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Acting FM Muttaqi Holds Talks with IFRC Chief, Calls for Enhanced Services in Remote Areas

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi on Saturday met with Alexander Matheou, IFRC's Asia Pacific Regional Director, and emphasized the importance of providing services to Afghanistan's remote areas and expanding health services. Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal, the deputy spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a statement that Muttaqi also requested special attention to treating children suffering from heart diseases. Muttaqi further urged Matheou to strengthen their health... **P3**



Retirees Demand Immediate Pension Payments Amid Winter Hardships

A number of retirees have once again expressed grievances over the economic challenges they face during the winter season. Forced by their circumstances, they have gathered outside the Pension Fund building, demanding the Islamic Emirate immediately begin the process of paying their pensions. Haseebullah, one of the retirees, said: "The people you see here are living in terrible conditions, conditions that are indescribable. This [document in hand] is the decree of the Amir al-Mu'minin, which states that retirees' pensions must be paid. This is the fourth year our pensions have not been paid." Retirees told that although several weeks have passed since the leadership of the Islamic Emirate issued a decree to establish a court to address pension payments, their fate remains unresolved. Hafizullah, another retiree, said... **P3**

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai: Education Bans on Afghan Women and Girls Are Inexcusable



Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, political deputy at the Foreign Ministry figure has urged the EIA's leader to scrap education bans on Afghan women and girls, saying there is no excuse for them, in a rare public rebuke of government policy. Sher Abbas Stanikzai, made the remarks in a speech on Saturday

in southeastern Khost province. He told an audience at a religious school ceremony there was no reason to deny education to women and girls, "just as there was no justification for it in the past and there shouldn't be one at all." The government has barred females from education after sixth grade. "We call on the leadership again

to open the doors of education," said Stanikzai in a video shared by his official account on the social platform X. "We are committing an injustice against 20 million people out of a population of 40 million, depriving them of all their rights. This is not in Islamic law, but our personal choice or nature." Stanikzai was once the head of the

Taliban team in talks that led to the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. It is not the first time he has said that women and girls deserve to have an education. He made similar remarks in September 2022, a year after schools closed for girls and months and before the introduction of a university ban.

Jaiswal: India Committed to Long-Term Cooperation with Afghans

Shri Randhir Jaiswal, the spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs, said that India's foreign secretary recently met with Afghanistan's acting foreign minister in Dubai, marking the highest level of engagement India has had with the interim Afghan government. Speaking at a press briefing, Jaiswal highlighted that the purpose of this meeting was to strengthen long-term relations with the people of Afghanistan. Responding to a question regarding this meeting, Jaiswal said "We have a technical mission in Kabul. Also, we have... **P2**



45,000 Jobs Provided for Afghan Returnees in 3 Years: Ministry

In the past three years, job opportunities have been provided for more than 45,000 returnee migrants. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation stated that in order to economically support returning migrants, job opportunities have been created in both public and private sectors. Abdul Motalib Haqqani, spokesperson for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, said: "Work has been done to create job opportunities. Over the past three years, job opportunities have been provided for approximately 45,700 individuals in the public and private sectors, as well as in professional training and economic development." However, some migrants who have returned to the country speak of



their difficult economic conditions. Mohammad, a deported migrant, said: "We have no shelter. It's winter, the weather has turned cold, and we have no resources, especially heaters. Our request is for shelters and job opportunities to be provided for us." Mohammad Younus, another deported migrant, said: "Winter has arrived, but so far, no proper

assistance has been given to us. Please support us, as winter is passing by." Some activists in the field of migrant rights stress that organizations supporting migrants should engage in discussions with host countries to prevent the forced deportation of Afghan migrants. Asifa Stanikzai, a migrant rights activist, said: "There is... **P2**

45,000 Jobs...

an urgent need for Pakistan to develop a strategic plan for migrant challenges and issue residency documents to integrate migrants." According to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, over the past three years, more than four million people have been returned to Afghanistan from neighboring countries.

