

(1) Khalilzad Pushes...

should allow their representatives to come to the table and discuss. I will continue to press the case," Khalilzad said in a tweet on Monday.

Khalilzad said that the reason that the US entered the peace talks was that "more war is not the answer".

"The US entered peace talks because more war is not the answer. During talks, I've proposed ways to reduce violence. By refusing to work with us to end the killing, the Talibs are prolonging it. Let Afghan people judge whether Talib statements encouraging more violence is way forward," he added in a tweet.

Khalilzad said the Afghan people deserve and want a comprehensive ceasefire and negotiations leading to a lasting peace. "The US stands with them," he says.

The US envoy said that the United States did not impose the war which he says has gripped Afghanistan for decades and has claimed tens of thousands of "innocent lives".

"We did not impose this war. Afghanistan has been at war for decades, at times with each other. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians have died. Rather than another season of fighting, Afghans are demanding a new way forward," he added in a tweet.

Khalilzad visited Kabul two times earlier this month in which he held talks with Afghan leaders and politicians as well as civil society members, the Afghan youth and tribal elders where he discussed with them the way forward toward a peaceful Afghanistan.

In their last meeting with Taliban in Doha in mid-March, the US negotiators and Taliban members agreed in draft on key issues under debate, including counterterrorism efforts and foreign forces withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Afghan politicians and probably a government delegation are all set to attend a meeting with the Taliban in Doha later this week where they will exchange views on the peace process. (Tolo news)

(2) Afghanistan...

\$100 million will likely be spent on initial assessments, exploration and evaluation work for these projects over the next 12 months with investments increasing significantly in the following years as projects advance. Tenders will cover a wide range of commodities including oil and gas, gemstones, copper, gold, marble, and talc.

Nehan highlighted 14 new opportunities open to international investors in her remarks.

"For the first time ever, Afghanistan is opening opportunities for international investors to bid on ruby, emerald and lapis lazuli projects. Many of the commodities, such as marble, travertine and cement, selected for tenders have strong domestic and regional market demand. Others, such as gold, copper talc, iron ore, marble and oil and gas have established international markets," she said. Nehan said the Afghan government has worked hard to put in place a new Minerals Law and transparent regulations and procedures for investors to take advantage of these new opportunities. "I am proud to say that Afghanistan's mining sector is open for business," she said.

Due to a previous investor-unfriendly Minerals Law, there has been negligible mineral exploration in Afghanistan for the past decade at a time when mining companies have spent, on average, more than US\$10 billion each year exploring for minerals worldwide, she said.

The April 14-16, 2019 forum in the financial hub of Dubai provided investors with information on conducting business, exploration and mining activities in Afghanistan, including the processes by which large-scale mining projects may be secured through competitive bidding tenders, and the mechanism by which small-scale mining opportunities can be applied

for on a first-come, first-served basis. (Tolo news)

(3) Afghan Delegation...

a former Taliban official.

The meeting is scheduled to be held on 19-21 April in Doha, the capital of Qatar. (ATN)

(4) Taliban Still an...

Abdullah asked the US to mount pressure on Pakistan to support genuinely the peace process, saying the neighbouring country continued to have influence over the rebel movement.

Meanwhile, the congressional delegation reaffirmed America's commitment to continued support for the war-torn country in various fields. (Pajhwok)

(5) US Does Not Want...

here (is) that whatever negotiated settlement ends the conflict, that it be done in a way that's very deliberate, that ensures a transition that all sides can participate in, and that there should not be a precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan," Shaheen told reporters at the US embassy.

Congressional colleagues agreed, she said, adding "that's the position of the administration as well".

"There is a deliberate position that may not always be reflected in the tweets that come from the White House," she said, referring to Trump's penchant of firing off unexpected foreign policy messages.

Shaheen also sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and is the only woman on the panel.

She said it is vital for women to be included in talks with the Taliban, whose regime shredded any Western notion of women's rights and executed women for allegations of adultery.

"What we know from the data is that when women are engaged, there is about a 35 percent more likely chance that those negotiations will ... endure for a longer period of time," Shaheen said.

It's important that "whatever comes out of any peace negotiations, that we support having women at the table."

A fresh round of talks is expected to take place later this month between Afghan political leaders, including some officials from the Kabul government, and the Taliban in the Qatari capital Doha.

The Taliban have long refused to speak officially with Kabul, dubbing the government a "puppet" of the West, and the militants have insisted that government officials are attending only in a "personal capacity".

The makeup of the delegation has not yet been announced, but an initial list reportedly only had two female participants. (AFP)

(6) Afghan Hindus...

said Gorbachchan Singh, a Nangarhar resident.

