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Heart of Asia

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UK May Keep Special Forces in Afghanistan: Telegraph

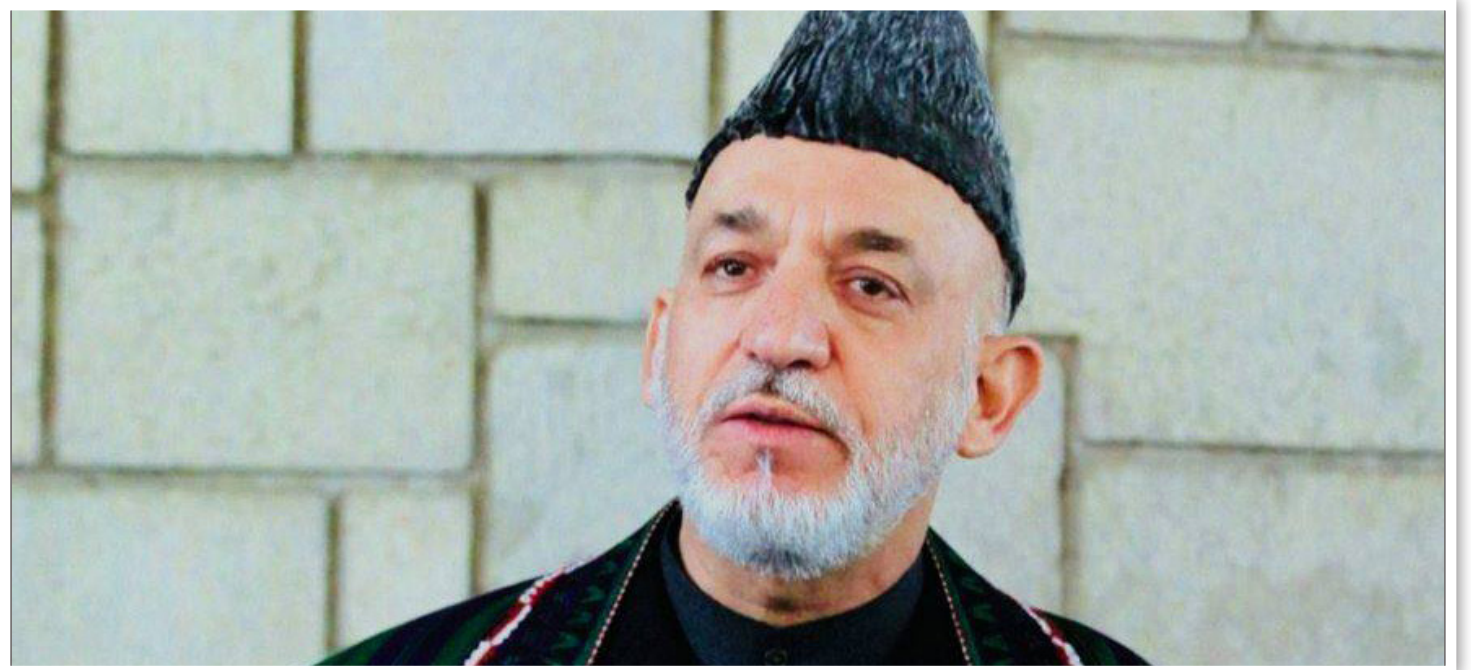
The British government is poised to keep a small special forces contingent on the ground in Afghanistan, The Telegraph has reported. This comes as the US and its NATO allies pulled out of the coalition's main base in Bagram district of Parwan province on Friday. The UK is now reportedly considering the retention of an "advisory group" of elite special forces soldiers in the country, the report said. Citing a former Special Air Service (SAS) soldier, who until recently was stationed in Afghanistan, The Telegraph reported that the group would "provide training to Afghan units and deploy with them..." **P3**



