

(1) 5th Round of...

that took Baradar and three other senior members of their political council to Doha.

While participating in the introductory meeting, Baradar reportedly underlined the imperative of peace talks to find a negotiated end to the Afghan conflict. Prisoner swap and lifting of a travel ban on senior Taliban leaders are also expected to figure at the meeting.

"The path to peace doesn't often run in a straight line. The situation in Afghanistan is complex and like all sensitive talks, not everything is conducted in public..." Khalilzad tweeted.

He claimed the two sides had made significant progress on two vital issues -- counter terrorism and a troop withdrawal.

"That doesn't mean we're done. We're not even finished with these issues yet, and there is still work to be done on other vital issues like intra-Afghan dialogue and a complete ceasefire," Khalilzad said. (Pajhwok)

(2) Karzai Says...

US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad wrote on his Twitter account: "Just finished a working lunch with Mullah Baradar and his team. First time we have met and now moving on to talks."

Baradar, the co-founder and head of the Taliban's political council, was freed from jail by Pakistani authorities last year. The US and the Afghan government had demanded his release. The Qatari foreign minister sent a special plane for Baradar and three other senior members of their political council to fly them to Doha. (Pajhwok)

(3) Afghan Forces...

by the airstrike on Monday night which left eight forces dead and four others wounded.

Ahmad Khan Sirat, spokesman for Ghazni police, has also confirmed the airstrike on the public uprising forces outpost in an interview with the BBC. (Tolo news)

(4) US to support...

invest in different projects as investment in instability was not possible.

He said currently the US was investing in Afghanistan's telecommunications and fiber optic projects and the amount of investment in telecommunication might reach \$100 million.

Jeffery Grico, a member of the AACC, said: "We are here today to meet Afghan investors and promote mutual trade through dialogue."

He said traders from both countries would exchange views on investment opportunities in both countries during their meetings.

Atiqullah Nasrat, senior official of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), said there was great opportunity of investment in Afghanistan's mining, energy, technology, agriculture, transport and other areas. He asked US investors to come and invest in these areas.

He did not share figures regarding ongoing trade between the two countries but said trade figures between the two countries were not good.

Hopes for investment and reconciliation raised after the US launched efforts to end the 18-year old war in Afghanistan.

The fifth round of talks between the US and the Taliban is underway in Doha, the capital of Qatar. (Pajhwok)

(5) Pakistan to Allow...

A council of the Afghan refugees

in Pakistan welcomed the prime minister's decision, saying the move would help the Afghan businessmen open accounts and transfer and receive money through Pakistani banks.

Muhammad Sherzad, a member of the refugees' council in the Pakistani city of Peshawar, told Xinhua on the phone that allowing refugees to open accounts in Pakistan was their primary demand.

"The Afghan refugees welcome the decision as it will enable us to send money through banks. Many refugees would now keep their money in banks, who previously did not have the permission to open accounts in Pakistan," Sherzad said. (Xinhua)

(6) Balkh Civil Society...

Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah's advisor Mahsan Danish said Afghan government wanted a peace in which women's rights and all national interests were safe.

Saleh Mohammad Muradi, a member of provincial council held similar views and urged the Taliban to set for intra-Afghan dialogue.

He called on government to take advantage from opportunity made for peace and said Taliban should also prepare for face to face talks with the government.

He believed Taliban and the government were tired of war and they were trying for ending the conflict in the country.

Afghans want lasting-peace and the Afghan government should stop the interference of regional countries who want war in Afghanistan instead of peace, he added.

Muradi said peace efforts would not be fruitful without the presence of Afghan government.

Civil society activists and public representatives in their resolution letter welcomed all those efforts which could bring an end to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(7) Chabahar Rail...

transportation sectors, especially in the port, sea and customs transit projects and infrastructure along with strong government support has made the Chabahar port a regional transit hub between India and Afghanistan. He said the removal of some existing obstacles and progress of the development plans will lead to a transit boom in this direction.