Jaiswal...

had engagements at Joint Secretary level and several of them in the past year or so. This was the highest level of engagement that we have had and we have clearly spelt out that we want to do more for... to offer humanitarian assistance and also to engage with the people of Afghanistan on development cooperation and on both these counts we want to continue to build on what we are doing there to strengthen our long-standing relationship with the people of Afghanistan." During the meeting between Amir Khan Muttaqi and Vikram Misri, India's foreign secretary, the two sides discussed humanitarian assistance, bilateral issues, and regional security. Jaiswal also highlighted the presence of Afghan players in the Indian Premier League (IPL), emphasizing that India is seeking to expand its relations with Afghanistan in the field of sports as well. "We also want to do more on sports and you would have seen there are several cricket players from Afghanistan who play here in the IPL. Greater Noida or one of the places also happens to be the home ground. See, these are... all these are areas where we want to build our relations so that we can bring more benefit of our approach, of our humanitarian assistance, of our engagement on the development cooperation front that we have with Afghanistan," he said.

By: Zhao Xing; Chinese Ambassador in Afghanistan

Walking Together for 70 Years, Writing a New Chapter of Friendship

The year 2025 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Afghanistan. Seventy years ago, the elder generation of leaders from both countries, with exceptional vision and steadfast commitment, crossed the towering natural barrier of the Pamir Plateau and built a new bridge of friendly cooperation between China and Afghanistan, opening a new chapter in the millennia-old neighborly ties between the two nations.

Over the past 70 years, China and Afghanistan have stood together regardless of situation, with their friendship growing stronger over time. Afghanistan is one of the first countries to recognize New China, and China has always treated Afghanistan with sincerity and mutual support. In the 1970s, despite being in the early stages of development with limited economic level, the Chinese government and people tightened their belts to assist Afghanistan, building a comprehensive water conservancy project in Parwan Province and the Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar Province. Today, the water conservancy project continues to irrigate vast expanses of farmland, and the Mirwais Hospital serves millions of people, earning the affectionate name "China Hospital."

Entering the new century, China has firmly supported Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction, contributing to landmark projects such as the Jamhuriat Hospital, the Kabul University teaching building and auditorium, and the National Vocational Training Center. During times of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government extended a helping hand at the earliest opportunity, providing emergency aid materials and standing alongside the Afghan people to overcome these challenges together.

At present, the friendly relationship between China and Afghanistan has entered a new stage of development.



China has always been a friendly neighbor that supports Afghanistan's development with peace and stability. China firmly adheres to the policy of "Three Respects" and "Three Nevers": China respects the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, respects the independent choices made by the Afghan people and respects the religious beliefs and national customs of Afghanistan. China never interferes in Afghanistan's internal affairs; never seeks self-interests and never pursues the so-called spheres of influence in Afghanistan. Upholding the policy of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness, China has supported Afghanistan's independent and self-reliant development with concrete actions, setting an example of good neighborliness relations. Across Afghan society, it is widely recognized that China is "the only major country that has never bullied Afghanistan." China has demonstrated its deep respect for China-Afghanistan friendship through tangible actions, injecting confidence and momentum into the future cooperation between the two countries. China has consistently been an important partner in Afghanistan's economic and social reconstruction. Through collaboration between the

two countries' governments and enterprises, key cooperation projects have progressed smoothly. China-Afghanistan bilateral trade expected to exceed USD 1.5 billion in 2024. Via bilateral and multilateral channels, China has provided Afghanistan with over 500 million yuan in various forms of assistance, helping Afghan address challenges such as the pandemic, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. China has also offered Afghanistan more than 2,000 training opportunities in China and awarded the "Ambassador Scholarship" to outstanding university students, aiding Afghanistan in strengthening capacity-building across various fields.