"We hope that peace is ensured in the country so that we celebrate our happy festivals in a peaceful environment," said Iqbal Singh, a Nangarhar resident.

The Hindus and Sikhs wear new clothes in the Vesak Festival and prepare special foods and invite special guest.

"They (Hindus and Sikhs) have a bright place in the history in Afghanistan. Afghans have trusted them and they have been a great part of Afghanistan in different sectors, including economy and politics," Nangarhar Governor Shah Mahmood Mikhel said.

Hindus and Sikhs have lived in Afghanistan for generations, but the various wars have forced many to leave the country and settle elsewhere.

An investigation by TOLONews from last June shows that close to 99 percent of former Hindu and Sikh citizens of Afghanistan have left the country over the past three decades.

The investigation revealed that the Sikh and Hindu population number was 220,000 in the 1980s. That number dropped sharply to 15,000 when the mujahedeen were in power dur-

ing the 1990s and remained at that level during the Taliban regime. It is now estimated that only 1,350 Hindus and Sikhs remain in the country. According to the findings, the main reasons behind their departure include religious discrimination and government's neglect of the minority group, during the Taliban era in particular.

The TOLONews findings indicate that where Hindus and Sikhs were once very active in business within the country, they are now faced with increasing poverty.

The findings also show that Hindus and Sikhs had suffered huge setbacks after the Taliban regime collapsed in 2001. This forced a large number of them to leave the countryside and to migrate to Kabul for a living. As a result, there are no Sikh or Hindu citizens living in Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

Despite their problems, remaining Hindu and Sikh residents have said they are trying to continue with their lives in Afghanistan as they are optimistic about the country's future. (Tolo news)

(7) Business Community...

reequipment of industrial parks, we have demanded a special unit to be assigned for the security of the industrial parks," said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, an industry owner.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior has said it is undertaking a range of comprehensive plans aimed at ensuring the security of businessmen.

"We have brought some eases in getting weapon licenses. The honorable factory owners and industrialists who are eligible may receive the license to carry a weapon," said Nusrat Rahimi, spokesman for the Interior Ministry. (Tolo news)

(8) Polio Eradication...

preventing their spread.

The Secretariat of the Academy denounced those fatwas prohibiting vaccinations and called upon preachers and imams to invite people to welcome vaccination campaigns.

Dr Saleh said: "We pray to hear of the eradication of polio soon, with the will of God."

WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari said: "Today we stand at a historic crossroads. For just the second time ever, humankind is poised to completely eradicate a disease from the face of the Earth."

"In the past, around 1000 children around the world were infected by the disease every day. But with the development of a safe vaccine that was used to vaccinate every child worldwide, we have succeeded in bringing polio to the brink of eradication," Al-Mandhari added.

He said only nine polio cases surfaced so far this year: three in Afghanistan and six in Pakistan.

"Islamic scholars met in March 2013 in Cairo, Egypt to support the fight against polio and recommend a way forward to correct religious misperceptions about the vaccine," said Dr Yagoub Al Mazrou, Chairman of the IAG Executive Committee.

Islamic scholars established the IAG to provide support to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in Muslim countries by raising community awareness about the compliance of vaccines with Islamic Shariah, addressing concerns and misperceptions, and facilitating access to vaccinate all children," says Dr Yagoub Al Mazrou, Chairman of the IAG Executive Committee.

Maulana Muhammad Hanif Jalalndhri, Nazim Aala Wifaq ul Madaris and member of the National Islamic Advisory Group in Pakistan, updated the participating scholars on the progress with polio eradication efforts in his country, and urged them to continue their hard work.

Mufti Ehsanul Haqq Hanafi, Member of Darul Ifta Supreme Court and of the National Islamic Advisory Group in Afghanistan, called upon those scholars rejecting polio vaccine to re-

consider their stance for the sake of protecting children's health.

"We have a great challenge to eradicate polio, but it is not an impossible mission and we put our trust in the eminent scholars of Afghanistan and Pakistan to help us achieve this goal from these last remaining endemic countries," says Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, Regional Director of WHO/EMRO.

"The Islamic Development Bank continues to support polio eradication efforts and looks forward to see the end of the disease by next year with the help of the Islamic scholars," says Dr El Bashier Sallam, Lead Health Specialist at the Islamic Development Bank.

"At the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation we believe that Ulema have an important role to play in maternal and child health. They have the mandate from the Qur'an and prophetic Sunnah, as well as the presence on the ground among the people and their congregations," says Mr Abdunur Sekindi, Professional Officer, Department of Science and Technology, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. (Pajhwok)

(9) School, Seminary...

building's construction.

