

(1) Ghani, Abdullah to...

It would be great if our security forces could stand on their own feet and this would be in favor of our people and the people of the world," said Miagul Khalid, a military expert. (ATN)

(2) MPs Demand...

the only candidate of Sikh and Hindu minority for the Wolesi Jirga was among the dead.

According to the election law, the Sikh and Hindu community has one seat at the lower house and slain Awtar Singh was the only contender for the seat.

Gulalai Akbari, an upper house member from northeastern Badkhashan province, asked why the minority members were invited without security measures being taken.

Senator Latif Zwandai demanded through investigation into the attack and asked the IEC to give the Hindu/Sikh minority another chance to elect their candidate.

He said the Sikhs and Hindus were a peaceful community and their rights should not be violated.

First deputy chairman Senate Mohammad Alam Ezediyar said called it government responsibility's to protect all citizens, including Sikh and Hindu minority members.

He also demanded the government and the IEC return the minority community assets and wealth which had been usurped. (Pajhwok)

(3) Kabul Inhabitants...

to address the issue with a sense of urgency.

Dr. Mohammad Liaqat Adil, a Kabul-based doctor, agrees many ailments result from pollution. He wants people to help the government ensure a clean environment.

Kazimi Humayoon, a NEPA official, admits air pollution has reached a harmful level due to an increase in the number of cars in the capital.

He explains the weather remains more polluted in the winter when wood is burnt in houses to keep them warm. A lot of smoke is thus created.

The NEPA official also refers to lack of familiarity with urban life and low public awareness. Many factories use coal and plastic -- a major more pollutant.

Health experts say a polluted environment cause different diseases such as skin cancer, tuberculosis and others.

Farooq Azimi, a private university student, thinks if the government and people pay no attention to the environment, life would become more difficult in Kabul.

Shah Zaman Maiwandi, chief of NEPA, admits air pollution had reached harmful level in central capital Kabul.

Fast-growing population, use of low-quality fuel, high number of vehicles and smoke-emitting machines are major air pollutants, sending substances into the air that cause various diseases.

Air pollution has become serious in major cities, particularly Kabul. Maiwand did not provide details about the level of pollution but NEPA officials had said four months ago dust particles in Kabul had reached from 1,500 millimicron in 2016 to 500 millimicrons per cubic metre in 2017. But the level is still very high compared to international standards. Bashir Ahmad Hamid, head of the preventive medicine section at the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), said air pollution caused 26 percent of deaths

in the country. (Pajhwok)

(4) Paktia Police...

Governor Shamim Khan Katawazi lashed out at the Ministry of Interior MoI for what he said not extending any support since the terrorist attack took place about eight months ago.

"I repeat the Ministry of Interior did not extend us cooperation during the past eight months, the ministry did not fulfill what it promised or what it should have done." (Pajhwok)

(5) Govt Fail...

Following sharp criticism about the lack of transparency around the tax collection system, former finance minister Eklil Ahmad Hakimi on Wednesday said in an interview with TOLO news the implementation of the Real Time System has been delayed because telecommunication companies have not done enough to help government.

"The telecom companies are the main obstacle for establishing a good system that enables us to collect every AFs of the tax," Hakimi said.

The private companies now say that based on President Ashraf Ghani's decree, telecom tax collection is the duty of government and that the relevant department should collect the taxes in whatever way they can.

"I think the advisors of the officials do not feed them the correct information and the officials make decisions based on the wrong information," Ali Askar-Zada, an official from Etisalat said. (Tolo news)

(6) Peace Convoy...

said representatives from the US embassy in Kabul have asked to talk to them but that they have decided to share their demands with the US people and with Congress in a letter.

"Our demand from the US people and US Congress is that they review and assess activities of their forces in Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan are in a bad situation," said Mohammad Hanif Taraki, a member of the peace movement.

The planned meeting will be held near the US embassy in Kabul on Thursday, activists said.

According to them, once they move on from their sit-in protest outside the US embassy, they will make their way to the Russian embassy in Kabul.

From there they will continue their protest outside the embassies of Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Britain.

Some members of the peace convoy have meanwhile fallen ill due to the heat and continuous exposure to the sun following their seven-day sit in protest.

