

(1) Afghan Forces...

Another resident, Yasan, said the Taliban were using loudspeakers at the mosque to warn residents to stay in their homes.

"Heavy explosions and gunfire can be heard. We are terrified," Yasan wrote in a Facebook post.

- Bodies in the streets -

Civilian houses and army checkpoints came under mortar attack and the bodies of dozens of Taliban fighters were in the streets, provincial governor spokesman ArifNoor said. The US said that the city remained under government control. "U.S. Forces responded with close-air support this morning in #Ghazni," the official account for US Forces in Afghanistan tweeted Friday. "Afghan forces held their ground and maintain control of all govt. centers. Another failed attempt by Taliban to seize terrain, while creating strategically inconsequential headlines," it said.

"Initial reports indicate minimal Afghan security force casualties," the US spokesman later told AFP, adding that American forces deployed attack helicopters and conducted a drone strike in response. Baz Mohammad Himmat, head of the civilian hospital in Ghazni, said at least 16 people had been killed in the fighting, including 14 soldiers and two residents.

A spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani said the Taliban had suffered heavy casualties in the onslaught and confirmed the airstrikes. Police special forces have also been deployed to help block the Taliban advance, an Afghan security official said.

The Taliban issued a statement claiming to have captured "most of the government buildings inside the city", and that they killed and wounded 140 security forces.

The insurgents frequently exaggerate their battlefield gains and downplay losses incurred during fighting.

- Growing pressure -

Afghan forces have been struggling to hold back the resurgent militant group since the withdrawal of NATO combat troops at the end of 2014.

In May, the Taliban attacked the western city of Farah. After a day of intense fighting, Afghan commandos and US air strikes drove the group to the outskirts of the city. The insurgents have also so far ignored an offer by Ghani in February of unconditional peace negotiations.

However, there are tentative signs that diplomatic efforts to bring the insurgents to the table for peace talks may be starting to bear fruit.

The Taliban have long insisted on direct talks with the United States. Washington has repeatedly refused, saying negotiations must be Afghan-led.

But the US indicated a change in its longstanding policy in June when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States was prepared to "support, facilitate and participate" in talks.

Pompeo also said the role of foreign forces in Afghanistan would be on the table.

Last month, Taliban representatives met US officials for talks in Qatar.

Kabul-based analyst Haroun Mir said Friday's attack may have been aimed at securing maximum leverage before engaging in formal peace talks.

"They want to enter the talks from the position of strength, and they want to capture big cities before potential peace negotiations," said Mir.

Anticipation has also been mounting about the possibility of a government ceasefire announcement for the Islamic holiday of Eid al-

Adha later this month.

An unprecedented truce in June brought fighting between security forces and the Taliban to a temporary halt, giving war-weary Afghans some welcome relief from violence. (AFP)

(2) Commerce Ministry...

business three years ago, I started with little money. Now my business has grown and eight to nine women are working with me. The government has not offered any visible support to women so far, but these kinds of exhibitions are helpful," said another businesswoman, NisaaRezayee.

The exhibition which is titled "National Exhibition of Creative Business Women" opened on Wednesday and is being held at Babur Gardens.

Over 100 women from various regions of the country are showcasing their products.

The ministry said that the aim of the exhibition is to expand the culture of using domestic products among the people.

"The exhibition aims to introduce Afghanistan's domestic products (to the market) and to seek proper international markets for them. We organized similar markets in the past and achieved positive results from it and managed to introduce Afghanistan's domestic products both on the local and international markets," said JawadNoori, MoI official.

This week the World Bank released its Update on Afghanistan and stated that women's participation in the labor force has been rising steadily since 2001, reaching 19 percent in 2016.

According to their report, about 64 percent of Afghans agree that women should be allowed to work outside the home, however, they still face a multitude of barriers, including restrictions, harassment, discrimination and violence, as well as practical hurdles such as a lack of job experience, employment skills and education.

The World Bank states that the overall literacy rates of women in Afghanistan is 17 percent, however, in some provinces that drops to under 2 percent. (Tolo news)

(3) Promise to Gain...

use and said technology was the need of the modern area and the most advanced technology was being used in the radar system. (Pajhwok)

(4) Rashid Khan...

get education and then the organization would work to provide clean drinking water, health facilities and other humanitarian assistance.

