

Headlines:

- **Pakistan Government Unveils National Energy Saving Plan**
- **Moscow says US Policies Have Put the US and Russia on Brink of 'Direct Clash'**
- **Taliban Closes Universities to Women**

Details:

Pakistan Government unveils National Energy Saving Plan

Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said the federal government will launch a nationwide program to conserve energy through initiatives like the early shutdown of markets, restaurants and other businesses. The new energy conservation plan aims to manage Pakistan's power crisis, which is due to a shortage of natural gas, load shedding policies in effect in some provinces and the broader energy crisis in the country. As part of the new energy conservation program, the government will also implement a system to encourage roughly 20% of the workforce to work from home, as well as promote the import and use of e-bikes and efficient lights. Pakistan's overall debt has reportedly grown to about 4 trillion rupees (\$17 billion). Not surprisingly, the new initiative risks increasing popular discontent since it will result in losses for businesses and further disrupt economic activity.

Moscow says US Policies Have Put the US and Russia on Brink of 'Direct Clash'

Russia's Foreign Ministry warned on Monday that Washington's policies have brought the US and Russia to the brink of a "direct clash." Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova made the comments in response to a statement from State Department spokesman Ned Price, who said last week that Russia was to "blame" for the deterioration of US-Russia relations. Throughout the war, Russian officials have made clear that they believe they are not just fighting Ukrainian forces in Ukraine but also the US and NATO. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recently said that the US and NATO are "directly participating" in the war by providing weapons and training Ukrainian soldiers. Despite this assessment, Russia has for the moment not undertaken any actions to push back against the US. Merely exposing US actions have done little to alter the quagmire in Ukraine.

Taliban Closes Universities to Women

The Taliban have announced the closure of universities to women in Afghanistan, according to a letter by the higher education minister. The minister says the move is until further notice. It is expected to take effect immediately. It further restricts women's access to formal education, as they were already excluded from most secondary schools. There has been a divide between Taliban members. Amongst those who believe they need to give an image of moderation to the internal community and those who believe they need to fulfil the wishes of the Taliban support base who feel they have given in too much to the international community. Off the record, some Taliban members have repeatedly said they are hopeful and working to try and ensure girls get an education. The Taliban face significant challenges since they took over in August 2021, a faltering economy and international isolation, education is really the least of their worries.