president's mandate to close the prison and you look at what the Department of Justice and other agencies are doing, they're squarely at odds with each other." But with the legal argument for indefinitely detaining Gitmo prisoners on shakier ground as U.S. troops leave Afghanistan, Biden and the Justice Department could finally get on the same page, possibly leading to the eventual closure of Guantánamo's military prison. With the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, "I think what you'll see is a lot of pressure put on the administration, and on the government more generally in litigation, arguing that the armed conflict has ended," said Farley, the Guantánamo defense attorney, "and detention authority has evaporated."

By: Mohammed Ayooob

Will Afghanistan Be America's Second Vietnam—Or Something Worse?

At a press conference on 8 July, US President Joe Biden unequivocally refuted the suggestion that there was any comparison between America's withdrawal from Afghanistan and its humiliating retreat from Vietnam in 1975. He asserted that the Afghan military was far better equipped and far more capable of withstanding an imminent Taliban takeover of the country than Saigon's forces were in confronting the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong armies almost half a century ago. Biden stated that it was 'highly unlikely' that 'there's going to be the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country'. He declared that the US went into Afghanistan 'to degrade the terrorist threat to keep Afghanistan from becoming a base from which attacks could be continued against the United States. We achieved those objectives ... We did not go

to Afghanistan to nation-build.' To reassure the Afghan government, Biden and his top defense officials, including Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, have repeatedly said that the US will maintain an 'over the horizon' capacity, presumably meaning airpower including drones, in order to help the Afghan government defend itself if the need arose. This looks like a consolation prize for the tottering government in Kabul, which American intelligence, according to reliable reports, believes may collapse in six months after the American withdrawal. While Biden has tried to minimize the import of this assessment, it appears credible in light of the Taliban's recent military victories that have seen a large number of districts fall into their hands. According to reliable estimates, the Taliban control more than half of the country's

districts, many of them captured after the beginning of the American withdrawal on 1 May. These include parts of Badakhshan province in the northeast bordering on Tajikistan and portions of Herat province in the west bordering on Iran that had not been Taliban strongholds and have large non-Pashtun populations that are averse to Taliban rule. Several of these ethnic groups have organized their own militias in order to bolster the government's capacity to resist Taliban advances. However, with Afghan forces melting away before Taliban advances they haven't been able to stop Taliban control of large swathes of the countryside. The Taliban conquest of a large segment of Herat province and their control over several crossing points into Iran have forced Tehran, which has been firmly opposed to the Taliban coming to power in Kabul, to start

negotiations with the Taliban. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif met with a Taliban delegation that had been invited to Iran in the first week of July to urge the Taliban to come to a negotiated settlement with the Kabul regime to forestall 'unfavorable' consequences for Afghanistan. The Taliban, on their part, having failed so far to seize major urban centers, have adopted the strategy of capturing surrounding areas, thus cutting off government-controlled cities with the aim of eventually forcing them into submission. Close observers of Afghanistan believe the Taliban are following a two-pronged strategy and can shift between the two depending on how the situation develops after America's total withdrawal. According to Tamim Asey, head of the Institute of War and Peace Studies in Kabul and a former deputy defense minister, 'In a maximalist sense, the Taliban wants a total military victory ... In a minimalist sense, once the Taliban has tested government forces and realized that a total

military victory is not within reach then it will use violence as leverage to secure further concessions at the negotiation table.' With the American withdrawal nearing completion, the Taliban have increased their military pressure, hoping to win an outright victory, though they will probably be willing to settle for a major share in a coalition government as a stepping stone for the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The latter outcome appears a distinct possibility, especially given the fact that the US didn't make a political settlement between Kabul and the Taliban a precondition for its withdrawal. The Trump administration was interested only in bringing American soldiers' home without incurring major losses, in the process leaving the Afghan government to its fate. The Biden administration has followed in its predecessor's footsteps and taken that strategy to its conclusion. This may not be an exact replication of the humiliating defeat... **P3**

Over 18M People in Need of Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan: UNAMA

