

(1) Khalilzad Comments...

We in the coalition are proud of our support to Afghan security forces. Afghan security forces and military pressure are important in this phase."

"Afghan unity is vital as we go forward."

On U.S. Force Posture:

"We have never said we want permanent military bases in Afghanistan. What we want is to see this conflict end through negotiation, to continue our partnership with Afghanistan, and to ensure no terrorist threatens either of us."

"In the long run, we want to have a comprehensive relationship with Afghanistan that honors the sacrifice of the last seventeen years and provides for a better future for all Afghans. That relationship includes a military, diplomatic, and economic relationship."

On the Next Date for Talks with the Taliban:

"We're hopeful it will happen very soon. That's what we're working towards." (PR)

(2) Political Settlement...

Munter recalled his past stay in Pakistan as a remarkable experience in his diplomatic career.

He informed that as a former diplomat and now as President of East West Institute (EWI), a prominent think tank, he continues to advocate strong relationship between Pakistan and United States. Pakistan is an important country of the region and critical to US national security objectives, he remarked. (Tolo news)

(3) Kabul, Islamabad

of Afghans by Pakistani security personnel at Torkham border-crossing.

The issue had been discussed with Pakistani Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, said the envoy, who would visit Torkham to review the situation.

He plans to take up the matter with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Shah Farman and Corps Commander Shaheen Mazhar Mahmood today (Wednesday). (Pajhwok)

(4) New Faces Make...

the polls on behalf of Junbish-i-Islami, three on behalf of Hezb-i-Wahdat Islami, Hezb-i-Wahdat Islami Mardum and Dawat-i-Islami, two from Hezb-i-Islami and one from Jamiat-i-Islami party.

Some other top Wolesi Jirga candidates have political parties affiliation, but they ran independently. Wadir Safi said most of the Afghans had no good memories of political parties and they even hated their names. "That was the reason most people chose independent candidates", he said.

Men and women candidates Of the top candidates from 33 provinces, except Ghazni, 172 are men and 66 are women.

Nine female candidates, who appeared in the initial Wolesi Jirga results, are from Kabul, six from Herat, four from Nangarhar, three each from Kandahar, Balkh and Kuchis (nomads), two each from Kunduz, Badakhshan, Parwan, Takhar, Maidan Wardak, Baghlan, Helmand, Daikundi, Faryab and Ghor provinces and one each from other 18 provinces.

According to the IEC procedure, 68 of the total 249 seats of the lower house are dedicated for women and three allocated for Kuchis while the rest to women of other provinces based on their population.

Wolesi Jirga, provincial council and district council elections in Ghazni would probably be held

together with the presidential polls in July.

Wadir Safi said women should have more seats in the Wolesi Jirga because he believed women were kinder and least corrupt compared to men. (Pajhwok)

(5) Iran, Afghanistan...

If Afghan government does not create obstacles, economic activists can double Afghan exports to Iran, Qalandari said. (IRNA)

(6) Militant Activities...

Center deputy head, said the Afghans had been in a horrific situation over the past 40 years.

"We are a nation who suffered a lot, we are victims of the four decades of miseries, peace is our goal and we can get closer to peace by spreading messages about it."

Hafizullah Barakzai, head of Afghanistan Journalists Council, said the entire world knew the conflict in Afghanistan was a proxy war that daily killed dozens of youth, children, men and women.

"We no longer want our people die in a proxy war, we should work together with the HPC until we reach a tangible result," he said.

Barakzai said neighboring countries showed 'a green light' for peace and the Afghans should not miss this opportunity. (Pajhwok)

(7) Turkmenistan...

have declined to comment.

Many Afghan districts bordering Turkmenistan are at least partially controlled by militants, mainly the Taliban, rather than by the internationally-backed Afghan government.

In December, a senior Russian military official said that the Russian Defense Ministry had resumed cooperation and joint training with Turkmen armed forces for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Turkmenistan says it is neutral and has been reluctant to join international military and security groups since the Soviet collapse.

