

### Ambassador Liu...

signed the BRI memorandum of understanding with China earlier, and also one of the first countries to declare in the joint statement that the two countries will jointly build the BRI. Whether it is policy, facilities, trade, financial or human connection, China and Afghanistan have the basis for "connection" and are striving to strengthen the afore-said "five connections".

A: Some in Afghanistan feel that China seems to prefer some countries in the BRI construction, with more financial and political preferential than Afghanistan.

Liu: Both Chinese and Pashto have the notion that "hands are carried by the palms of the hand". China does not deviate from any neighbors and friends. In fact, we have given quite a lot of care to Afghanistan. We give Afghanistan a large number of training opportunities and government scholarships every year. Other countries are very envious of this. We propose to actively explore the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan in an appropriate manner. This will benefit China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. What is the specific direction of the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor? Should we give priority to roads, railways, pipelines, or fiber optic cables building? There is much room for consultation between the parties. The BRI is not one "road", one "line" or one "belt", but a comprehensive network and system, so Afghanistan has many opportunities. If the security and business environment in Afghanistan is improved, it will be more likely to become the interface between the two major corridors, especially in the construction of the "Silk Road Economic Belt".

A: When some countries do bad things, Afghanistan has always suffered. When they do good things, Afghanistan has always been ignored. This is unfair. China is not such a country. China's initiative always considers the interests of all parties. It is hoped that when it comes to the BRI, China could consider more about Afghanistan's participation and benefits.

Liu: China welcomes Afghanistan to participate more actively in the construction of the BRI. To deal with some major projects of economic cooperation, Afghanistan needs to think about the big things, starting from a small place, and gradually, from the easy to the difficult, and have more thorough considerations of the security situation and security measures.

A: Afghanistan is a poor country. One of the major obstacles for us to participate in the BRI is that we have no money and we cannot engage in the construction of large projects such as railways and highways. Another obstacle is the poor security situation. It is hoped that the Chinese government will encourage Chinese enterprises to invest and operate projects in Afghanistan, which will have a very good impact among the Afghan people.

Liu: Improving the security environment in Afghanistan requires the efforts of both Afghanistan and the international community. The second meeting of the Kabul Process was a very positive action. Terrorism is a common enemy of mankind. The international community needs to join forces in combating all forms of terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

The fund is indeed a big problem, but this does not mean that Afghanistan can't do anything in the construction of the BRI or can only rely on external assistance to engage in

projects. The Afghan side can explore and rely on various types of funds, and win and execute projects in multiple ways. In terms of exerting its own comparative advantages and introducing foreign media, Afghanistan seems to be able to take a more active approach, including formulating mature plans for the country, giving necessary prior investment, and clarifying preferential policies for foreign companies, so that there will be good returns. As Dari proverb puts: "As we sow, so shall we reap."

A: I suggest that the BRI transport project for South Asia could get through Afghanistan than through other corridors. A shortcut through by Afghanistan can save you a lot of time and money.

What is your opinion?

Liu: Afghanistan and other South Asian and Central Asian countries are all China's friendly neighbors. We hope that all countries will develop and live in harmony because the neighboring countries cannot be chosen and changed. It is hoped that Afghan friends will develop their relations with major neighboring countries from a long-term perspective and a strategic perspective, and pay more attention to mutual understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation. As far as I know, Afghanistan's neighboring countries all support interconnection in principle. It is hoped that Afghanistan will have open communication with neighboring countries. When there is strategic mutual trust, there will be regional connectivity. As for the use of specific transportation lines, it is a market behavior and it is also open. Of all the ways ahead, businessmen will always choose the ones that are convenient, safe and secured.

A: I completely agree with you and thank you very much for providing this opportunity for in-depth dialogue.

### (1) NATO FMs...

in Afghanistan Ambassador Cornelius Zimmermann.

NATO-led Resolute Support Mission Commander General John W. Nicholson will also be in attendance. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Afghanistan...

have been implicated in several cases of violence against journalists, RSF reported.