Both Afghan government and United Nations confirmed that escalation in violence is leading Afghanistan to a humanitarian crisis. UN general secretary's deputy special representative in Afghanistan Ramiz Alkabrove on Sunday said that half of Afghanistan's population is in need of humanitarian assistance and a third of children under five are facing acute malnutrition. Alkabrove added that coronavirus, drought, and war are the main causes of this year's critical humanitarian situation. The deputy special representative on the other hand expressed concern about aid

envoys being attacked and killed. He reiterated that the aid envoys are impartial and should not be subject to attacks by armed groups. Acting Finance Minister Khalid Painda said that the Afghan government has announced more than \$250 million to address the humanitarian crisis but called on a joint international move in this regard. Khalid Painda called on international organizations to offer aid in order to prevent a humanitarian crisis. This comes as war, drought, and the lethal pandemic is threatening the lives of millions of Afghans nationwide.



Pentagon Continue...

people. "We are not walking away from this relationship," Kirby said. "We're going to continue to support them from a financial perspective, logistical perspective and certainly aircraft maintenance." Meanwhile, General Sir Nick Carter, the chief of the UK defense staff has said it is "too early to suggest" that Afghanistan is "going to go to tell in a handcart". He claimed that there were "reports from some of the rural areas that the Taliban have taken over that they're actually allowing girls to go to school" and said it was "too early to say what will happen". "You know, it's got a burgeoning civil society, it's got a media that is remarkable in many ways. And of course, they've got an education system now. And actually, the Taliban recognize that. So again, I think we're very quick to suggest this is going to go to hell in a handcart. It's too early to suggest that." However, Republican Adam Kinzinger, an Air Force veteran who flew missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, told NBC that he agreed with media characterizations that the U.S. and allied pullout from the country after a 20-year deployment as a "crushing defeat" at the hands of the Taliban insurgency.

Turkey Saved 5,693

authorities for the torture, ill-treatment and illegal pushback of migrants and refugees to Turkey, saying that the country's practice had become its "de facto" border policy. In a new report, the rights group described 21 incidents that involved around 1,000 people. Many had been subjected to violence before being transferred back to Turkey, Adriana Tidona, migration researcher for Europe at Amnesty, said in the report. The pushbacks, on land and at sea, sometimes involved people apprehended as far as 700 kilometers (435 miles) inside Greek territory, said Amnesty International. Furthermore, a joint investigation by several international news outlets reported in October that Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, had been complicit in maritime pushback operations to drive away migrants attempting to enter the EU via Greek waters. A month later, Brussels-based news outlet EUobserver revealed that Frontex exchanged letters with Greek authorities on Athens' orders to push back migrants to Turkish waters.

Qatari FM...

and facilitate peace talks until a just and lasting political settlement is reached in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the government negotiating team has demanded third party mediation in peace talks with Taliban in Doha, a credible source said on Monday. The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Pajhwok Afghan News that Taliban and government contact groups had resumed meetings. Work on main issues around the

dialogue agenda had been ongoing for the past two weeks, revealed an insider. He added the two sides conferred on the need for identifying key topics and presenting them for discussion at a joint meeting. The host country had offered to mediate the Kabul-Taliban talks, which have been deadlocked for the past few months. "we told the host country that it can cooperate in case of need. Of course, talks have not been finalised yet, but the two teams have jointly identified a few points

for facilitators," the source said. One of the points was that the mediator would not attend meetings even in time of need, but would share proposals with the two parties," the source explained. Peace talks in Qatar have long been stalled and so far, the agenda has not been finalised. Meanwhile, US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has embarked on a visit to a number of countries, including Afghanistan and Qatar, in a bid to accelerate the peace talks and pave the way for a political agreement.

Central Asian...