Arab said the construction of a high school building was had also begun in the district. Construction of the building for Chotra High School would cost 19 million Afghanis.

This building will contain 14 classrooms, 12 administrative rooms and other sections, he said, adding the project would take 16 months to complete.

Azra district chief Hamidullah Hamid asked construction companies to complete their jobs on time and to the required standards.

He acknowledged most schools in the district were without buildings and the government should focus on addressing the issue.

According to local officials, 310 schools are open in Logar but 120 of them are without buildings. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban's Attempt...

The Taliban had been told to capture some cities, including the Kunduz capital, to get maximum attention and advantage at the negotiating table but they were unable to achieve their goal due to strict security measures, said Hilal.

On Monday, the security forces announced reopening of the Kunduz-Takhar highway for traffic but threats still exist.

An official at the Civil Hospital, who wished to go unnamed, said 94 injured, including 50 military personnel, had been evacuated to the hospital. In addition, 18 bodies, including six of security personnel, had also been brought to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid acknowledged four fighters had been killed and six injured in Kunduz clashes. He claimed 63 security forces were also killed in the firefights. (Pajhwok)

(11) Sar-I-Pul: Taliban...

two Taliban militants and one policeman were killed and nine policemen and five militants were wounded. Currently security forces were in control of the areas, Amani concluded. (Pajhwok)

(12) New Zealand PM...

its lowest since September 2017, at 40 percent.

"All I know is that I'm doing my job to the best of my ability," Ardern told 1News when asked about the poll result.

Since coming to power in 2017, Ardern's coalition government has faced several challenges including weak business confidence, emboldened unions and a slowing economy. Her youth and global celebrity has also given critics doubt.

But the 38-year-old leader struck all the right notes in the hours after the Christchurch attack.

Ardern promptly labeled the mass

killing as terrorism, and set about reassuring a nation that has been largely unscathed by the violence and fears that have afflicted other countries in the past two decades. (Reuters)

(13) India's Jet Airways...

20,000-plus jobs which are at stake here, to pay our salaries," said Jet Airways captain Asim Valiani.

Company Chairman Naresh Goyal, who founded the airline in 1992, resigned from the board last month but submitted an expression of interest on Friday to make a bid, Indian news media reported.

Goyal built the airline into India's largest carrier by offering an alternative to the unreliable schedules of the country's state-owned airlines.

But it has been struggling for more than a decade since it borrowed heavily to compete against a new crop of budget airlines.

Jet Airways was pinched further last year when the government imposed a 5% import tax on jet fuel even as petroleum prices worldwide rose.

Around the same time, the company announced it was low on working capital. Employee pay became irregular. Pilots and engineers began to jump ship, taking jobs at rival Indian airlines. Aircraft lessors began taking back leased planes in lieu of payment. (AP)

(14) Russia-Germany...

option "can only be seen as a deliberate attempt to delay the project's completion," adding European consumers could lose as much as "at least 20 million euros" a day.

The planned Baltic pipeline will transport natural gas via a 1,200-kilometer (746-mile) pipeline from Russia to Europe. It has come under fire from the United States and some European countries claiming it could increase Europe's dependence on Russia as a supplier of energy.

Washington, which wants to sell its liquefied natural gas to Europe, has threatened sanctions against companies involved in the undersea pipeline. While it is wholly owned by Russian gas giant Gazprom, half of the project's 8 billion euro (\$9 billion) cost is covered by five European energy and chemicals companies including Shell, BASF and ENGIE. (AP)

(15) Egypt, Greece...

Arab, African and Western states to boost military collaboration and exchange. (Xinhua)

(16) South Korean...

away an arsenal he may see as his strongest guarantee of survival, and Pyongyang apparently has been trying to drive a wedge between Washington and Seoul by appealing to Moon's enthusiasm for engagement.

"Whenever North Korea is ready, we hope that the South and North could sit down together and hold concrete and practical discussions on ways to achieve progress that goes beyond what was accomplished in the two summits between North Korea and the United States," Moon said in a meeting with senior aides.

Moon's office did not provide a timeline on when his fourth summit with Kim might take place.

Moon met with Trump last week in Washington, where they agreed on the importance of nuclear talks with North Korea but did not announce a specific plan to get the stalemated negotiations back on track.

Moon spent the past year making aggressive efforts to stabilize South Korea's hard-won detente with North Korea and improve bilateral relations. He also lobbied hard to set up the first summit between Kim and Trump last June, when they agreed to a vague statement about a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula without describing how or when it would occur. Trump and Kim met again in Vietnam in February, but the summit collapsed over what the Americans saw as excessive North Korean demands for sanctions relief in exchange for limited disarmament steps. (AP)