In response to the threats, the Afghan authorities and media representatives have jointly launched coordination committees for the safety of journalists and media, it said.

The commission, RSF said, is comprised of senior government officials and representatives of media and reporters led by the Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish.

The organization said the commission has addressed dozens of cases of violence against journalists and media workers this year.

The RSF has commended Afghan journalists' bravery in defending rights, pluralism and independence.

The organization meanwhile stated it reiterates that insecurity has a direct impact on women reporters' presence in society and in media.

This index however was released the same day as unknown gunmen killed a Kandahar journalist, Abdul Manan Arghand.

Arghand's family said the incident happened at about 9am on Wednesday in Yarana Market in PD9 in Kandahar city.

Afghan government leaders have often said the safety of journalists and providing them with sufficient information is their top priority.

Freedom of press is deemed as one of Afghanistan's biggest achievements in the past 17 years. (Tolo news)

### (3) Billion Dollars in...

In total, donors from around the world have given the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which is administered by the World Bank, more than \$10 billion.

But according to a watchdog appointed by Congress, those billions of dollars are at risk because the World Bank and the government of Afghanistan are not adequately monitoring where they go and how they are used.

"Once the US or any other donor provides its contributions to the fund, neither the World Bank nor USAID can account for how those

funds are specifically spent," said the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction in a statement. SIGAR is tasked with monitoring US spending in Afghanistan, and the US provides money to the fund through USAID. The ARTF described itself as the "the largest single source of on-budget financing for Afghanistan's development ... delivering important results within key sectors including education, health, agriculture, rural development, infrastructure, and governance." It does not fund Afghanistan's security sector.

The funds from the trust fund are used to pay salaries of Afghan government workers, SIGAR says, but the World Bank does not require a third-party monitor to physically verify that those government workers actually exist.

The third party contractor's work is limited by security concerns because they are not always able to verify workers in insecure areas, the report states. The World Bank also does not publicly share evaluations of the third-party contractors who are monitoring how the money is used.

"Donors, including USAID and U.S. taxpayers, will continue to provide billions of dollars to the ARTF without adequate assurance that the money being spent is actually contributing to the ongoing operation of the Afghan government, addressing fiscal gaps in Afghanistan's national budget, and furthering the international community's overall reconstruction efforts," the report states.

The World Bank also is not consistently measuring performance of projects funded by the ARTF, according to the watchdog. "Without an accurate, reliable evaluation, the World Bank will be unable to determine the impact the roughly \$10 billion in donor funding has had in improving Afghan development."

The fact that there is apparently little accountability for how the money is spent has an impact on the projects selected, according to the report: "A senior aide to Afghanistan's President told us that the structure of the ARTF allows for ill-conceived projects to be funded because there is no repayment obligation and that dysfunctional projects are nearly impos-

sible to eliminate."

There's political pressure to spend the money, the aide reportedly said, "even if the programs and projects being funded are ill-conceived or unneeded, or risk losing future funding."

The World Bank did not immediately respond to NPR's request for comment. The report states that the World Bank has taken steps to improve its monitoring since the last report in 2011 but there are still major gaps. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Nearly 100...

Qais Hassan, Daud Kalakani, Mir Amanullah Guzar and 26 others lawmakers have said they will contest the upcoming lower house election.

Farkhanda Zahra Naderi, Mohammad Younis Qanoni had said they had not yet decided to contest the upcoming poll or not while Baktash Syawash, Shukria Barakzai and Sharifullah Kamawal could not be reached for the contact. Members of Wolesi Jirga's 15th legislative period:

Nine members of Wolesi Jirga's 15th legislative period have been able to penetrate into the 16th legislative period of the lower house while of the remaining members of the 15th legislative period currently only three --- Baidar Zazai, Jamil Karzai and Abbas Noyan --- had said that they would contest the upcoming Wolesi Jirga polls.