Spetsnaz (special forces) of the Central Military District, who are also in charge of preparing the Uzbek military, are leading the activities. It is expected that these mixed forces will soon be deployed on the borders with Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is the most lukewarm country in the fight against the Taliban, with whom it had made agreements at the time of the historic President Islam Karimov. Even his successor Šavkat Mirziyoyev is not averse to taking on social models closer to those of the Taliban. With the recent law on religious freedom, Mirziyoyev has allowed Uzbek Muslims to profess more open forms of Islamic radicalism, including the possibility of wearing the hijab in public places. Uzbekistan, however, is also welcoming several Afghan soldiers fleeing

the Taliban militias. The situation is more uncertain in Turkmenistan, whose border with Afghanistan is in the hands of the Taliban. President Gurbangul Berdimukhamedov has decided to strengthen the military presence on the border, also by hiring private militias. Many of these armed groups are made up of Uyghur refugees. Joint defense plans against the Taliban are also being discussed by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Its director Anatolij Sidorov is now permanently based in Dushanbe to monitor the Afghan-Taliban border and draw up joint response plans. For now, the only measure in place seems to be the use of Uyghur militias. Russia is also trying to deal directly with the Taliban. A delegation of Islamic fundamentalists was welcomed in Moscow, despite

the fact that it is an "extremist organisation" banned in the Federation. Many opponents are now demanding that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov be excluded from the electoral lists, in which he would be the leader of United Russia, President Vladimir Putin's party. Contact with extremists' is the reason also used to exclude all nationalists from the elections. Turkey is also reportedly preparing plans to meddle in Afghanistan. According to various Kurdish media, Ankara would like to engage the mercenary militia of the 'Syrian National Army', which includes various members of the former Isis. The mercenaries, Uyghurs or others, would thus be the key to the management of a very complex conflict, which goes beyond the borders of Afghanistan and involves the entire Central Asian region.

Will Afghanis...

in Vietnam, but the final outcome is unlikely to be very different. The US made the fatal error of turning its anti-terrorist campaign into an anti-insurgency one in 2001-02 and getting embroiled in an unwinnable civil war. History teaches us that prolonged foreign intervention in intra-state conflict exacerbates the conflict by stoking nationalist and religious sentiments. Propping up regimes, especially one as dysfunctional as the Afghan regime, normally leads to severe a backlash, as both the South Vietnam and Afghanistan cases demonstrate. Washington's

allies and adversaries will see the US's abandonment of Afghanistan—no matter how much it is camouflaged in optimistic verbiage—as a defeat similar to the one it suffered in Vietnam. The major difference between the two outcomes is that while there was a clear-cut alternative power structure present in Vietnam that could replace the American-backed government, that's not true of Afghanistan. The Taliban is clearly the major contender for power in the post-American era, but, given the fractious nature of Afghan society, its control over the whole country will be contested by force of arms by various regional factions,

warlords and ethnic groups. This means that Afghanistan could slide into chaos as it did in the early 1990s after the Russian withdrawal, thus once again creating the space for non-state actors, including terrorist groups, to move in. As if that wouldn't be bad enough, neighbors—Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China and India—whose interests and objectives are often in conflict with each other, surround Afghanistan. An unstable, indeed failing or failed, state is bound to draw them into the vortex of civil conflict, making the situation in Afghanistan even worse. There's much more at stake here than merely the credibility of the US and its loss of face.

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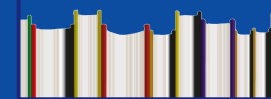
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Uzbekistan, UAE Energy Company Sign Power Purchase Agreements

Agreements were signed between the Uzbek government and Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company PJSC (Masdar) to build two solar photovoltaic plants in the central Jizzakh and Samarkand regions, Uzbek Energy Ministry said Monday. Under the agreements, Masdar, a renewable energy developer based in the United Arab Emirates, will produce power for the national electric grid of Uzbekistan at record low tariffs of 1.791 U.S. cents per kWh for the Samarkand plant and at 1.823 U.S. cents per kWh for the Jizzakh plant, for a 25-year period, it said.

Masdar was awarded with the two projects following an open tender overseen by the International Finance Corporation in May this year. The company is expected to invest up to 300 million dollars in these projects and construction is expected to start in the first quarter of 2022, Uzbek officials said during the document signing ceremony. Uzbekistan has been opening up the country's power sector to private investment, in order to reach its goal of 25 percent of energy consumption deriving from renewable sources by 2030.



