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Inside C2

# Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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## Taliban grapple with Afghan economy in chaos, humanitarian crisis

Sept 1 (Reuters) - Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers struggled to keep the country functioning on Wednesday after the final withdrawal of U.S. forces, with foreign donors alarmed about an impending humanitarian crisis.

Two weeks since the Taliban's sweep into the capital Kabul brought a chaotic end to 20 years of warfare, the Islamist militants have yet to name a new government or reveal how they intend to rule.

In an administrative vacuum, prices have soared and crowds have gathered at banks to withdraw cash.

Heavily-armed fighters have imposed control on Kabul, but Taliban officials were grappling with keeping hospitals and government machinery running following the end of a huge airlift of foreigners and Afghans who had helped Western forces.

The new, Taliban-appointed central bank head has sought to reassure banks the group wants a fully-functioning financial system, but has so far given little detail on how it will supply funds for it, bankers familiar with the matter said. read more  
Qatar's Al Jazeera television reported that Qatari technical experts had arrived at the Taliban's request to discuss resuming operations at Kabul airport, currently inoperable.

The foreign minister of neighbouring Pakistan, which has close ties to the Taliban, said he expected Afghanistan to have a new "consensus government" within days. Meanwhile, people fearful of life under Taliban rule rushed to the borders.

And in Panjshir province, members of local militias and remnants of former military units were still holding out under the leadership of Ahmad Massoud. Senior Taliban leader Amir Khan Motaqi called on them to put down weapons and negotiate.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is home for all Afghans," he said in a speech. The Taliban have declared an amnesty for all Afghans who worked with foreign forces during the war that started when they were ousted from power in 2001 over their refusal to hand over al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden after the Sept. 11 attacks. Taliban leaders have called on Afghans to return home and help rebuild. They have promised to protect human rights in an effort to present a more moderate face than their first government, which enforced radical Islamic law, including banning women from education and employment.



### PRICES SOAR

But the more immediate concern for them now is staving off economic collapse. Afghanistan desperately needs money, and the Taliban are unlikely to get swift access to the roughly \$10 billion in assets mostly held abroad by the Afghan central bank.

The Taliban have ordered banks to re-open but strict weekly limits on withdrawals have been imposed.

Acting central bank governor Haji Mohammad Idris met members of the Afghanistan Banks Association and other financiers this week, said two bankers who attended the meeting. The militant group was working to find solutions for liquidity and rising inflation, they quoted Idris as saying. "They were very charming and asked banks what their concerns were," said one of the bankers who requested anonymity.

Long lines have formed at banks, the currency is sinking, inflation is rising, and many offices and shops remain shut. "Everything is expensive now, prices are going up every day," said Kabul resident Zelgai.

Outside the capital, humanitarian organizations have warned of impending catastrophe as severe drought has hit farmers and forced thousands of rural poor to seek shelter in the cities. But foreign donors are unsure about whom to speak to.

Taliban officials have said the problems will ease once a new government is in place, and have appealed to other countries to maintain economic relations.

Bankers outside Afghanistan said it would be difficult to get the financial system running again without the specialists who joined the exodus. "I don't know how they will manage it because all the technical staff, including senior management, has left the country," one banker said.

### LEFT BEHIND

More than 123,000 people were evacuated from Kabul in the U.S.-led airlift after the Taliban seized the city in mid-August but tens of thousands of Afghans at risk remained behind. With Kabul's airport out of

action, efforts to help Afghans fearful of the Taliban focused on arranging safe passage across the borders with Iran, Pakistan and central Asia. read more

At Torkham, a crossing with Pakistan just east of the Khyber Pass, a Pakistani official said: "A large number of people are waiting on the Afghanistan side for the opening of the gate."

Uzbekistan's border with northern Afghanistan remained shut.

Britain and India held separate talks with Taliban officials in Doha amid fears that up to half a million Afghans could flee. read more

The U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said on Wednesday Afghans have so far largely stayed within Afghanistan and so far only small numbers had fled to neighbouring countries. It called for \$300 million in international funding for the humanitarian emergency. Washington said it would use its leverage, including access to the global marketplace, over the Taliban as it seeks to get the remaining Americans and allies out of Afghanistan.