Khan said his success in the cricket game was a result of the prayers and well wishes of the Afghans and now it was the time for him to help the deserving people.

Hundreds of social media users praised and welcomed Rashid Khan's move to set up the charity. Previously another cricketer Karim Sadiq had set up a charity organization. (Pajhwok)

(5) Kunduz Residents...

of the council, Khosh Mohammad Nusratyar, said.

The protestors said the IECC even did not provide the opportunity to the disqualified candidates to defend themselves.

"A individual who works for human rights and democracy, his names is dropped from the list by the electoral complaints commission and it is a shameful move," said a resident of Kunduz city Wahidullah Rahmani.

"The closure of the office (of IECC) and other problems can create obstacles on the way of elections," said Yousuf Rashid, chairman Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghan-

istan. "It is better that the people lodge their complaints to the commissions and both government and election commission need to address these issues so that negative impacts are not on holding the elections."

The IECC has said that enough time was given to all candidates to defend their case.

The committee of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC), assigned for investigation of possible links of some candidates with illegal armed groups, said last week that 25 names have been dropped from the parliamentary elections candidates' list.

Abdul Basir Faiz, member the committee, said seven other possible candidates received notices and 27 others received warning that if they are proved to have links with irresponsible gunmen, they will be removed from the final list.

The IECC is expected to disqualify candidates who are involved in security issues, coordinated crimes, drug smuggling, and misuse of public and private assets. (Tolo news)

(6) MEC Clears DABS...

to pay their electricity bills. He said DABS was responsible for spending every afghani and had documents for it.

Ghaleb said to completely eradicate corruption, DABS planned to hand the collection of electricity bills over to the private sector. He said the strategy had been prepared and would be finalized soon. (Pajhwok)

(7) Herat Land...

reforms in the transport department and removal of corrupt individuals had resulted in transparency and effusiveness.

The Heart's land transport revenue surges after five employees of the Transport Department were removed as directed by the president recently. (Pajhwok)

(8) China Interested in...

chief executive officer of Pakistan's state-owned Inter State Gas Systems (ISGS), told Reuters that Chinese officials have shown growing interest in building a spur from Pakistan and the line could act as an alternative to Beijing's plans to build a fourth China-to-Turkmenistan pipeline.

"With this channel, there is a possibility they don't have to do another line and they can off-take from this pipeline which is passing through Pakistan," Saulat said.

A China-to-Turkmenistan line has to cross several Central Asian mountain ranges and Saulat said it would be cheaper and easier for China to build a line from inside Pakistan's territory to cross the Karakoram range to its Western border.

China's ties to Islamabad have deepened in recent years as Beijing has pledged to fund \$57 billion in infrastructure as part of its Belt and Road initiative, including power stations and transport links.

Facing more delays, TAPI countries have changed tack to attract financing and make progress in the past two years. The project is now due to be done in two phases, with the pipeline built without compressors in the first phase, which would cut gas volume but would reduce prohibitive project costs.

Once gas starts flowing, and the pipeline begins generating cash flow, financing would be raised for the second phase that would see 11 compressors installed along the 1,814 km pipeline project.

"With this introduction of the phased approach, it has gained momentum with the Chinese," said Saulat.

The financial close for the first phase is due by the end of September, Saulat said, with the Asian Devel-

opment Bank promising \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion and the Islamic Development Bank giving assurances of \$1 billion in loans. (Tolo news)

(9) Hajj Flights...

said the post-hajj flights operation would begin on day five of Eidul-Azha and the process would take one month to complete. Each pilgrim's cost this year stood at \$2650, he said. (Pajhwok)

(10) Training on HR...

A TTC lecture emphasised: "The six-day human rights and gender workshop was very important as this subject is utterly needed to be taught."

"It was good that different methods were used throughout the activity. It made the topics more understandable. We acquired new knowledge and learned different teaching methods at the same time."

Over the last two years, the TED developed the manual with BEPA's support and input by TTC lecturers.

The manual will be introduced at 10 pilot TTCs located in various Afghan provinces. It shall help TTC lecturers teaching the subject of human rights and gender to future school teachers.