All Foreign Troops Must Leave by Deadline: Taliban

Any foreign troops left in Afghanistan after NATO's September withdrawal deadline will be at risk as occupiers, the Taliban has told the BBC. It comes amid reports that 1,000 mainly US troops could remain on the ground to protect diplomatic missions and Kabul's international airport. NATO's 20-year military mission in Afghanistan has all but ended. But violence in the country continues to rise, with the Taliban taking more territory. Under a deal with the militant group, the US and its NATO allies agreed to withdraw all troops in return for a commitment by the Taliban not to allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group to operate in the areas they control. President Joe Biden set a deadline of 11 September - the 20-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the US - for American troops to fully withdraw, but reports suggest the pullout may be complete within days. As Afghan forces prepare to take charge of security alone, concern is growing for the future of Kabul. Taliban spokesman Suhail... **P2**

Karzai Sees Important Role for China in Helping Afghanistan



Former President Hamid Karzai says China can play an important role in helping Afghanistan secure its future, especially in improving its ties with Pakistan. "China plays a very important role, a significant role in improving the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in making sure that a synchronized relationship is established between the two countries," Karzai said in

an interview with China Global Television Network (CGTN) via video link during the World Peace Forum which opened in Beijing. "So this way, I as an Afghan, feel a lot more hopeful towards a better future than I was before, because we are now on our own, and it is in our interest in Afghanistan, and certainly in our neighborhood, to bring peace to Afghanistan, and

if we join hands, we will certainly gain it sooner rather than later," he added. Meanwhile, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged Washington to act with sincerity and work toward solutions on a variety of hot-spot issues regarding countries such as Afghanistan and Iran, China Daily reported on Monday. He said the top priority in Afghanistan is to maintain peace and stability and

to prevent wars and chaos, and the United States, as the initiator of Afghanistan's issue, should ensure a smooth transition in the situation there "in a responsible manner." The World Peace Forum is a key annual policy gathering that brings together hundreds of leaders, officials and scholars on international relations from across the globe.

Moscow Expresses Concern Over Situation in Afghanistan

Russia is concerned about the developments in Afghanistan's border regions after the withdrawal of US troops from there, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday. "Of course, after the Americans and their allies pull out of Afghanistan, the situation in that country is a matter of grave concern for us. We are keeping a close eye [on the situation] and note that, unfortunately, destabilization is taking place," he said. When asked whether Russia was exploring the possibility of sending additional troops to help Tajikistan protect the border, the Kremlin... **P3**



Wolasi Jirga to Summon Security Officials

Parliament Speaker Mir Rahman Rahmani expressed concern about the constant collapse of districts. Rahmani told the House session on Monday that the government must have regular measures and strategy in regards to the security situation. Rahmani directed the Defense and Security Committees to invite security officials, in order to hear their plans for the prevention of district collapse and share them with the public. He added that the collapse of districts was expected after the withdrawal of foreign forces, but assured that the latest changes on the battlefield will not, under any circumstances, threaten the system and national sovereignty. Rahmani called on the warring parties to prevent civilian casualties, urged the government to avoid discrimination and maintain balance in distributing military equipment to people's uprising



forces across the provinces. Member of Parliament (MP) for Daikundi province, Ali Akbar Jamshidi, criticized the Ministry of Defense and National Directorate of Security for failing to address the lack of military equipment in the province, as the province has witnessed fighting over the past month. MP for Maidan Wardak province Mahdi Rasikh said that about 100 districts fell to the

Taliban, over the recent weeks, and managing the ongoing war has slipped from government's control. MP for Farah province Abdul Sattar Hussaini claimed to have obtained documents, showing that drones have hovered over districts, which have fallen to the Taliban within days afterwards. Hussaini added that he has shared the issue with security officials, who have expressed ignorance about it.

Japan...

of emergency is in place for urban areas like Tokyo amid fears of the spread of the highly transmissible delta variant of the coronavirus. "Until we see the spread of the delta variant subside, it will be difficult to allow the mutual exemption of quarantine," a Japanese government source said. Japan has a sweeping ban on new entries of foreign nationals to cope with the pandemic, except those with approval given under "special exceptional circumstances." Travelers entering Japan are asked to stay at home or a designated facility for 14 days after arrival. The European Union has its own digital vaccination passport for EU citizens and residents. Certificate holders are exempt from testing and quarantine when traveling to a different country within the bloc. The World Health Organization does not endorse making vaccine passports mandatory for travelers as equal access to COVID-19 vaccines has not been ensured.

All Foreign...