The activists, who are at Massoud Circle in Kabul city center have spent the last week sitting on mats placed on the asphalted road. With no shelter, the protest has taken a toll on the group, they said.

Ajmal, one member of the peace convoy, said he had been treated for heat exhaustion by a doctor and is now sitting in the shade of the Ahmad Shah Massoud minaret at the circle.

"I had a headache. I visited the doctor. He asked me to avoid sitting in the sun. He also said I had a throat infection," said Ajmal.

Sit-in Protest Started In Helmand
 The peace activists initially launched their sit-in protest in Lashkargah City after a suicide bombing outside a stadium back in March. About a month later, a group of eight protestors left Helmand on foot for Kabul. The activists walked through

towns and villages, crossed provinces and met with local residents along the way for 38 days. And as they progressed, so their numbers grew.

About 700km later, the group of eight had grown to an estimated 100. They arrived in Kabul on June 18 and handed over demands for a ceasefire and peace to both the Afghan government and the Taliban.

The group gave the Taliban three days in which to answer and said if they failed to do so, they would embark on sit in protests outside diplomatic offices and missions in the capital.

The Taliban's deadline passed without any response. The activists then held a three-day sit-in protest outside UNAMA's office in Kabul. They sent a letter to the UN Secretary General António Guterres in which they asked him not to remain indifferent towards ending the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

From there, they moved on to the US embassy - where they have been for the past seven days.

The activists, whose ages range from 17 to 65, come from all walks of life and include students, athletes and farmers among others.

The growing efforts for peace by members of the public and the Afghan government comes amid ongoing conflict. On Sunday, a suicide bombing left 19 people dead in Jalalabad City in the east of Afghanistan - the majority of whom were from the Afghan Hindu and Sikh community. (Tolo news)

(7) Neymar Dazzles...

Samara heat.

A glaring spotlight had been on Neymar after his opening three performances saw him miss a litany of chances, frequently squander possession and spend far too long on the turf.

Yet he answered a number of questions with his display and a decisive finish early in the second half from a move that he had started himself.

It began when he darted across the edge of the area before a perfect backheel released the excellent Willian, whose low cross fizzed into the danger area where Neymar slid in to turn the ball home for his second goal of the tournament.

It was a choking blow for Mexico, who had been the better side for the opening half an hour, but it was not the manner of defeat but Neymar's habit of constantly hitting the deck that most irked the Mexico coach.

"Unfortunately, and it is a shame for football, we wasted a lot of time because of one player," Juan Carlos Osorio said.

"It is a shame for all the people watching, all the children watching... There shouldn't be acting. I think this had an impact on our pace and style."

Brazil, who will have to do without defensive midfielder Casemiro in the quarters after he picked up his second booking, had to wait until the 88th minute to put the match to bed.

Neymar was the architect, crossing for Firmino, who is becoming something of a 'supersub' for Brazil, to tap the ball home.

Brazil coach Tite was unsurprisingly supportive of Neymar, dismissing accusations of play-acting, while preferring to talk about his improving side, who seem to be finding their rhythm after a third successive 2-0 victory.

"The team still has to grow," he said. "I wanted to repeat the standard of the last match and grow and that happened." (Agencies)

(8) Belgium Reminded...

how lopsided Belgium's victory would be.

So after Brazil beat Mexico comfortably earlier Monday to advance to the final eight, it was hard not to wonder if Belgium, with a starting lineup full of difference-makers from some of the most decorated club teams in Europe's elite Champions League, would be able to jettison the five-time World Cup champs en route to its first World Cup semifinal appearance since 1986. Japan had other ideas. Manager Akira Nishino had his team expertly set up to trouble Belgium's three-man backline of Toby Alderweireld, Jan Vertonghen and Vincent Kompany. The Blue Samurai's high press was on them from the opening kickoff, with wingers Genki Haraguchi and Takashi Inui stretching Belgium's defenders while playmaker Shinji Kagawa, who nearly scored with an early shot from distance, pulled the strings in the middle. But Belgium settled into the match soon enough, and Roberto Martinez's side had no shortage of chances to take the lead. Their front three of Dries Mertens, Romelu Lukaku and Eden Hazard never seemed to get the service they required from the midfielders behind them to break down Japan's disciplined defensive scheme, however. And the Japanese continued to threaten on the counter when the ball turned over, with forward Yuya Osako squandering a free header by hitting it straight at goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois a half-hour into the match.