China continues to be a force for justice in advocating for Afghanistan. China has firmly spoken out in favor of Afghanistan at the United Nations and other multilateral platforms, calling on the international community to increase humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan, enhance dialogue and engagement with Afghanistan's interim government, lift unjust sanctions against the country, and urging relevant nations to return the overseas assets belonging to the Afghan people. These efforts underscore China's sincere goodwill and sense of

responsibility in upholding international fairness and justice and supporting Afghanistan's reconstruction and development.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan has unwaveringly adhered to the One-China principle, supporting China's firm determination and efforts to safeguard the nation's unity. We are also pleased to see that an increasing number of Afghan businessmen and students are engaging in trade and studies in China. Kabul-Urumqi direct flight serves as an important link for exchanges between the two countries people. Products such as saffron, pine nuts, and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan are highly popular in the Chinese market. According to relevant authorities, China's direct investment in Afghanistan saw rapid growth from January to September 2024, ranking first among Asian countries in terms of growth rate. Looking ahead, the potential for practical cooperation between the two countries across various fields is immense, with broad prospects for the future. As the Chinese old saying goes, the path to mutual benefit lies in keeping pace with the times. Over the course of 70 years of profound transformation, China is now at a critical stage of advancing its great endeavors of building a strong nation and achieving national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. Afghanistan has also emerged from the shadow of prolonged conflict and is committed to pursuing national stability and development. Facing the next 70 years, China is willing to join hands with Afghanistan to jointly pursue development and prosperity, promote regional peace and security, and foster mutual learning and cultural exchange. Let's work together, to pass on the torch of China-Afghanistan friendship, ensuring it lasts for generations and endures for eternity, and to make new contributions to building a community with a shared future for mankind and creating a better world for all.

Editorial

Afghanistan-China Relations: A Prime Example of Long-Term Trust and Genuine Friendship

January 20, 2025, marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China—a day symbolizing a long-standing partnership, trust, and cooperation between the two nations. Afghans regard China as a sincere and reliable friend that has stood alongside Afghanistan under all circumstances. These relations are rooted in mutual respect, collaboration, and transparency, representing an exemplary model of goodwill in the sphere of international relations.

China has consistently supported Afghanistan's peace, stability, and development. One of the defining characteristics of this relationship is China's non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, maintaining a policy of mutual respect. For Afghans, China's friendship goes beyond political and diplomatic ties, extending to economic, cultural, and humanitarian domains.

Over the past three years, following

the withdrawal of U.S. forces, China was the first country to maintain consistent engagement with Afghanistan's caretaker government. While many other nations closed their embassies or scaled back relations, China remained steadfast in its presence during challenging times. This commitment underscores the depth and sincerity of the bond between the two nations.

China's contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts, including thousands of scholarships for Afghan students, as well as its economic cooperation, have been remarkable. Recently, China has facilitated visa issuance for Afghan traders, which is seen as a significant step toward enhancing economic ties. This initiative not only opens new opportunities for trade but also positively impacts the livelihoods of many Afghans.

The people of Afghanistan view all these efforts by China as a promising sign for their future. Afghanistan-

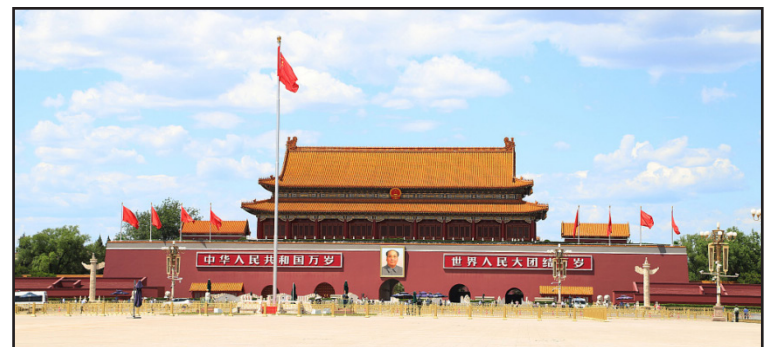
China relations are not solely about safeguarding mutual interests; they also serve as a strategic approach to fostering peace and stability in the region. Afghans deeply appreciate this enduring partnership and look forward to its further strengthening in the years to come.