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# WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

## CORONAVIRUS DIARY 09/01/2021



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# We Are Ending The Longest War In Afghanistan



and everywhere in the world continues.

An immediate challenge for the Taliban is now to run the international airport and decide how to get assistance from the rest of world to survive.

Today the U.S. formally ended the war in Afghanistan. Over the last several decades we got involved in many wars and conflicts around the globe, but we still can't solve all the problems. We now need to learn from history that war is not the solution, but rather the problem.

President Biden told the nation that the real decision in Afghanistan was between leaving or escalating and thereby favored his choice to withdrawal troops as the only option, rather than surging more forces into the country.

The U.S. withdrawal was rocked by the Taliban's unexpected swift takeover of the capital.

but Secretary Blinken said our commitment to them and to all Americans in Afghanistan

As of Monday, more than 122,000 people had been airlifted from Kabul airport including 5,400 Americans. There are fewer than 150 American citizens currently in Afghanistan. The State Department no longer has any diplomats in Afghanistan,

The president said, "I was not going to extend this forever war, and I was not extending a forever exit."



**Southern DAILY** Make Today Different

## Editor's Choice



Fuel leaks from a capsized boat along Bayou Lafourche in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida in Galliano, Louisiana. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



Taliban walk in front of a military airplane a day after the U.S. troops withdrawal from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. REUTERS/Stringer



Hossain Rasouli of Afghanistan enters the stadium for the men's long jump at the Tokyo Paralympics. REUTERS/Athit Perawongmetha



U.S. President Joe Biden departs after delivering remarks on Afghanistan during a speech in the State Dining Room at the White House in Washington. REUTERS/Carlos Barria



An activist wearing a wedding dress reacts as she stands in the police vehicle during an Extinction Rebellion protest, in London, Britain. REUTERS/Tom Nicholson



A giant American flag, billed as the largest free flying flag in the world by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, flies on Flag Day from the western towers of the George Washington Bridge between New York and New Jersey, in Fort Lee, New Jersey, June 14, 2021. REUTERS/Mike Segar

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Afghanistan, now under the control of the Taliban, is sitting on what could be the world's largest lithium reserves, among other precious deposits

China May Align Itself With Taliban For Rights To Mineral Riches



Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi (R) meeting with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, political chief of Afghanistan's Taliban, in Tianjin (Photo/Li Ran / Xinhua/AFP)

(NOTE: China's foreign minister has met a Taliban delegation in Tianjin, China, signalling warming ties as the United States-led foreign forces continue their withdrawal from Afghanistan. Wang Yi last week told the nine visiting Taliban representatives, which included the group's co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, that Beijing expected it to "play an important role in the process of peaceful reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan", according to a readout of the meeting from the foreign ministry)

KEY POINTS

- Rare earth metals in Afghanistan were estimated to be worth anywhere between \$1 trillion and \$3 trillion in 2020.
- Only hours after the Taliban overran Afghanistan, a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman said Beijing was ready for "friendly cooperation with Afghanistan."
- China has dominated the rare earths market globally and threatened to cut off supplies to the U.S. during the trade war in 2019.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001, the global economy looked a lot different: Tesla Inc. wasn't a company, the iPhone didn't exist and artificial intelligence was best known as a Steven Spielberg film.

Now all three are at the cutting edge of a modern economy driven by advancements in high-tech chips and large-capacity batteries that are made with a range of minerals, including rare earths. And Afghanistan is sitting

on deposits estimated to be worth \$1 trillion or more, including what may be the world's largest lithium reserves -- if anyone can get them out of the ground. Four decades of war -- first with the Soviet Union, then between warring tribes, then with the U.S. -- prevented that from happening. That's not expected to change anytime soon, with the Taliban already showing signs they want to reimpose a theocracy that turns back the clock on women's rights and other basic freedoms rather than lead Afghanistan to a prosperous future.