A look at the world

Tensions High Between UN Forces, Russian Mercenaries in C.African Republic

Tensions between Russian-controlled Wagner mercenaries and UN peacekeepers are still running high in the Central African Republic (CAR), a few days after the attempted arrest of a military official in the country, local media reported on Monday. Suspected of selling arms and ammunition to young people in the central town of Bria, a captain of the country's national army was pursued and nearly arrested by Russian mercenaries from the Wagner company. The captain is currently in hiding,



according to a CAR-based information agency, Corbeau News Centrafrique. The security situation has forced many people to flee Bria to the capital Bangui. According to people departing the area, the Russian mercenaries reportedly planned to carry out a major operation in various districts of the city over the coming days. "Officially, Wagner's men said they were going to search for weapons... but unofficially, their objective would be to massively arrest the young people whom they now consider to be accomplices of the fleeing FACA (Central African Armed Forces) captain," Corbeau News quoted a resident as saying. Some of the young people informed the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) of the situation after heavily armed Wagner mercenaries entered Mandet district, located in the city center. The UN peacekeepers reportedly followed Wagner's men and took up positions in strategic corners of the Mandet district, forcing the Wagner's mercenaries to return to their base. Wagner -- a private Russian military company -- is reportedly operating in the CAR at the invitation of the government.

Turkey Saved 5,693 Migrants Pushed Back by Greece So Far in 2021

The Turkish Coast Guard Command has rescued 5,693 irregular migrants that were pushed back by Greek forces in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas in the first half of 2021. According to data from the coast guard's website, 4,670 irregular migrants that were pushed into Turkish waters by Greece were rescued in the period between January and June 2021 while 1,023 migrants that were stranded while attempting to cross abroad were similarly saved. Authorities have also caught 29 people suspected of organizing the illegal transit of irregular migrants. Most of the operations to rescue migrants at sea took place in Turkey's western Izmir province. While 261 migrants that were stranded were rescued by Turkey, the coast guard also rushed to the aid of 2,120 migrants including children and women who were left to die in the sea or on rubber boats by Greek elements. Some 434 irregular migrants and six Turkish citizens were caught trying to illegally go abroad from Izmir's coasts. Pushbacks are considered contrary to international refugee protection agreements, which say people should not be expelled or returned to a country where their life and safety might be in danger due to their race, religion, nationality or membership in a social or political group. Turkey and Greece have been key transit points for migrants aiming to cross into Europe, fleeing war and persecution to start new lives. Turkey has also accused Greece of large-scale pushbacks and summary deportations without migrants being given access to asylum procedures, which is a violation of international law. It also accuses the European Union of turning a blind eye to this blatant abuse of human rights. Most recently, Amnesty International criticized Greek... **P3**



China Completes Work on \$1.7bn Project to Transform Pakistan's Dysfunctional Grid

A \$1.7bn electricity transmission line on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which was begun in December 2018, was inaugurated in a ceremony held in Islamabad and Beijing at the end of last month. The 660kV Matiari-Lahore high-voltage direct current line will provide Pakistan's national grid with a new backbone and improve chronic problems with the



country's energy transmission and distribution grids. The 878km line was financed and built by the State Grid Corporation of China, which will operate it for the next 25 years. More than 1,300 Chinese and 6,500 Pakistani workers were employed on the scheme. Hammad Azhar, Pakistan's energy minister, said the project would bring stability to the country's power system. Speaking at the online ceremony, he said the project would "enhance transmission capability and bring relief to consumers". Electricity generation in Pakistan has increased dramatically in recent years, thanks to the large-scale construction of mainly coal-fired plants funded by China. As a result, the country has an installed capacity of around 37GW and peak demand of only 25GW, although this is growing at a rate of about 5% a year. However, the grid is able to handle only 22GW of power, resulting in chronic blackouts... **P2**



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