Shaheen said seizing Kabul militarily was "not Taliban policy". But speaking to the BBC from the group's office in Qatar, he said no foreign forces - including military contractors - should remain in the city after the withdrawal was complete. "If they leave behind their forces against the Doha agreement then in that case it will be the decision of our leadership how we proceed," Mr Shaheen told the BBC. "We would react and the final decision is with our leadership," he added.

By Dinesh D'Souza

Why We Lost the War in Afghanistan

America's top general in Afghanistan, Austin S. Miller, is deeply worried the United States has lost the war in that region—and he knows best, because he's on the scene. In a recent conversation with journalists in Kabul, Miller declared, "A civil war is certainly a path that can be visualized if this continues on the trajectory it's on right now." But even this grim assessment is optimistic. The real danger is not of a divided Afghanistan, with rival tribes competing for power and dominance, but rather a nation completely taken over by the Taliban. Taliban fighters have been over-running districts in quick succession, not merely in the middle and southern part of the country, where they have always been strong, but even in the north, where the Tajiks and other rival tribes have traditionally been dominant. What this means is that a full U.S. withdrawal, of the sort originally planned by Donald Trump and now being carried out by Joe Biden, almost certainly means a Taliban return to power. The Taliban are the strongest power over there, and both parties in this country are now in favor of bringing the troops home. America became militarily involved in Afghanistan, in the wake of 9/11, to expel the group that hosted the 9/11 hijackers, so the return to power of that very group, two decades ago, must be viewed as a serious foreign policy defeat for the United States. "The future will tell the rest of the story," Miller concluded. "What we will have to do is make an honest assessment of what went well and what didn't go so well over the years." Here I'd like to offer that brief, candid assessment. My argument is that America lost the war in Afghanistan from the outset, because of poor leadership and an unwinnable strategy. In fact, America



lost the war in Afghanistan for the same reason we lost the Vietnam War. Let's think back to Vietnam for a moment. America faced the threat of a communist North Vietnamese force, led by Ho Chi Minh, attempting to take over South Vietnam and turn all of Vietnam into a communist country. The obvious strategy to prevent this was to pulverize the communists in the North, wipe them out, and thus disable their capacity to make irredentist raids into the South. But America didn't do that. Instead, America built its strategy on the demilitarized zone or DMZ, the dividing line between the North and the South. Basically, American troops were prohibited from fighting north of the DMZ. So the communist forces of the Vietcong could easily cross the line, pulverize South Vietnamese villages, and then race back across the line where U.S.

forces could not pursue them. Is it any surprise that this American strategy, developed and carried out by a group of incompetent leaders, proved a dismal failure? Yet America seems to have learned nothing from Vietnam, and implemented an equally misguided—even obtuse—strategy in Afghanistan. Unlike Vietnam, where the case for getting involved in the first place is highly debatable, America had a very good reason to intervene in Afghanistan. The ruling Taliban, after all, sponsored, hosted, and encouraged the 9/11 hijackers. So the obvious strategy should have been to use massive force to oust the Taliban, kill as many of them as possible, drive the rest into the mountains, and then leave Afghanistan under the control of rival tribes with longstanding enmity to the Taliban. In other words, get rid of

the bad guys and install whoever is around to take their place. And then leave. But this was not the view of Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and other luminaries of the Bush administration who developed the quixotic and, upon reflection, idiotic idea that America should somehow attempt to remake Afghanistan in its own image. Some called it the "democracy project." Powell memorably said that U.S. policy toward Afghanistan should resemble the policy of a curio store. "If you break it, you own it." Supposedly, America was "breaking" Afghanistan by ejecting its ruling powers, and therefore America now had the responsibility to put Afghanistan together again. Thus began a project in political and cultural reform that was doomed from the beginning. Think of the absurdity of taking people who are virtually... **P3**