Eleven more lawmakers which included Mohammad Ibrahim Qasimi, Qadia Yazdan Parast, Mohammad Ismail, Abdul Kabir, Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf, Sabrena Saqib and others could not be reached for comments.

New candidates:

Pajhwok Afghan News has learnt that at least 65 new faces had decided to contest the Wolesi Jirga election for the first time. Pajhwok may not had been able to contact some individuals who want to contest election for the first time.

Ajmal Gulab, Ahmad Shah Sangdil, Etebar Zazai, Abdul Hai Malik, Abdul Sabour Rahmani, Abdul Qayyum Naderi, Zia-ul-Haq Amarkhel, Mohammad Idress Stanikza are some of the new faces wishing to contest the upcoming polls.

Traders:

Almost half of the people who want to contest the October 20 polls are traders. According to Pajhwok of the 67 individuals 42 per-

cent are businesspersons, two are journalist and the remaining are government officials, members of political parties and employees of private organisations.

Lack of women:

Among the new contenders three while among the current lawmakers seven women want to contest the future Wolesi Jirga polls. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Fight Against...

opportunities to the private sector, recommendations and solutions.

The CEO hailed the efforts of Spoko and his team regarding Afghanistan's reconstruction.

Abdullah presented his own anti-corruption ideas and said fight against corruption was government's top priority.

The two sides also discussed reforms and efforts on the eradication of corruption. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Air Pollution...

had reduced from 1,500 milli-microns in 2016 to 500 milli-microns in each cubic meter in 2017.

But that level of is still very high compared to international standards.

Bashir Ahmad Hamid, head of preventive medicine in the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), said air pollution 26 percent deaths in the country.

He said serious measures should be taken and people made aware about the hazards of air pollution and educate towards protection of environment.

State minister for Natural Disaster Management Najib Aqa Fahim, who was also present in the conference, said drought was among new risks that caused air pollution.

He asked NEPA and other relevant organs to work jointly towards dealing with the matter. (Pajhwok)

### (7) Afghanistan...

society and the private sector during special annual meetings.

Abdul Qadir Mutfa, the spokesman of mines and petroleum ministry, said the IGF was the only intergovernmental and international organization for preparing policy guides for mineral sources, cooperating with member countries for proper use, getting more benefit and attracting foreign investors for mines and economic development. Afghanistan can benefit from its membership of IGF by building its capacity, policy, attract assistance of mineral sectors and implementation of mines extraction policy, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

### Germany Trims 2018 Growth Forecast, But Outlook Still Strong

BERLIN — The German government trimmed its economic growth forecast for this year to 2.3 percent on Wednesday, though it said the outlook remains good and is predicting that growth next year will be almost as strong.

The new forecast is slightly lower than the government's prediction in January of 2.4 percent growth in 2018. For 2019, officials are forecasting that gross domestic product will expand by 2.1 percent.

That is in line with last year's growth of 2.2 percent, the strongest in six years. Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said that the economy, Europe's biggest, is in a "robust state" and the new forecast is "in a very realistic corridor."

However, he voiced concern about developments in international trade relations and noted that Germany is a major exporter.

The European Union is seeking a continued exemption from new tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump on steel and aluminum imports.

Altmaier said that while German steel and aluminum exports to the U.S. aren't a huge factor in themselves, his concern is more general — that "such a trade dispute could escalate, and so we would do well to avoid the escalation." (AP)

### Iran Set for Landmark Jump of 70% in Aluminum Output

TEHRAN - Iran's aluminum production is headed for a landmark rise of 70% when a new smelter comes online early next year, making the country self-sufficient in the strategic metal, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mehdi Karbasian has said. The South Aluminum Corp (Salco) smelter, being built in the city of Lamerd near the Persian Gulf, is about to add 300,000 tonnes per year of new capacity in the first phase to Iran's current 400,000 tonnes.

The country's aluminum consumption is less than 700,000 tonnes, and the operation of the new plant means Iran will need no more imports of the metal which is widely used in transportation, packaging, construction, electrical industry, consumer durables and machinery. (Press TV)