

(1) Trilateral Meeting...

agreed that these negotiations should produce a peace framework as soon as possible.

This framework should guarantee the orderly and responsible transition of the security situation and detail an agreement on a future inclusive political arrangement acceptable to all Afghans.

The four sides encouraged all parties to take steps to reduce violence leading to a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire that starts with intra-Afghan negotiations. The four sides agreed to maintain the momentum of consultation, will invite other important stakeholders to join on the basis of the trilateral consensus agreed on April 25, 2019 in Moscow, and this broader group will meet when intra-Afghan negotiations start.

US welcomed Pakistan joining the consultation and believe that Pakistan can play an important role in facilitating peace in Afghanistan (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghanistan ...

The turnaround came after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met with Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad on June 27 where both sides agreed to deepen trade relations.

On Friday, a Technical Working Group (TWG) of Afghan officials met with Adviser to PM on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood where both sides exchanged their concerns and proposals.

During the meeting, Dawood complained to Afghan officials over the unchecked pilferage of goods through transit trade and asked them to address the issue.

He also asked officials to submit their revised draft on the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTITA) which has been pending since 2017.

On the other hand, the Afghan side agreed to increase bilateral trade through mutual cooperation by addressing all the issues which are negatively affecting trade relations.

The official leading Afghan delegation proposed a joint commission to resolve issues including transit trade.

He stressed the need to translate political will of leadership in both countries to revive trade ties by cooperating on technical level including understanding of customs authorities on both sides.

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries President Daroo Khan Achakzai also welcomed the revival of talks between the two countries on trade issues.

Deliberation on transit trade agreement will lead to increasing the bilateral trade volume, he added.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan peaked at \$2.4 billion in 2010-11 and remained north of \$2bn mark in 2011-12 and 2012-13 before falling to \$1.3bn in 2018-19 after talks between the two sides broke down. Dawood is expected to visit Kabul next to continue talks and understand issues hampering trade relations between the two neighbours.

Stressing the need to continue negotiations, he pointed out that trade between Kabul and Islamabad can grow if trade barriers are removed.

He also stressed on the need to implement APTITA in true letter and spirit and pointed out that Pakistan can play an instrumental in ensuring Afghanistan's food security. (Agencies)

(3) Turkey Delivers...

Last year, Ankara ratified a motion to extend the deployment of Turkish troops in Afghanistan for another two years as part of the NATO's support mission in the war-torn country.

The legislation that was first passed by the Turkish parliament in 2015 also grants the government authority to permit foreign army personnel to be transported to and from Afghanistan through Turkey. It is worth recalling the two countries share time-tested and deep-rooted ties. One of the first resolutions adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) Government was related to opening a representation in Kabul.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established through the signing of Turkey-Afghanistan Alliance Agreement in 1921.

Thus, Afghanistan has become the second country recognizing the TGNA. Turkish Embassy in Kabul whose premises were a gift of King of Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan, was the first diplomatic mission inaugurated in Kabul. (Agencies)

(4) Taliban Wants ...

Afghanistan Reconciliation said Thursday that America is not "cutting and running" from its longest war and that women will continue to have seats in peace talks to end nearly 18 years of fighting. Khalilzad addressed an audience in Washington on a video link from Qatar where the two-day intra-Afghan conference concluded on July 8 with a resolution that offered a roadmap for the country's future.

This comes as representatives of China, Russia, and the United States held their third consultation on the Afghan peace process in Beijing late last week where they agreed on key issues including an immediate start of the intra-Afghan negotiations which will also involve the Afghan government and the Taliban. (Tolo news)

(5) Experts Discuss...

She said experts would share their views regarding the protection of historic relics and all these suggestions would be shared with the president.

Haseena Safi, acting minister for Information and Cultural Affairs, said at least 10,000 historical sites had been identified and of them 3,500 items had been transferred to the national museum. Fifty more big items which included Buddhist and Astopa idols have also been secured in the area. (Pajhwok)

(6) Nearly 90 Taliban...

the police claim and said their fighters had suffered no casualties in the mentioned districts.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Yousuf, a resident of Murdian district, told Pajhwok that security forces and Taliban militants clashed until this morning. However, he had no information about casualties on either side. (Pajhwok)

(7) 4 Taliban Killed...

The source added the children were travelling in a car with their Taliban fathers when they came under attack from the air. Police, however, rejected the killing of two children in the airstrike.