The head of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) -- which includes Russia and several other former Soviet republics but not Turkmenistan -- said there was a danger of a "powerful extremist group" appearing along Afghanistan's borders with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

In January 2016, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said during a visit to Ashgabat that Russia was ready to help Turkmenistan patrol its southern border with Afghanistan, but that Turkmenistan did not need such assistance at the time. (RFE/RL)

(8) NATO's Commitment to...

The Afghan government runs only half the country but there is growing hope that some kind of peace agreement can be reached with the Taliban.

But the rebels may have little incentive to talk if, as many fear, America pulls its troops from the nation.

"Our commitment to Afghanistan is unwavering," said Air Chief Marshal Peach.

Earlier this month, the chair of the Defense Select Committee said as quoted by the Forces News that it was "fanciful" to believe British forces could stay in Afghanistan if the US pulls out. (Tolo news)

(9) 'Naive, Reckless'...

nights sleeping on a thin mattress on the floor of his Afghan host's bedroom.

"Not that there are any in Afghanistan," he adds wryly.

Once a popular stop on the well-worn hippy trail between Europe

and South Asia in the 1970s, Afghanistan has seen the number of foreign travellers crossing its borders dwindle in the past four decades of almost non-stop conflict. But dozens still make the dangerous journey every year, ignoring clear warnings from their own governments to stay away from a country infested with suicide attackers, kidnappers and armed robbers, and which by some estimates is now the world's deadliest conflict zone.

Many take their chances by staying with Afghan strangers they find through the Couchsurfing network, rather than paying for a room in a hotel protected by armed guards and bullet-proof doors.

"Staying with people and dressing to blend in a bit makes it possible to travel in Afghanistan with not too big of a risk," says Barr, who -- with his dark hair and beard, and dressed in the baggy pyjama-style shalwar kameez favoured by most Afghan men -- stands out less than most foreigners.

- 'You have to be smart' - Couchsurfing's concept is like a modern-day version of Afghanistan's tradition of hospitality, which obliges Afghans to provide food and shelter to strangers.

But it is risky. Couchsurfers only have their host's online profile and references to judge their character.

In a country where kidnappings remain common and foreigners are highly-prized targets, they have no way of knowing if their host is connected to criminals, who may see a chance to get rich by abducting them or giving them up to militants. "You can end up with the Taliban," says a diplomat in Kabul, who has been involved in negotiations to rescue kidnap victims.

"It's naive and reckless."

That is what happened to North American couple Caitlan Coleman and Joshua Boyle, who were kidnapped while backpacking in Afghanistan in 2012.

They were freed from the Taliban in 2017, along with their three children who were born in captivity.

But Norwegian tourist Jorn Bjorn Augestad, who has couchsurfed in Iraq and the Central African Republic, tells AFP in Kabul that government warnings exaggerate the dangers.

"They are too careful. You have to be smart about a lot of things, having contact with a local is the best way to stay safe," says Augestad, who is on a mission to visit every country in the world, including Syria, before his 30th birthday this year.

He adds: "This is part of the cultural experience, seeing how people live and hearing people's life story and getting an understanding of the country that you are in."

- Vicarious travel - Barr and Augestad began their week-long Afghan odyssey in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, famous for its ancient Blue Mosque and buzkashi, a savage version of polo played with a goat carcass.

The pair met through a local travel agent, who found them a taxi driver to take them more than 400 kilometres (250 miles) to the Afghan capital.

After reaching Kabul, the deadliest place in Afghanistan for civilians, Barr and Augestad stayed with Couchsurfing host Naser Majidi, 27, who works as a technical adviser for a water utility company.

For Afghans consumed by wanderlust, hosting a foreigner is a chance to travel vicariously

through their experiences, as more and more countries make it all but impossible for Afghan passport holders to obtain a visa.

"I can make it easier for them to see the beauty of this country," says Majidi, who has hosted six guests since signing up to Couchsurfing in 2016.

"It's a good experience for me -- I get more friends and I know the world better."

But his family worry that he is putting himself in danger.

"They have advised me many times that this is very risky for you and for them (guests)," Majidi says.

Elyas Yari, who became a host in 2017 despite the objections of loved ones, says he enjoys listening to his guests' travel "experiences and their ideas".

"It's fun for me," says Yari, 19, who has received visitors from Canada, Russia, Mexico and Taiwan.