As the United States races to evacuate thousands of Americans and vulnerable Afghans after a rushed troop withdrawal that ended 20 years of war, US President Joe Biden has taken steps to isolate the new Taliban-led administration economically [Photo: First Lt Mark Andries/US Marine Corps via Reuters] But there's also an optimistic outlook, now being pushed by Beijing, that goes like this: The Taliban form an "inclusive" government with warlords of competing ethnic groups, allows a minimal level of basic human rights for women and minorities, and fights terrorist elements that want to strike the U.S., China, India or any other country. "With the U.S. withdrawal, Beijing can offer what Kabul needs most: political impartiality and economic investment," Zhou Bo, who was a senior colonel in the People's Liberation Army from 2003 to 2020, wrote in an op-ed in the New York Times over the weekend. "Afghanistan in turn has what China most prizes: opportunities in infrastructure and industry building -- areas in which China's capabilities are arguably unmatched -- and access to \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits." For that scenario to have even a remote possibility, much depends on what happens the next few weeks. Although the U.S. is racing to evacuate thousands of Americans and vulnerable Afghans after a rushed troop withdrawal ending 20 years of war, President Joe Biden still has the power to isolate any new

Taliban-led government on the world stage and stop most companies from doing business in the country.



The U.S. maintains sanctions on the Taliban as an entity, and it can veto any moves by China and Russia to ease United Nations Security Council restrictions on the militant group. Washington has already frozen nearly \$9.5 billion in Afghanistan's reserves and the International Monetary Fund has cut off financing for Afghanistan, including nearly \$500 million that was scheduled to be disbursed around when the Taliban took control. Afghanistan is estimated to have trillions of dollars worth of rare earth metals, and countries -- such as China -- that may be looking to swoop in on the country must follow international terms, one analyst told CNBC.

Afghanistan fell into the hands of the Islamist militant group over the weekend, as it seized the capital of Kabul as well as the Presidential Palace. After President Joe Biden's April decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban made stunning battlefield advances -- and nearly the whole nation is now under the insurgents' control. The international community should put pressure on China, for instance, if it seeks to ally itself with the Taliban, Khan added.

**Afghanistan's Rare Earth Minerals** Minerals and rare earth metals in Afghanistan were estimated to be worth between \$1 trillion and \$3 trillion in 2020, according to a report in news magazine The Diplomat, citing Ahmad Shah Katawazai, a former diplomat at the Afghan Embassy in Washington D.C. A report by American news organization The Hill earlier this year put the value at about \$3 trillion. Afghanistan has rare earth elements such as lanthanum, cerium, neodymium, and veins of aluminium, gold, silver, zinc, mercury, and lithium, according to Katawazai. Rare earths are used in everything from electronics to electric vehicles, and satellites and aircraft.

**China poised for bigger role in Afghanistan?**

Only hours after the Taliban overran Afghanistan, a foreign ministry

spokeswoman said Beijing was ready for "friendly cooperation with Afghanistan."

"On the basis of fully respecting the sovereignty of Afghanistan and the will of all factions in the country, China has maintained contact and communication with the Afghan Taliban and played a constructive role in promoting the political settlement of the Afghan issue," said spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a press conference on Monday. According to Hua, the Taliban said "on multiple occasions" that it "looks forward to China's participation in Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. We are ready to continue to develop good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation with Afghanistan and play a constructive role in Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction," Hua said.



**Rare earths minerals displayed in Afghanistan.**

**China's Dominance In World's Rare Earths**

China dominates the rare earths market globally. About 35% of rare earth global reserves are in China, the most in the world, according to the United States Geological Survey. The country is also a mining machine, producing 120,000 metric tons or 70% of total rare earths in 2018, compared to the U.S. which mined 15,000 metric tons of rare earths the same year, it said. U.S. reserves also pale in comparison to China. The U.S. has a total of 1.4 million metric tons of reserves, versus 44 million metric tons of reserves in China. China used rare earths as a threat during its trade war with the U.S. in 2019, when Beijing threatened to cut off supplies to the U.S. Rare earth minerals are commonly used in high-tech devices, automobiles, clean energy and defense. The U.S. was heavily dependent on China for rare earths in 2019, when the Asian country was exporting 80% of U.S. needs, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. (Courtesy cnc.com)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