The long-term benefits of this partnership are not limited to diplomatic and economic realms but also play a vital role in enhancing trust and friendship between the peoples of both nations. Afghans believe that Afghanistan-China relations stand as a unique example of mutual respect and cooperation, offering an inspiring lesson in unity and partnership for the world.

The 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China is not merely a reflection of the past but also a beacon of hope for future collaboration and development. Afghans aspire that under the shadow of this partnership, new opportunities for peace, progress, and stability... **P3**

By: Wen Ying

The Unfading Hue of Blue: a Testament to Everlasting Sino-Afghan Friendship



If you were to describe Afghanistan with a color, which would you choose? Maybe red, the color of saffron. Or beige, for the fine cashmere.

I have decided on a tranquil blue. The idea came to me after watching a popular Chinese dance drama, in which the costumes are in a beautiful hue of blue. There is some interesting history to the special hue. The dance drama is a reproduction of a Chinese masterpiece painted almost 1,000 years ago—in different shades of blue. Its pigment came from a precious stone found in

Afghanistan, the lapis lazuli.

Animating great Chinese art, paint made from the gem can be found on the ribbons of Buddhist deities depicted in ancient caves, on the beaded necklaces Chinese emperors wore on the solemnest occasions, and on Chinese laquerware and silk carried through Begram along the ancient Silk Road.

Interestingly, blue is also seen in our close ties today.

There stands the blue Mirwais regional hospital. The Chinese government helped to build it in the 1970s... **P3**

Afghanistan Generates \$29.5 Million from Saffron Exports Over Nine Months

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce reports that over 42,200 kilograms of Afghan saffron, valued at \$29.588 million, were exported to various countries during the first nine months of 1403 (solar year).

Akundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the ministry, emphasized that most Afghan saffron exports were made to India, Spain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Australia, and Turkey.

"In the first nine months of (1403 solar year), Afghanistan exported 42,200 kilograms of saffron, worth approximately \$29.588 million, to countries including India, Spain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, France, Australia, Turkey, and others," the spokesperson said. Afghan saffron, recognized as one of the country's most valuable agricultural products,



enjoys global acclaim. However, exporters of this product report challenges, including a lack of standardized markets, restrictions on money transfers, and inactive air corridors. Qudratullah Rehmati, deputy head of the Afghanistan Saffron Union, called for immediate action by the Islamic Emirate to

address these issues, stating: "We urge the Islamic Emirate to take swift steps to resolve these challenges so that we can better and more quickly offer saffron to global markets." Somaya Siddiqi, another saffron exporter, highlighted the challenges, saying: "Our main issues include banking problems, limited air flights,

and visa challenges, especially for countries like India, which is one of Afghanistan's key saffron buyers."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock has announced an increase in saffron production this year. According to Misbahuddin Mustaeen, the ministry's spokesperson, approximately 40 metric tons of saffron were harvested from 9,500 hectares of land in 1403. He added: "Saffron cultivation has expanded to 30 provinces, and this crop has been introduced as an alternative to poppy cultivation."

Saffron has been promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock as a replacement for poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. According to some experts, if Afghan saffron farmers are supported, the country can generate significant revenue from selling saffron in global markets.

Afghanistan-China Relations...

will emerge for their country. This friendship will deepen the bonds of trust and solidarity between the two nations and remain a shining example of mutual respect and cooperation on the global stage.

As the two nations celebrate this milestone, they renew their commitments to friendship and collaboration, taking joint steps toward a brighter and more prosperous future. The Afghan people extend heartfelt gratitude to China for its unwavering support and believe that these relations will continue to serve as a glowing testament to peace and progress worldwide.

Acting FM Muttaqi...

and relief centers in the provinces to provide effective and timely assistance to those affected by natural disasters.

Matheou expressed satisfaction with the current situation in Afghanistan and thanked the Afghan government for its cooperation in providing services and activities in a fair manner. He also promised to continue his efforts to support the needy Afghan people.

Retirees Demand...

"Why should it take a month for a decree to be implemented in these ministries? It should take at most two or three days. A decree is not an ordinary matter; it must be enforced."