By Shadi Khan Saif

Bagram Airfield, Witness to Peace, Wars in Afghanistan, Changing Hands Again

Conceived during the Cold War era, the Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan saw the inception of the modern Afghan Air Force before serving as the main bastion for the invading Red Army and later as the main base of operations for the US in the war-ravaged country. By effectively vacating this sprawling facility overlooking majestic Hindu Kush Mountains in the historical town of Bagram, the US this week moved closer to ending the longest chapter of its military engagement in Afghanistan. Built during the reign of King Zahir Shah in the 1950s, Bagram Airfield initially had a runway of 10,000 feet. Over the years, it both received upgrades and suffered destruction during the Cold War and Soviet invasion, civil war and

eventually the US invasion in 2001. Home to Americans in Afghanistan Within months after the US invaded Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban regime, Bagram became home to nearly 10,000 US soldiers, transforming the entire area and making the town synonymous to the Americans with military patrol vehicles plying through the lands around it, along with jets, choppers and drones flying overhead. In the peak of the invasion, a Bagram resident Parvez Ameen told Anadolu Agency, the US troops would mingle with the locals openly, share gifts and distribute propaganda materials. "But, in the later years, when the Taliban-led insurgency gained momentum, they (Americans) cut contacts with the locals," he

said. Over the years, the base was drastically transformed to give the US soldiers a sense of belonging, with Christmas and Thanksgiving celebrations, a state-of-the-art medical facility, and a Burger King kiosk. Visiting top US officials, including presidents George Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, would land here and talk to the soldiers on duty before meeting the Afghan officials. The airfield was in rough shape when the US invaded Afghanistan, military analyst retired Brig. Ali Khail said, adding that the US took control of it from the then anti-Taliban Northern Alliance and rebuilt the facility to match their needs. "This is the most advanced and biggest military facility in the country. The control and effective use of the

Bagram Airfield would be decisive for the future of Afghanistan," he added. Guantanamo of Afghanistan Bagram was also called the "Guantanamo of Afghanistan" by many in the country as it served as the main prison facility where US forces jailed alleged terrorists. The prison facility was built in Bagram during the administration of President Bush, once holding up to 3,000 suspects. Its control was transferred to the Afghans in 2012. Mawlawi Hamdullah Tarakhail was a young member of the Hezb-e-Islami party when US forces captured him along with thousands of other alleged Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters from the capital Kabul and imprisoned them here before being moved to Guantanamo Bay. "In Bagram, I faced atrocities beyond explanation and torture that was 'inhuman.' They (Americans)

would completely undress us, put us in chains whenever we wished to go to toilet. They (Americans) would shout in our ears, force us on the shoulders, and parade us naked to the shower. For us Muslims, this is disgraceful," he had told Anadolu Agency last year. Deployment of foreign troops began in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001 when the US, together with the UK, launched Operation Enduring Freedom. They were joined by some 43 NATO allies and partners after the UN authorized International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on Dec. 20, 2001. There have been up to an estimated 130,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan. This mission was declared complete on Dec. 28, 2014 with the size of foreign troops drastically reduced and combat operations by all members almost entirely ended with exception of the US... **P3**

EU Mobilizes €25 Million In Humanitarian Aid to Fight Hunger

The Commission is allocating €25 million in humanitarian funding from its Solidarity Emergency Aid Reserve to fight hunger in Afghanistan. Urgent actions to save lives and livelihoods are required due to a drought that is currently affecting Afghanistan, leaving at least 11 million people in a food crisis, and 3.2 million people in a food emergency. Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management said: "In 2021, half of the population in Afghanistan is expected to suffer from acute food insecurity. The drought affecting the country is worsening an already dire situation with political insecurity and conflict, as well as the current strong third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The food shortage and limited water availability will increase the prevalence of severe malnutrition. In response, the EU is mobilising humanitarian support to help alleviate hunger." The latest EU funding to Afghanistan comes in addition to the EU's initial allocation of €32 million humanitarian aid for Afghanistan in 2021. The

funding will support activities that contribute to addressing the increased needs stemming from drought, including the sectors of food assistance, nutrition, health, water-sanitation-hygiene, and support to humanitarian logistics. All EU humanitarian assistance is delivered in partnership with UN agencies, International Organisations, and NGOs. It is provided in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, to benefit directly the people in need across the country. Afghanistan suffers from one of the world's largest food crises. The drought currently affecting Afghanistan is linked to the La Niña climatic phenomenon and further exacerbates the risk of flooding, with soils too dry to absorb melting snow or rain later in the year. As there is a strong correlation between areas affected by the drought and further food insecurity, severe acute malnutrition of the population is increasing. The wheat crops are at risk, and livestock