When Haraguchi scored three minutes into the second half and Hazard hit the post at the other end seconds later, it looked like it wouldn't be Belgium's day. Japan's confidence only grew when Inui doubled the advantage just four minutes later.

"They frustrated us, and they were clinical on the counter," a clearly relieved Martinez told the official broadcaster afterward. "And then all of a sudden it was a test of character."

Belgium passed it with flying colors. As soon as Martinez replaced Mertens and Yannick Carrasco with Chadli and Marouane Fellaini in the 65th minute, things started to click.

Vertonghen pulled back a goal almost immediately. Then Hazard spun out of trouble deep in Japan's end and sent a perfect cross to Fellaini, who headed home the equalizer with 15 minutes remaining.

To its immense credit, Japan kept pressing for the goal that would've sent it to its first quarterfinal. Then just when the match appeared headed to extra time, Courtois rose to catch a wayward corner kick and launched his team's classy attackers on a break that, after a textbook Lukaku dummy run, ended with Chadli side-footing the winner past the outstanding Eiji Kawashima.

Just like that, Belgium is a game away from the final four. Neymar and mighty Brazil stand in the Red Devils' path, however, and the way Brazil defended against Mexico makes you think it will take a far better performance than this one to get past the prohibitive favorites, even if Belgium does present the South Americans with some interesting physical and technical challenges. (Agencies)

(9) Afghan Diplomats...

"condemning" the attack on the community.

The moment was heartening for

the members of the Sikh community who met the officials. The diplomats reiterated the fact that they are also victims of cross border terrorism. (Agencies)

Russian Railways Launches €1.2 Billion Project in Iran

TEHRAN - Russian Railways has begun the 1.2 billion-euro electrification of the Garmsar-InceBurun railway line in Iran, which stretches to Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, linking Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and beyond. Russian Railways CEO Oleg Belozerozov and Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Abbas Akhoundi attended the start of operations, coming in the wake of the US decision to leave the JCPOA nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions on Tehran. "This is the biggest sign that the JCPOA is firmly and strongly in force. Despite all pressures and threats by (US President Donald) Trump, a 1.2 billion-euro was launched today," Akhoundi said. Construction engineering company RZD International LLC, a subsidiary Russian Railways, is the main contractor in the project. The Russian government has also undertaken to provide 85% of funds for its implementation. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has permitted the remaining 15% of the credit needed in the project to come from the National Development Fund of Iran, Akhoundi said.

"This is an important project in terms of economics and upgrade of the rail transport industry. The most important point is that we will witness a technological change in the transportation industry in Iran. We are transforming from diesel locomotives to electric locomotives," he said.

Belozerozov said the project will double the maximum speed on the link to 120 km per hour and raise its capacity fourfold to 10 million tonnes a year.

"It will also increase safety and reduce emissions into the atmosphere. All this creates conditions for the growth of cargo turnover along the International North-South Transport Corridor and intensification of economic relations in the Caspian region," Belozerozov said.

The International North-South Transport Corridor is a 7,200-km multimode network of ship, rail, and road route connecting India, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia.

The project launched on Monday involves electrifying the 495-km line linking Garmsar near Tehran to InceBurun on the Turkmenistan border.

The contract covers design, sourcing of materials and equipment and construction of stations and tunnels, traction substations, section pillars, duty posts of the contact station and the power supply administration building.

Iran's rail sector has become a magnet for rail engineering and rolling stock firms from all over the world, but European companies are most likely to lose out to their Russian and Chinese rivals in the wake of Trump's decision to reimpose sanctions on Tehran. According to Swiss firm Stadler Rail's sales chief Peter Jenelten, "the craziest thing about the story" is that US sanctions should benefit Russia and China in the first place.

His remarks came last month as Stadler Rail said it was ditching a \$1.4 billion railway deal in Iran because of Trump's decision on the Islamic Republic. (Press TV)