Eslami noted that a new chapter in the life of the Chabahar Port which includes players at national, regional and international levels will prompt the comprehensive development of the deprived region it is located in. (IRNA)

(8) Herat Women...

Affairs Directorate.

Herat activists said the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces deserve more support from the people and that the campaign is part of the efforts to honor their sacrifices.

"Our National Army is striving day and night for us and we took part in the blood donation campaign to thank them for their services. We are grateful to those who are serving the country," said Asma, a Herat resident.

Officials from Herat public hospital said the donated blood will be handed to the 207 Zafar Corps in Herat so that it helps wounded soldiers.

"We coordinate with the health center of the 207 Zafar military Corps, and if necessary, we will supply the blood to them," said

Farhad Torabi, deputy of Herat blood bank.

Herat residents hold blood donation campaign every year to support Afghan forces. (Tolo news)

(9) Afghan Agricultural...

overseas retail buyers. "Our goal is to move away from wholesale and into the retail market," he said. "We are currently in negotiations with a buyer with the Carrefour retail chain. Having our saffron on supermarket shelves is where we want to be."

This is the ninth consecutive year that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting the participation of Afghan traders at Gulfood, considered the world's largest annual food and hospitality show. Now in its 24th year, the event comprised one million square feet of exhibition space for 5,000 exhibitors from the foodservices and hospitality industries. Last year's exhibition saw more than 98,000 visitors from 193 countries.

Participation at Gulfood comes on the heels of successful USAID-supported events in New Delhi and Mumbai in India, and Almaty in Kazakhstan. In 2018, Afghan agribusinesses signed \$278 million in contracts for Afghan agricultural products.

USAID's Commercial Horticultural and Agricultural Marketing Program, Regional Agricultural Development Programs (North and East), Afghanistan Value Chains - High Value Crops, and Livestock and Promoting Value Chains - West supported Afghanistan's participation in Gulfood this year. (PR)

(10) 18 Taliban...

Naqibullah, a resident of Qarabagh district, told Pajhwok that the district was under air strikes from the last several days.

He said the airstrikes targeted Taliban most of the times but civilians also suffer casualties sometimes.

On the other hand, a Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid said that security forces raided a house of a civilian in Rashidan district and killed an innocent man named Matin.

He said that Afghan forces also arrested five civilians during the raid. Afghan and foreign forces also raided a healthcare center in Rasani area of Gilan district and killed a doctor named Muslim, he added.

However, Ghazni officials rejected Taliban comments about civilian casualties. (Pajhwok)

(11) Over 200 Addicts...

296 kilograms of drugs charges in the past few days.

Meanwhile, provincial counter-narcotics department's head Mohammad Idress Safi said if job opportunities were provided for certain addicts after their rehabilitation they might not return to addiction. (Pajhwok)

(12) Wardak Residents...

The report says that 2018 witnessed the highest number of civilian casualties ever recorded from suicide attacks and aerial operations.

The National Security Advisor's Office in a statement on Feb. 24 said the Afghan forces are undertaking new strategies to prevent civilian casualties in their operations.

The statement said that the Afghan forces have always paid thorough attention in preventing civilian casualties. (Tolo news)

(13) Senior Taliban...

An intelligence source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mullah Shahabuddin -- in charge

of usher -- was among the dead. Shahabuddin led a 40-fighter group in the district.

Another rebel wounded in the overnight attack was in critical condition, the source revealed. Taliban have not yet commented on the incident. (Pajhwok)

(14) Brexit: Parliament...

Businesses warn that without a deal Britain risks a chaotic departure that could disrupt trade between the U.K. and the EU, its biggest trading partner. The uncertainty has already led many British firms to shift some operations abroad, stockpile goods or defer investment decisions.

British lawmakers rejected May's deal with the EU last month -- largely over concerns about a provision to guarantee an open border between the U.K.'s Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland -- and sent May back to Brussels to get changes.

The EU is adamant that the legally binding withdrawal agreement can't be changed, though the bloc's negotiators are holding talks with U.K. Attorney General Geoffrey Cox about potential tweaks or additions around the margins.