threatened, which will have a strong impact on food availability and livelihoods. On 22 June 2021, the government of Afghanistan officially declared the drought in the country. The nutritional status of children under 5 continues to deteriorate, with 27 out of 34 provinces now above the emergency threshold for acute malnutrition. This makes the continuation of life-saving severe acute malnutrition services critical. In addition, Afghanistan is affected by one of the deadliest conflicts worldwide while simultaneously being a disaster-prone country affected by floods, flash-floods and earthquakes, leaving the country with a high level of urgent humanitarian needs. Further, Afghanistan is going

through a massive third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, with an average of 2,000 new infections per day. EU humanitarian aid responds to Afghanistan's needs by giving life-saving assistance in solidarity with those affected. Since 1994 the EU has mobilised over €1 billion in humanitarian funding to Afghanistan. The support ensures critical relief assistance to the most vulnerable, including the victims of war, forced displacement, and natural hazards. Interventions will continue to provide emergency healthcare, shelter, food assistance, access to clean water and sanitation facilities, education in emergencies, and various protection services targeting women and children.

UK May Keep

on the ground as advisers." The deployment will be open-ended, they said, meaning the forces would stay "as long as [the government] continue to see value" in having them stationed there. The decision whether to withdraw all the UK's remaining 750 soldiers from Afghanistan for good or leave some troops behind amid the Taliban's ongoing offensive is yet to be made, a senior military source told the paper. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has the final say on the matter, is expected to make an announcement at the National Security Council meeting on Monday. Earlier reports in the UK media suggested that British troops might exit Afghanistan by July 4. Officials in the UK, however, did not commit to a certain timeframe, saying that London "reserves the right" to dispatch troops back to Afghanistan, either as part of a coalition or unilaterally, if parts of the country are overrun by terrorists, the report added. In the meantime, the former head of the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, said the potential for extremist groups to be able to regenerate in Afghanistan as US and British troops leave the territory would pose an international threat. Alex Younger told Sky News that if such groups were allowed to regenerate in Afghanistan following the departure of the international forces, "it will lead to more threat on the shores of our country and our allies." Lord Richard Dannatt, the former Chief of the General Staff from 2006 to 2009 said Britain's mistake had been to allow itself to be diverted into Iraq in 2003 instead of investing in the future of Afghanistan. "This is generally going to be a civil war, an internal struggle, and it's up to the Afghan people to decide do they want to go back under the Taliban or do they want to live that better life that we've shown them glimpses of," he told Sky News on Monday.

Moscow...

spokesman noted that Russian military servicemen and border guards would monitor the situation in Afghanistan's border regions and make appropriate decisions. "As for an additional contingent, I cannot tell you. Of course, as the situation evolves, and we see that, unfortunately, it is not evolving in the best possible way, the necessary decisions will be made by our military and border guards," he stressed.

On Monday, the press center of the Border Guard Troops of Tajikistan's State Committee for National Security said in a statement that more than 1,000 Afghan troops had retreated to Tajikistan after battles with the Taliban (outlawed in Russia). Afghan troops had to cross the Tajik border several times over the past two weeks. Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Stanislav Zas earlier said that the situation in

Afghanistan's northern regions was worsening, and that triggered alarm bells within the organization. According to Zas, it is essential to provide assistance to Tajikistan in ensuring the security of the southern border. On July 1, the Council of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly approved a statement expressing concern about the situation in Afghanistan and urged all political actors in that country to facilitate the peace process.

Why We Lost...

living in the 13th century and attempting to cajole them into 20th or 21st century democracy. Think of the madness of introducing women's rights and the paraphernalia of Western identity politics to a mountain and desert people accustomed to thousands of years of tribal patriarchy. I'm originally from India, and the British, who ruled India for nearly 200 years, never had the illusion that they could somehow

"remake" the Indian people. Apart from outlawing one or two egregiously barbaric practices, the British left the whole structure of Indian life largely intact. They didn't interfere with ancient village modes of governance. One writer wryly observed the British did nothing to change the Indian caste system, except to install themselves at the top of it. No wonder we lost the war in Afghanistan. The war was not lost by the brave American soldiers who

carried out their missions and endured the hardships of surviving and fighting in a distant country. Rather, the war was lost by their leaders, who set impossible goals and then developed strategies that were destined to fail. We can only hope that our country's leaders will get the message this time and prove a little less utopian, gullible, and inept when America once again dispatches its armed men and women abroad.