Separately, three Taliban were killed in a security forces night raid in Balaboluk district, Hashmat Ahmadi, a military spokesman said. (Pajhwok)

(8) US Service Member ...

were killed in Uruzgan Province by small arms fire while engaged in combat operations, the Pentagon said. That incident is under investigation.

At least 2,300 American soldiers have died and more than 20,400 have been wounded in the country since a US-led coalition ousted the Taliban in 2001. (Tolo news)

(9) 56 Militants ...

targeted Taliban insurgents on Friday when 26 rebels were killed and some others wounded.

On the other hand, the Taliban rejected the claims. The group's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, denied casualties among the fighters in Azra. (Pajhwok)

(10) 11 Security Forces...

Zargho and Oba districts, the police spokesman said.

Ghulam Jilani Farhad said security forces suffered no casualties. But a source in the public health department said 11 injured soldiers had been evacuated to the civil hospital and other medical facilities from the two districts over the past two days.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the fighters killed 21 security personnel in the Kashmirabad area of Pashtoon Zarghon district, where the rebels seized eight weapons.

Meanwhile, he said two militant commanders -- Mullah Nazir and Bor Mohammad -- were among four rebels wounded in infighting in Shindand district. (Pajhwok)

(11) 3 Killed, 10 Wounded ...

Council, said gunfire and blasts could be heard 200 metres from the police headquarters.

Abdul Aziz Baig, the Provincial Council head, said security forces gunned down two suicide bombers who wanted to blow themselves up near the police compound. However, Nasrat Rahimi, Interior Ministry's deputy spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the Taliban attackers were holed up in a local hotel, spraying bullets at common people.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack, and their spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said their fighters forced their way into to a building close to the police headquarters and currently they were engaged in fighting with security forces. (Pajhwok)

(12) Local Radio Anchor ...

Nadir Shah was disappeared on Friday evening and security forces found his body in Bagh-e-Per area in Gardiz on Saturday.

Quoted by NAI, a journalists rights organization, Jalazai said the marks on Nadir Shah's body show that he was stabbed and tortured to death.

According to NAI statistics, Sahibzada is the seventh journalist killed in Afghanistan so far this year.

NAI in a statement called on the Ministry of Interior Affairs to run a thorough investigation into the murder of the journalist. According to local officials, this is the first time that a local journalist is killed in Paktia.

A report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released in April shows that for

Afghanistan's journalists, 2018 was the deadliest year since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.

According to the report, a total of 15 journalists and media workers were killed in a series of bombings that began early in the year, nine of them in a single day.

Government's statistics show that there are 96 TV channels, 65 radio stations and 911 print media in Kabul, as well as 107 TV channels, 284 radio stations, and 416 print media in other provinces. He says there are 1,879 active media outlets in Afghanistan which are called as one of the main achievements of the country in the past 18 years. (Tolo news)

(13) Paktika's Khoshmand...

a string of attacks and due to lack of coordination between security forces.

Aziz claimed the Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers did not support the police personnel and the district subsequently collapsed.

But Brig. Gen. Rahm Dil Haidarzaei, commander of the 2nd battalion of 203rd Thunder Military Corps, said the district had been retaken by the security forces.

He said: "Right now, the governor and security forces are present in the district centre." Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban's spokesman, the the rebels overran the district after a brief clash. He claimed the security forces had suffered heavy casualties. (Pajhwok)

(14) UAE Fast ...

of their drawdown is surprising," noted Varsha Koduvayur, a senior research analyst for the Gulf States at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). "It shows that Abu Dhabi is eager to mitigate any damage its reputation suffered stemming from its Yemen involvement, particularly as anti-Saudi sentiment grows in Congress and Capitol Hill seeks to hold the Saudis accountable on that front."

She underscored that the decision to drawdown is not surprising though, as "the UAE has wanted to wind down its role in Yemen for years and hand off responsibility to UAE-trained local units in Yemen."

Officially, Emiratis have pinned the scale-back as being in line with the fragile peace-deal brokered by the United Nations in December to cease the fighting in the port of Hudaydah, a strategic hub for humanitarian supplies and economic lifeline for the war-torn country.

And despite questions over how the drawdown may have inflamed their close-knit relations with Saudi Arabia, Riyadh has remained firm that two countries are aligned on their Yemen objectives. The Pentagon, which has long come under its own criticism for selling weapons to the Saudi coalition and for its own involvement with regards to intelligence sharing the refueling of planes, is said to pushing for a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

The troop shakeup has subsequently prompted Saudi Arabia's military to deploy a stronger presence of its own to the Red Sea ports this week, Reuters noted. What it means for the next chapter of the war, remains unclear.