Afghanistan is "not as dangerous as it looks", he says.

But Barr and Augestad are not oblivious to the potential pitfalls of travelling independently in Afghanistan where the Taliban and the Islamic State group terrorise much of the country.

"Things can go well nine out of 10 times," says Barr, adding: "It just takes that one time when things go wrong and so far nothing has gone wrong. (AFP)

(10) 15 Taliban, ISIS...

Both the Afghan and Coalition Forces have stepped ground operations and airstrikes against the anti-government armed elements to suppress the growing insurgency against the government and security institutions. (KP)

(11) Germany Arrests...

but gave no further details.

German news magazine Der Spiegel reported that the suspect had access to sensitive information, including possible data on troop deployments in Afghanistan.

The German military often uses native-born interpreters to accompany troops on patrol in Afghanistan.

A German government source said the case was viewed very seriously, coming shortly after other espionage cases linked to Iran that last week prompted the European Union to add the names of two Iranians and an Iranian intelligence unit to its terrorist list.

"It has been made unmistakably clear to the Iranian side repeatedly that such unacceptable behavior will have consequences," the German foreign ministry said at the time.

Cornelius Adebahr, an analyst with the German Council on Foreign Relations, said the case underscored Iran's continued activities against Germany and the West.

"This cannot just be shrugged off. It makes clear Iran is a country with hostile intentions that is spying against us," he said. "Despite Europe's interest in maintaining the 2015 nuclear accord, this is not a relationship among friends or allies."

Allegations of espionage by Iran come at a particularly sensitive time for Germany, which is battling along with other European countries to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal after Washington's unilateral decision to pull out. In July, Germany's domestic intelligence agency reported that Iran had expanded its cyber attack capabilities and posed a danger to German companies and research institutions.

In January, the foreign ministry summoned Iran's ambassador

over what it said was Tehran spying on individuals and groups with close ties to Israel. (Reuters)

(12) Logaris Complain...

He said, "I want to directly hand over my application to the governor because I don't trust others, but it is too hard to visit the governor, who is not accessible to dozens others."

According to him, all authorities rested with the governor who did not allow anyone else to sign people's documents on his behalf.

A number of other residents expressed similar views and said the governor spent most of his time dealing with personal matters.

About the issue, deputy provincial council head Abdul Wali Wakil told Pajhwok that some people had complained in this regard to them.

But he defended the governor, saying nothing was wrong with the governor as he always attended office on time. He said it was difficult to sign each paper.

He promised to share people's mentioned issues with the governor soon.

Governor's spokesman Shamsad Lawari told Pajhwok that mpeople's applications were always answered on time.

He said they had created a center for receiving people's application letters and rejected allegations in this regard.

He said the governor had directed all employees to finish people's work without any hurdle and delay. (Pajhwok)

(13) Former Local...

their three children, and his entire family, some of whom still live here in Arcadia. As we like to say, once an Apache, always an Apache. We are proud to say Paul was and always will be a member of the Apache and Arcadia Unified family. May he rest in peace."

An Indian national was among those killed in the terror attack in Afghanistan's capital on Monday, a statement from the External Ministry of India said.

India called for the perpetrators of the assault as well as those who provided them shelter to be brought to justice expeditiously.

"India strongly condemns the horrific terror attack in Kabul yesterday in which an Indian national and many others lost their lives," the MEA said in a statement Tuesday.

The Indian Embassy in Kabul is taking steps for the repatriation of the mortal remains of the Indian national, the MEA said. (Pajhwok)

(14) Balkh Women's...

and priority for both men and women."

Meanwhile, women's rights activists welcomed the increasing participation of women in the society as beneficial and important.

Dr. Tahira Alami, women's rights activist, told Pajhwok that women's increasing interest in learning driving showed 'a big change' in the conservative society.

She said driving was not something specific to men, but women also could become professional drivers. "Harassment is a huge issue, and it should be countered at the earliest possible", she said.

Provincial traffic department confirmed women also drove vehicles in the city besides men.

For two consecutive weeks, Pajhwok tried to obtain data from the provincial Traffic Department about how many women received licenses last year, but failed. (Pajhwok)