Bagram...

Since 2015, as per the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, a total of 9,592 troops from 36 nations were stationed in Afghanistan, with the US topping the list with 2,500 soldiers. After the US came Germany with 1,300 soldiers mainly stationed in the north of the country. The third highest-number of troops stationed in Afghanistan were from Italy and numbered 895, mainly stationed in the west of the country bordering Iran. 'Getting closer to peace' Vacating of the facility has evoked mix reactions

among Afghans. Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the Supreme Council for National Reconciliation, has welcomed the development, but warned that the Taliban must not take this as an opportunity to march on Kabul to grab power by force. For their part, the Taliban also hailed the withdrawal of US forces from the site. "We consider evacuation of all the US forces from #Bagram a positive step & seek withdrawal of foreign forces from all parts of the country. Such is in the interest of both them & Afghans. Afghans can move

closer to peace & security with complete withdrawal of foreign forces," the group said in a statement. In line with the announcement earlier this year by US President Joe Biden, all American troops are to depart from Afghanistan by September this year, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. In the wake of the US withdrawal, the Taliban are on a nationwide offensive, overrunning more than 100 districts as Afghan forces claim that nearly 200 insurgents were killed in counter-terrorism operations on a daily basis.

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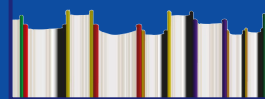
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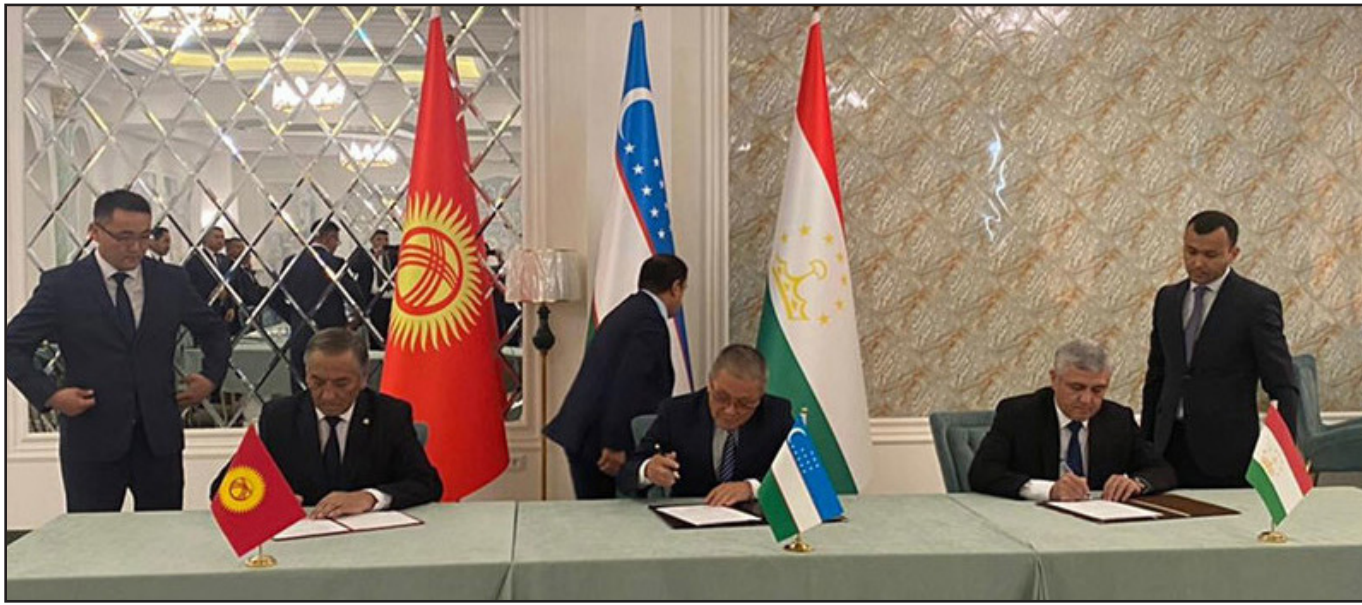
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Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Sign Protocol on Junction of Borderline