These States Are Seeing A Huge Rise In Delta Hospitalizations



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

COVID-19 hospitalizations have hit 100,000 for the first time since January. Doctors are staging walkouts. Nurses are exhausted. Look past the headlines and you will see more and more Americans dying or hospitalized due to severe disease caused by the Delta variant of the coronavirus. If you felt invincible last year, please reconsider. "I think most of us thought once we got through the winter or people started getting vaccinated, we said, Okay, the worst is behind us. We're not going to deal with this again," virus expert Ashish Jha told Good Morning America. That didn't happen because "we never expected that a third of Americans would opt not to get vaccinated." As a result, the following 5 states have hospitals overflowing; one is even begging tourists not to come.

1. Oregon



"Every day we see just the body boxes roll out one after the other and then

as soon as we clean the room we get somebody back in there... It's the worst we've ever seen." That's what ICU nurse Clarissa Carson told CBS News' Janet Shamlian Wednesday at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center in Medford, Oregon, where COVID-19 patients have filled the hospital," reports CBS News. "Shamlian reported constant turnover in the hospital's intensive care unit, but not because patients are getting better." "We have patients waiting to get onto life support," ICU Dr. Somnath Ghosh said. "The turnaround is so rapid, it's pretty sad."

2. Illinois



"Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker has reinstated a mask mandate for the state, requiring masks indoors for residents as he says the state is 'running out of time as our hospitals run out of beds,'" reports 5 Chicago. "The new indoor mask mandate, similar to mandates already handed down in Cook County and Chicago,

will begin Monday and require facial coverings in indoor settings, regardless of COVID vaccination status." "Illinois will join several other states that have reinstated statewide indoor mask requirements, regardless of vaccination status, effective on Monday," Pritzker said. "Masks work. Period."

3. Florida



Florida has the most people hospitalized at more than 17,000. "South Florida COVID patients are filling ICU beds at rates not seen before. A new dashboard released by Palm Beach County Thursday reveals that only 4% of ICU beds in its 17 hospitals are available. In Broward County, only 3% of ICU beds at its 16 hospitals are available, its dashboard shows," reports the Sun Sentinel. "Across the state, the situation is just as bleak. With COVID patients getting sicker and many on ventilators, only 5% of intensive care beds are open to new patients, according to the U.S. Health and Human Services data."

4. Texas



Texas has 14,000-plus people hospitalized with COVID. "As the highly contagious delta variant of COVID-19 spreads and sends unvaccinated Tex-

ans to the hospital with serious illness, hospitals are under enormous pressure to make room for growing numbers of patients," reports the Texas Tribune. "Hospital staff has never been in shorter supply, which deepens the strain on all departments, including emergency rooms, respiratory therapy and even labor and delivery. Without the capacity to



take on new patients -- and equally thin resources elsewhere to transfer them to -- doctors fear they'll have to start making heartbreaking decisions about care in order to save the most lives possible."

5. New Mexico



"New Mexico's Democratic Governor Michelle Grisham has announced a temporary indoor mask mandate following a 90 percent increase in statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations over the

last two weeks," reports Newsweek. "In addition to the mandate, Grisham announced mandatory vaccinations for all personnel working in care settings and schools." "We can't continue our economic recovery and our positive economic journey if we have out of control COVID cases in the state of New Mexico," Grisham said. "We're gonna use masks and vaccines to blunt the spread of COVID and see if we can't rebalance where we are as a state, particularly given the Delta variant."

Stay Safe Out There!



No matter where you live, follow the public health fundamentals and help end this pandemic, no matter where you live--get vaccinated ASAP; if you live in an area with low vaccination rates, wear an N95 face mask, don't travel, social distance, avoid large crowds, don't go indoors with people you're not shel-



tering with (especially in bars), practice good hand hygiene, and protect your life and the lives of others. COVID. (Courtesy eatthis.com)