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MOSCOW BACKS MEGA GAS PIPELINE TO CHINA THROUGH MONGOLIA

Russian President Vladimir Putin has backed Mongolia's offer to build a gas pipeline through its territory to China. Chinese President Xi Jinping is studying the "energy supernet in Northeast Asia," Mongolia's President Khaltmaagiin Battulga announced at the Eastern Economic Forum. Mongolia has been offering its territory for transit of Russian gas to China for years, and in 2018, the three countries established a "China-Russia-Mongolia economic corridor." China is currently receiving Russian gas from Blagoveshchensk, Vladivostok, and Altai, and the two countries have nearly completed the 3000-kilometer Power of Siberia gas pipeline, which will deliver 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year to the PRC. The China National Petroleum Corp. and Russian gas producer Novatek are also building the \$27 billion Yamal LNG energy project. (*Russia Today*, September 6, 2019)

THE TALIBAN VISITS BEIJING...AGAIN

A nine-member Taliban delegation met in Beijing with Deng Xijun, China's special representative for Afghanistan, to discuss the extremist group's ongoing peace talks with the United States. Mullah Baradar, the delegation's leader, said the organization had previously succeeded in reaching a "comprehensive deal" with the U.S. – and that the arrangement has the backing of Beijing. "The Chinese special representative said the U.S.-Taliban deal is a good framework for the peaceful solution of the Afghan issue and they support it. Now, if the U.S. president cannot stay committed to his words and breaks his promise, then he is responsible for any kind of distraction and bloodshed in Afghanistan," Baradar said, according to Suhail Shaheen, the group's spokesman in Qatar. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman confirmed that Deng "exchanged opinions with Baradar regarding promoting Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation process." The visit marks the group's second in recent weeks; back in June, just before its talks with Washington collapsed, a Taliban team had met in China with government representatives there. (Reuters, September 22, 2019)

CHINA MOBILIZED "THE MASSES" TO JOIN SECURITY OPS

Beijing deployed 200,000 citizen security guards in red armbands or sashes around Tiananmen Square to keep tabs on fellow residents and check IDs as part of a massive security operation ahead of the 70th anniversary National Day celebrations on October 1st. They paid particular attention to public toilets, which are seen as places to plot subversion, disruption or terrorism. Many were recruited by the Chaoyang District party committees and paid just 50 yuan a day. According to one resident, "People who take on stability maintenance work usually have no job and are on the lowest rung of the social ladder and about 40 to 55 years old. [A typical patrol includes] 4-5 people and 2-3 [professional] security guards. There's still a lot of competition for these jobs. You can't just apply on your own account; you have to get picked by the village committee, and they turn some people away even when they want to do it." (Radio Free Asia, September 25, 2019)

CHINA ACCUSED OF HARVESTING ORGANS FROM UIGHURS

The China Tribunal, an independent panel founded to examine the issue of organ harvesting in China, has urged the UN Human Rights Council to investigate China's killing of Uighur Muslims and harvesting their organs. "Forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience, including the religious minorities of Falun Gong and Uighurs, has been committed for years throughout China on a significant scale," the Tribunal's Hamid Sabi told the UNHRC. The panel's report details how the government sanctioned doctors to "cut open [victims' bodies] while still alive for their kidneys, livers, hearts, lungs, cornea and skin to be removed and turned into commodities for sale." (*National Review*, September 26, 2019)

MALAYSIA TREADS CAUTIOUSLY ON UIGHUR ABUSE

Malaysia has made clear that it isn't prepared to forcefully confront China over its abuse of Uighur Muslims. "You don't just try and do something which would fail anyway, so it is better to find some other less violent ways not to antagonize China too much, because China is beneficial for us. Of course, it's a big trading partner of ours and you do not want to do something that will fail, and in the process, also, we will suffer," Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has said. "The Malay states have existed near China for the past 2000 years. We have survived because we know how to conduct ourselves. We don't go around trying to be aggressive when we don't have the capacity, so we use other means." (Reuters, September 28, 2019)