The manual includes lesson plans for different topics, such as discrimination and gender roles as well as efficient teaching methods.

Another attendee commented: "We learned very interesting methods that we can not only use for teaching the subject of human rights and genders but other subjects, too. The teaching workshop was conducted very participatory, which is great." The master trainers who conducted the workshop had received training on human rights and gender as well as teaching methodology before the activity.

They followed a participatory approach. Participants had to complete a series of tasks to explore and reflect on their own attitude towards human rights and gender. The master trainers also encouraged attendees to use new teaching methods in accordance with the manual. (Pajhwok)

(11) 28 Taliban Killed, 16...

said that a de-miners team has been reached to the area in order to clear the highway.

The Taliban have so far said nothing in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(12) With Some...

similar peace walk was first organized from the capital of southern Helmand province to Kabul after a deadly attack in Lashgargah and then several similar journeys followed.

The activists upon reaching Kabul erected protest tents in front of the US, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, the UN and the EU diplomatic missions and sent letters to the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). (Pajhwok)

(13) Political Parties...

of the political parties and movements.

The parties also asked the government to facilitate political parties and civil society groups in monitoring the elections.

They warned of pursuing their demands through legal ways if the government did nothing to ensure transparent elections.

They urged the international community to play its part in ensuring fair and transparent elections in Afghanistan as per the wishes of Afghans.

The gathering in Kabul was attended by political heavyweights including Mohammad Muhaqqiq, Atta Mohammad Noor, Younus Qanoni, Ismail Khan, Zalmi Rassel, Humayun Humayun, Zahir Qadir, Dr. Anwarul Haq Ahadi,

Rahmatullah Nabil and Jubish party leader Bashir Ahmad and others. (Pajhwok)

(14) Military Affairs...

the formation of Hamid Karzai-led interim government, Wardak was first appointed as advisor to the Ministry of Interior in 2003, then deputy counternarcotics minister and then head of DIAG program.

ZalmiWardak was also a candidate in the upcoming parliamentary elections from Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(15) UN Pledges...

Conference in November.

Jenča emphasized the importance of political dialogue and the shared responsibility among political leaders, the Afghan Government and the electoral institutions in creating an environment conducive to credible elections.

Assistant Secretary-General Jenča commended the Government for its efforts to find a political solution to the conflict in the country, including through the offer of unconditional peace talks to the Taliban.

In light of Afghans' strong desire for peace and reconciliation, he discussed the Government's vision for how to move forward on a peace process and welcomed its plan for a new ceasefire. The United Nations is ready to assist if requested. (Pajhwok)

NAB's Anti-Corruption Strategy Proves Excellent:Chairman

ISLAMABAD - Chairman, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal Friday said Bureau's Anti-Corruption Strategy has proved excellent which would continue in future.

NAB is determined to making Pakistan corruption free which is our national duty, he said this while chairing a meeting held here to review progress on implementation status of decisions and measures taken to further improve performance and efficiency of Bureau.

He said NAB's investigation officers strictly follow law, SOPs and code of conduct in conduct of complaint verification, inquiries and investigations on merit.

The Chairman said NAB, with improved infrastructure and rationalized workload, has prescribed efficient, effective and expeditious disposal of white collar crimes cases, putting a maximum limit of 10 months which is a record as compare to other Anti-Corruption Organizations. (Monitoring Desk)

Aussie Researchers Help Pacific Islands Farmers Beat Crop Pests, Diseases

SYDNEY - Researchers from the University of Queensland (UQ) will develop a strategy to help Pacific Island farmers to tackle crop pests and diseases.

Announced on Friday, the 3.2 million U.S. dollar project will be funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research over a period of five years.

"The project will work with Pacific Island governments to promote biological control of insect pests as part of an overall approach to sustainable agriculture," Doctor Michael Furlong from UQ's School of Biological Sciences said.

Harmful chemicals are currently used in parts of the Pacific Islands as pest control, however some of the products used can have harmful effects for humans and the environment.

"The production of high-value fruit and vegetable crops free from unsafe agrochemicals is a priority in many Pacific Island countries," Furlong said.

"These chemicals can be expensive and often have adverse effects on the environment and human health." (Xinhua)