"The big question is whether or not Hodeida is now off the table, and that is not yet clear. The main fighting force on the ground is Yemeni and is still in place; what the UAE drawdown does is remove coordination and air support," Salisbury explained. "If the Saudis step in and perform the same role, that makes an assault on Hodeida possible, although I wouldn't rate the chances of success highly. That would trigger a worse conflict and widespread famine. But if these forces just remain in a holding pattern we have a largely stalemated conflict in which the best next move is peace talks."

However, Emiratis will keep its footprint -- albeit reduced -- in the southern city of Aden, the Times reported. Aden has become a de-facto capital for Saudi-supported government officials in Yemen given that the Houthis seized control of the capital Sana'a in 2014, prompting the launch of Saudi's bombing campaign in March 2015 with strong support from the UAE, the United States, and other regional allies. (Fox News)

(15) Russia Delivers...

deal with Russia for the S-400s, the United States and Europe had not presented a viable alternative.

The dispute between the countries with the two largest armies in NATO marks a deep division in the Western military alliance, which was forged after World War Two to counter Moscow's military power. Reaction from Washington was limited on Friday, with acting Defense Secretary Mark Esper saying the U.S. stance had not changed. Esper later spoke with Turkish counterpart Hulusi Akar.

"Minister Akar told his U.S. counterpart that Turkey remains under a serious air and missile threat and that purchase of S-400 defense systems was not an option but rather a necessity," a Turkish Defence Ministry statement said. Investors in Turkey have been unsettled

by the deal and the prospect of sanctions, a year after a dispute with Washington over the trial of a U.S. pastor in Turkey contributed to a financial crisis which drove Turkey's economy into recession. The Turkish lira weakened as much as 1.6% to 5.7780 against the dollar on Friday, before recovering somewhat.

Russia's TASS news agency quoted an unnamed military-diplomatic source on Friday as saying that a further delivery -- of 120 guided missiles -- would be carried out by ship at the end of the summer. (Reuters)

(16) Clashes Erupt...

against a proposal to change extradition laws have reawakened other movements in Hong Kong. Thousands marched last weekend against middle-aged mainland women who sing loudly and dance somewhat provocatively in a public park. Some of the women receive tips from older men. The protests have a common refrain: Hong Kong's government, led by a non-democratically elected chief executive, is not addressing the people's concerns.

Several thousand people marched in Hong Kong against traders from mainland China on Saturday in what is fast becoming a summer of unrest in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory. (July 13) Amy Chan, a 25-year-old bank employee who joined Saturday's march, called it a continuing action building on the momentum of the anti-extradition law protests.

"There isn't an anti-extradition protest every day to keep us going," she said. "I hope that through today's action, people in Hong Kong will not forget that there are actually many other social issues waiting to be solved."

The city's leader, Carrie Lam, has pledged to do a better job of listening to all sectors of society, but many protesters want her to resign. Her government proposed legislation in February that would have allowed suspects to be extradited to China to face trial. The proposal ignited concerns that the rights and freedoms guaranteed to the former British colony for 50 years after its 1997 return to China are being chipped away at by a pro-Beijing government in Hong Kong. Lam suspended the legislation indefinitely after protesters blocked the legislature on June 12, preventing the Legislative Council from meeting to debate the extradition bill. Faced with continuing protests, she declared the bill "dead" on Tuesday, but protesters remain unsatisfied, demanding it be formally withdrawn. (AP)

(17) S. Korea...

crisis erupted, Japanese officials told their South Korean counterparts that Tokyo saw weaknesses in Seoul's export controls. They said that the trade curbs were not retaliation for South Korean court rulings that ordered Japanese firms to compensate aging South Korean plaintiffs for forced labor during World War II, according to a Japanese trade ministry official. Lee Ho-hyeon, an official from South Korea's trade ministry, said Japanese officials cited inadequate bilateral discussions as a reason why their government tightened controls on high-tech exports to South Korea, but didn't clearly say whether Tokyo believes Seoul may have illegally transferred sensitive materials to North Korea.

Lee said South Korean officials countered by saying that Seoul has a stronger export control system than Tokyo's.

The Japanese officials also reiterated that they won't negotiate over the trade curbs and said, without specifying, that there have been "inappropriate" cases regarding Japanese exports to South Korea. When pressed by South Korean officials, the Japanese said the cases were unrelated to illegal shipments to a third country but refused to provide details, Lee said.

He said South Korean officials protested that Japan was providing only "very abstract" reasons for its stricter export controls. "The positions still differ (between the two sides)," Lee said. "We did not see any willingness by Japan to change its measures from this meeting."