The governmental delegations of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed a protocol on the location of the point of junction of the state borders during talks in Ferghana, the Kyrgyz government's press service reported. "During talks the sides exchanged suggestions on location of the point of junction of state borders of 3 countries. The respective protocol was signed then," said the reported. The next meeting of the governmental



delegations will be held in Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan's Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov and State National Security Committee Chairman Kamchibek Tashiev discussed delimitation of remaining border sections in March 2021. During the state visit of President Sadyr Japarov to Uzbekistan, the two leaders reached agreement on intensification of work of governmental delegations.

A look at the world

Vladimir Putin Will Not Visit Pakistan in July

Russian President Vladimir Putin will not be visiting Pakistan in July, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said in a statement on Monday. Responding to media queries, the spokesperson said that the Foreign Office had seen some reports regarding Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Pakistan. "Pakistan and Russia are close partners and friends. The two sides are committed to building a strong multi-dimensional relationship that not only serves their respective national interests but also contributes



to regional as well as global peace and security," the spokesperson said. Chaudhri said the exchange of high-level visits is an important part of the growing Pakistan-Russia relations. "While invitations for visits at the summit level have been extended by both sides, no such visit has been scheduled yet," the spokesperson noted. The spokesperson highlighted that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov paid a successful visit to Islamabad in April this year, while Pakistan's foreign and defence ministers had visited Moscow last year. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his counterpart Lavrov on June 14 had held a telephonic conversation where the two emphasised enhanced bilateral relations between the two countries. "Pakistan attaches special importance to its bilateral relations with Russia," said FM Qureshi. "Strengthening of these ties, after a period of time, is a welcome news," he added.

Stop Politicizing COVID-19 Origins Probe, China Urges World Powers



Warning against what it said were efforts to politicize the work, China on Monday slammed fresh demands for a new probe into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Those so-called scientists are politicians. True scientists with a neutral position are facing attacks by extreme forces of certain countries," said Wang Wenbin, spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, commenting on calls by some countries and scientists for another investigation to determine the cause of the pandemic. He urged world leaders to "stop politicizing the COVID-19 origins-tracing work and the public not to be misled by the lies and disinformation," Chinese daily Global Times reported. Wang added that a World Health Organization (WHO) team that visited China earlier this year for an investigation had "already released a scientific conclusion." A report released after the joint China-WHO study said there was insufficient evidence that the virus had spread in Wuhan before December 2019. The findings, however, drew criticism from several quarters and many countries, including the powerful G7 nations, have continued to demand a new probe. At a summit last month, leaders of the G7 states – the UK, US, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Japan – called for a "timely, transparent, expert-led and science-based WHO-convened Phase 2 COVID-19 origins study including, as recommended by the experts' report, in China." China has reported 91,869 coronavirus cases, including 4,636 deaths, since the outbreak began in December 2019. A total of 22 new infections were reported on Monday, including three cases of local transmission in Yunnan province, where authorities have now imposed strict restrictions and launched a widespread testing drive.

Japan Seeks to Have Vaccine Passports Accepted by Over 10 Nations

Japan is making arrangements for its COVID-19 vaccination passports to be accepted by over 10 nations, including Italy, France and Greece, after the certificate program begins in late July, government sources said Sunday. If the agreements are reached, certificate holders will be exempt from quarantine or showing negative test results for COVID-19 when traveling from Japan to those countries, the sources said. But the Japanese government plans to continue requiring travelers



entering Japan, including returnees, to quarantine for two weeks even if they have been vaccinated. The position has complicated negotiations with countries such as Singapore and Israel, which have called for mutual exemption, the sources said. So-called vaccine passports are official documents showing a person has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The certificate, to be issued by municipalities, will include the holder's name, passport number and date of vaccination. Business circles in Japan have been calling for the introduction of vaccine passports. The country's largest business lobby, the Japan Business Federation, proposed in late June that such certificates be in digital format. Japan has lagged behind the United States, Britain and Israel, among others, in its rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations. However, it has stepped up efforts to inoculate citizens ahead of the Tokyo Olympics starting on July 23. A quasi-state... **P2**



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