

## Headlines:

- **Protests in China**
- **Pakistan Looks to Russia for Energy**
- **Less than half of UK Population Christian, Census 2021 shows**
- **Russia Calls for Gas Union with Central Asia**

## Details:

### Protests in China

Public protests in China related to the government's Covid-19 restrictions have hit the global media following a fatal apartment fire in Urumqi, Xinjiang which killed ten people. Protests erupted in cities across China according to videos posted on China's Weibo and Twitter. Citizens across China blamed the deaths on the inability of fire and rescue services to access the building due to COVID-19 restrictions. Protests began in Urumqi and were followed by protests in several other Chinese cities — including Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Lanzhou and Xi'an. Many of the protests included hundreds of people, some included thousands, and all seemed to focus on getting the government to ease or stop its "zero-COVID" policy, with some crowds calling for freedom and the overthrow of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist party.

China's Covid measures are among the strictest in the world, as it continues to pursue lockdowns to suppress the virus – what it calls a “dynamic zero Covid” policy. The protests are in reality street protests where the demonstrators disperse after marching and protesting, and the main focus of the protests are the Covid restrictions rather than wider political principles. The main issue here is frustration not just with Covid restrictions but the inconsistent ways these measures are being implemented.

### Pakistan Looks to Russia for Energy

Pakistan's petroleum minister visited Russia in order to pen a deal over oil and gas. The trip comes as the Pakistan nation struggles to meet domestic gas supply needs as winter approaches while battling to contain a current account deficit swelled by energy payments, mostly for oil. In the meeting. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan was committed to expanding cooperation with Russia across all areas of mutual benefit including food security, trade and investment, energy, defence and security. According to sources, Pakistan will save more than \$2 billion annually in case of the implementation of energy projects with Russia whereas buying petroleum products from Moscow would ease pressure on the foreign exchange reserves. In

October, Pakistan's Ambassador to Moscow Shafqat Ali Khan had revealed that Islamabad was also seeking liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies from Moscow. With dwindling local gas reserves, the country has begun to ration supplies to residential and commercial consumers. Local media has also reported that oil supplies remain tenuous owing to difficulties in paying for imports.

### **Less than half of UK population Christian, Census 2021 shows**

For the first time fewer than half of people in England and Wales describe themselves as Christian, the Census 2021 has revealed. The proportion of people who said they were Christian was 46.2%, down from 59.3% in the last census in 2011. In contrast the number who said they had no religion increased to 37.2% of the population, this is 4 out of every 10 people. Those identifying as Muslim rose from 4.9% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2021. These census results reveal many things about the UK. The role of religion has declined considerably over the decades, despite Britain Christian heritage. Those with no religions are increasing and will have a large impact on legislation and the future orientation of the UK. Despite all the coverage Muslims and Islam receive, they are overall just 4 million out of a total UK population of 67 million. Much smaller than all the stories of the UK being swamped or the Muslims take-over of the country.

### **Russia Calls for Gas Union with Central Asia**

Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are discussing a gas union for internal supplies and to the markets of third countries, including China, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak told reporters. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's spokesman said on Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed such an idea in a meeting with Tokayev recently. While Russia is a major natural gas exporter, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan produce roughly as much as they consume. The two countries are connected by a gas pipeline to Russia, and a separate pipeline crosses both on its way to China. Ever since Russia invaded Ukraine, the west has imposed sanctions on it and this is forcing Russia to search for alternative and willing consumers. Whist Russia's energy revenue has increased, this is solely due to the high price of oil, as its export volumes have declined and Russia knows in the long term it faces serious energy challenges.