Mohammad, another retiree, shared his problems: "I am sick. I have heart disease and back pain. My pockets are full of prescriptions, but I cannot afford to buy medicine. How much longer can this continue?" Previously, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate stated that efforts are underway to ensure pension payments. According to Zabihullah Mujahid, time is needed to finalize the work of the courts and the Ministry of Finance.

The Unfading...

Named after a former Afghan ruler, it is also known as "Chinayano Shafakhana" ("Chinese Hospital") in Pashto. For millions of Afghans in Kandahar and nearby areas, it remains the largest and best equipped hospital.

When I was visiting China's annual International Import Expo, I found blue in handmade Afghan rugs, which were sold out immediately after their first appearance in 2018 and were ordered in the thousands.

Blue was also in the fine bowls presenting Afghan pine nuts at the Expo. The nuts are extremely popular among

Chinese consumers. In a single livestreaming session to sell the nuts, 26 tons were snapped up in two hours—1,000 cans per minute. As they place orders, Chinese shoppers left comments like: "A can of pine nuts to help the Afghans," "I'm buying this to support the Afghan people," and "Afghan farmers are having a hard time and we must help them."

Now, these little gifts of nature are flying to China every year in thousands of tons—on their own chartered planes. A Chinese company is investing millions of US dollars to build a processing plant in Kabul, keeping more value added for the locals.

Other examples abound. In blue overalls, Chinese engineers and workers toiled hard to build the Jalalabad Highway and Kabul's Jamhuriat Hospital. In blue packaging, Chinese relief arrived in Herat soon after a huge earthquake struck. Tents, foldable beds, thick blankets and clothes worth millions of dollars were airlifted there just as they were most needed.

A tour guide for China's Dunhuang Caves on the Silk Road told me the blue made from lapis lazuli does not fade with time. I find that quite symbolic. Isn't it just like the time-tested bonds between China and Afghanistan?

Putin and Iran's...

Pezeshkian, on his first Kremlin visit since winning the presidency last July, hailed the treaty as an important new chapter in bilateral relations, while Putin said Moscow and Tehran shared many views on international affairs.

"This (treaty) creates better conditions for bilateral cooperation in all areas," said Putin, emphasizing the upside for economic ties and trade, which he said was mostly carried out in the two countries' own currencies.

"We need less bureaucracy and more concrete action. Whatever difficulties are created by others, we will be able to overcome them and move forward," Putin added, referring to Western sanctions on both countries.

Putin said Russia regularly informed Iran about what was going on in the Ukraine conflict and that they closely consulted

on events in the Middle East and the South Caucasus region.

Russia and Iran were the main military allies of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who fled to Moscow after being toppled last month. The West also accuses Iran of providing missiles and drones for Russian attacks on Ukraine. Moscow and Tehran say their increasingly close ties are not directed against other countries.

Putin said work on a potential gas pipeline to carry Russian gas to Iran via Azerbaijan was progressing despite difficulties. He added that, despite delays in building new nuclear reactors for Iran, Moscow was also open to potentially taking on more nuclear projects.

Pezeshkian, whose words were translated by Russian state TV, said the treaty showed that Moscow and Tehran did not need to heed the opinion of what he called "countries over

the ocean".

"The agreements we reached today are another stimulus when it comes to the creation of a multi-polar world," he said, adding that he hoped the war in Ukraine could be ended at the negotiating table.

"War is not a good solution to resolve problems and we would welcome talks and achieving peace between... Russia and Ukraine," Pezeshkian said.

Moscow has cultivated closer ties with Iran and other nations hostile towards the U.S. since the start of the Ukraine war. It already has strategic pacts with North Korea and close ally Belarus, as well as a partnership agreement with China.

Moscow has made extensive use of Iranian drones during the war in Ukraine. The United States accused Tehran in September of delivering close-range ballistic missiles to Russia for use against Ukraine. Tehran denies supplying drones or missiles.