May has said a new vote on any revised Brexit deal won't be held this week and could come as late as March 12.

Both May's governing Conservatives and the main opposition Labour Party are deeply split over Brexit, and there is no quick or easy way to break the political impasse. (AP)

(15) Iran's Foreign...

The post included a drawing honoring Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, as Iranians commemorate her birth Tuesday.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman, Abbas Mousavi, confirmed to the state-run IRNA news agency minutes later that Zarif had resigned but gave no reason for his departure.

Earlier Monday, Zarif met with members of the activist group Code Pink in Tehran, smiling as he posed for a photograph with them. However, he was not seen in images later in the day showing Syrian President Bashar Assad meeting with Khamenei and Rouhani. Iran has been one of Assad's main supporters during the years-long war in Syria.

On Sunday, Zarif criticized Iranian hard-liners in a speech in Tehran, saying: "We cannot hide behind imperialism's plot and blame them for our own incapability."

"Independence does not mean isolation from the world," he said.

Analysts say Rouhani faces growing political pressure from hard-liners within the government as the nuclear deal unravels. Iranian presidents typically see their popularity erode during their second four-year term, but analysts say Rouhani is particularly vulnerable because of the economic crisis assailing the country's rial currency, which has hurt ordinary Iranians and emboldened critics to openly call for his ouster.

Reaction to Zarif's resignation was swift. A prominent reformist lawmaker, Mostafa Kavakebian, wrote on Twitter that Rouhani should reject Zarif's resignation as his departure would only "make enemies of Iran's dignity happy."

Hassan Mohammadi, a Tehran-based political analyst close to Rouhani, said he understood it was Zarif's third time submit-

ting his resignation in the last year.

"It is part of plan for changing the track in foreign policy in Iran. A negotiation-seeking foreign minister is not a favored person anymore," Mohammadi told The Associated Press. "Iran needs a tough foreign minister from now on. Someone who does not offer smile towards the West."

The son of a wealthy family, Zarif overcame hardline objections and Western suspicions to strike the accord with world powers that saw Iran promise to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions. (AP)

But the deal was later challenged by the administration of President Donald Trump, which pulled America out of the accord. In doing so, Trump also fueled doubts of Iranians still wary of U.S. interests decades after Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. Zarif himself faced withering criticism at home after he shook hands with President Barack Obama. (AP)

(16) Pence in...

Hours later, Venezuela's government issued a statement accusing the U.S. and the Lima Group countries of conducting "a ferocious campaign to oust" Maduro by trampling on basic international human rights.

The statement also rejected Pence's announcements, accusing him of attempting "to give orders so that other countries join the vulgar plundering" that Washington is pursuing against Venezuela's assets.

Pence's appearance before the Lima Group comes at an important crossroads for the coalition of mostly conservative Latin American nations and Canada that has joined forces to pressure Maduro. A month after Guaido declared himself interim president at an outdoor rally, hopes that support for Maduro inside the military would quickly crumble have faded.

Over the weekend, security forces on the borders with Colombia and Brazil fired tear gas and buckshot on activists waving Venezuelan flags while escorting trucks with emergency medical and food kits. Four people were killed and at least 300 wounded, although only a few were hospitalized.

While Colombian authorities said more than 160 soldiers deserted their posts and sought refuge across the border over the weekend, the highest-ranking among them was a National Guard major. No battalion or division commanders have come forward to challenge Maduro despite almost-daily calls by Guaido and the U.S. to do so.

That's left many asking what Guaido and the U.S. can do to break the stalemate. (AP)

(17) Turkey Says...

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan also criticized the EU on Tuesday for attending the summit in Egypt.

"Can you talk about democracy in these EU countries that attended Sisi's invitation? Can you talk about rights and freedoms there? Can you talk about human rights there?" he said at a rally in the northern province of Giresun.

Turkey aspires to join the EU but its accession negotiations, launched in 2005, are at a standstill amid concerns over its record on human rights and the rule of law. (Reuters)