The meeting started in an icy atmosphere, with officials skipping handshakes and staring at each other across the table in silence for several minutes, and continued for nearly six hours.

Kim You-geun, deputy director of South Korea's presidential national security office, said South Korea has been thoroughly implementing U.N. sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons program. He demanded that Japan provide evidence for claims made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his conservative aides that there may have been illegal transfers of sensitive materials from South Korea to North Korea.

Kim said his government proposes Japan accept an inquiry by the U.N. or another body over the export controls of both countries to end "needless arguments" and to clearly prove whether the Japanese claims are true or not. He said South Korea has been imposing stringent export controls on arms and sen-

sitive materials that can be used for both civilian and military purposes as a signatory of major international pacts that govern such transactions.

"If the result of the investigation reveals that our government did something wrong, our government will apologize for it and immediately apply measures to correct it," said Kim, reading a prepared statement on live TV.

"If the result shows that our government has done nothing wrong, the Japanese government should not only apologize but also immediately withdraw the exports restrictions that have the characteristics of a (political) retaliation. There also should be a thorough investigation on (any) Japanese violation," he said. (AP)

(18) Merkel's Health ...

newspaper, showed a majority - 59% - believed Merkel's health was her own business.

The voters were asked: "In your view, should Angela Merkel provide detailed public information about her state of health, or is this her private concern?" Just 34% favored her health details being published, with 7% undecided.

The chancellor, who has no history of serious health issues, insisted "I am fine" on Wednesday, after trembling at the ceremony to receive Finland's premier, and said she was "working through" a bout of tremors that first occurred in mid-June. But she has declined to give any details about her health.

Merkel is famously private, only rarely making public appearances with her husband. This is in stark contrast to her predecessor Gerhard Schroeder - who faced questions in office about his marriage and whether he dyed his hair.

Merkel has led Germany since 2005, making her the longest-serving political leader of a major Western democracy. Now serving her fourth term in office, she does not plan to stand again at the next federal election, due in 2021.

Merkel decided to seek a fourth term only after long reflection, and said in November 2016 she was seeking to stay on "if health allows". In 1998, she was quoted as saying: "I don't want to be a half-dead wreck when I leave politics."

Leading the European Union's largest economy, Merkel is renowned for her work ethic and has a reputation for outlasting other leaders at EU summits with her ability to focus on the details of complex discussions deep into the night.

In the United States, portions of the results of the president's annual medical examination are traditionally made public, but in Germany, political leaders are generally expected to enjoy more privacy around their health. (Reuters)

(19) 'Destroy Caves...

terrorist organization by Turkey and its NATO allies. The operation is a direct "follow-up" to 'Claw-I', launched by Ankara in Iraq's Hakur area in May.

Turkey has been making military incursions into Kurdish-populated areas of northern Iraq and Syria over the past few years. Turkish officials say the operations are necessary to prevent the PKK militants from infiltrating across the border and attacking its troops and civilians.

This tactics have put Ankara at odds with Baghdad, which says the Turkish military violates its borders and airspace, as well as kills civilians in Iraqi Kurdistan during raids.

In late June, Iraq issued a protest to a Turkish airstrike, saying that "unilateral acts of war violate Iraqi sovereignty and contradict the principles of good neighborliness."

"We stress on the Turkish side the importance of stopping the bombing of Iraqi areas," the foreign ministry said at the time. Turkey had denied targeting civilians and rebuffed Iraq's allegation as "unacceptable." Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hami Aksoy stressed that Ankara's priority is curbing the PKK activity on Iraqi soil and cross-border raids against the group "will continue with determination." (RT)

(20) Russia, India...

in the International Space Station program, and promised assistance to complete the country's Human Space Flight Program - 'Gaganyaan' - aimed at sending an Indian citizen into space during the nation's 75th independence anniversary in 2022, the Ministry of External Affairs added. Russia and India have a 40 year history of cooperation in space exploration. One of the key milestones of that collaboration saw the first Indian astronaut, Rakesh Sharma, travel to space in 1984 aboard the Soyuz T-11 spacecraft.

"Today there is new respect for India's rapidly growing capabilities in outer space, and Russia sees India as a key partner for promoting peaceful uses of outer space," a source familiar with the discussion, told local news outlets on Friday.

This Sunday, New Delhi is looking to repeat Russia's historic 1969 'Lunokhod 1' landing by launching its 'Pragyaan' rover into space to the Moon. (RT)