President Xi...

cooperation, strengthen collaboration, and do more great, practical and good things for both countries and the world. This will enable China and the United States to continue moving forward along a course of stable, healthy, and sustainable development.

Thanking Xi for extending his congratulations, Trump said

he cherishes great relationship with Xi, calling for continuing to maintain dialogue and communication. He expressed his expectation of meeting with President Xi at an early date.

The U.S. and China are the most important countries in the world, and they should maintain their long-lasting friendship and work together to safeguard world peace,

Trump said.

The two leaders exchanged views on major international and regional issues of common concern, such as the Ukraine crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They agreed to establish a strategic communication channel to maintain regular contact on major issues of common concern to the two countries.

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President Xi calls for greater progress in China-U.S. ties in phone talks With Trump

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday spoke with U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on the phone, calling for greater progress in China-U.S. relations at a new starting point. Congratulating Trump on his election as president of the United States, Xi said they both attach great importance to interaction with each other and hope that China-U.S. relations will have a good start in the new U.S. presidential term.

China and the United States are two great countries that are pursuing their own dreams and are committed to making their people live a better life, Xi said, adding that the two countries share extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation.

China and the U.S. can become partners and friends, achieve mutual success and prosperity, and benefit both countries and



the world, he said.

As two major countries with different national conditions, it is inevitable that there will be some differences between China and the United States, Xi said, adding that the key is to respect each other's core interests and major concerns and find appropriate ways to properly resolve the issues.

Xi said the Taiwan question concerns China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, expressing hope that the U.S. will handle it with extra prudence.

The nature of China-U.S. economic and trade relations is mutually beneficial and win-win, he said, adding that confrontation and conflict should not be a choice.

He called on both sides to uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win... **P3**

A look at the world

Fuel Tanker Truck Blast Kills at Least 70 in Nigeria

At least 70 people were killed and more injured in northern Nigeria on Saturday when a petrol tanker truck overturned, spilling fuel that exploded, the country's national emergency agency said.

The accident in Niger state follows a similar blast in Jigawa state last October that killed 147 people, one of the worst such tragedies in Nigeria, Reuters reported.

"As of this report, over 70 bodies have been recovered, 56 individuals are injured, and more than 15 shops have been destroyed," the National Emergency Management Authority said in a statement.

"The injured have been transported to hospitals for treatment, while recovery efforts for the deceased are ongoing."

A Reuters witness said residents and officials were digging graves with a view to bury the victims on Saturday night in accordance with Islamic rites. Niger is a largely Muslim state in Africa's most populous nation.

"Large crowd of people gathered to scoop fuel despite concerted efforts to stop them," Tsukwam said in a statement.

Tsukwam said firefighters had managed to put out the fire.

Such accidents have become common in Africa's largest oil producer, killing dozens of people in the country grappling with its worst cost of living crisis in a generation, read the report.

The price of petrol in Nigeria has soared more than 400% since President Bola Tinubu scrapped a decades-old subsidy when he came into office in May 2023.

Bologi Ibrahim, spokesperson to Niger state governor, said residents should give priority to their safety when petrol tanker trucks are involved in accidents.



Pakistan Launches First Home-made Observation Satellite

Pakistan launched its first home-made observation satellite from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northern China, Pakistan's space agency said.

The PRSC-EO1 satellite will boost Pakistan's ability to monitor and manage natural resources, respond to disasters, and improve urban planning and agricultural development, the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) said in a statement, Reuters reported.

This type of satellite uses electro-optical sensors to collect data and images of the Earth's surface by detecting and measuring reflected sunlight or emitted radiation.



Putin and Iran's President Strengthen Defense Cooperation with 20-Year Agreement



Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian deepened military ties between their countries on Friday by signing a 20-year strategic partnership that is likely to worry the West.

Under the agreement, Russia and Iran will boost cooperation in a range of areas including their security services, military drills, warship port visits and joint officer training, Reuters reported.

Neither will allow their territory to be used for any action that threatens the other and will provide no help to an aggressor attacking either nation, according to the text, which also said they would work together to counter military threats.

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