

**(1) WB Sees...**

strong headwinds to growth. Afghanistan has faced all of these concurrently". Economic management remains strong in Afghanistan and prospects are improving for 2019, with growth expected to accelerate to 2.5 percent with the easing of drought conditions.

Government policies continued to support low inflation, improved revenue collection, and a limited fiscal deficit, the World Bank said.

Slow growth generally reflects the impact of negative shocks rather than deterioration in government policy. In fact, the report acknowledged, the government has maintained progress with policy reform even during these difficult times.

Government revenues reached a new high of nearly 190 billion afghanis in 2018, up seven percent from 2017, while budget execution rates also reached record levels.

The government spent 92 percent of the available national budget in 2018 and is on track to repeat this strong performance in 2019, the bank continued.

Growth is expected with improving weather conditions to accelerate to 3.2 percent in 2020 and to 3.5 percent in 2021, with the resolution of election-related political uncertainties.

Over the longer-term, much faster rates of growth are required to significantly reduce poverty from high current levels. According to the report, the potential for much-faster growth exists, but will only be realized under certain conditions.

"For government, more work is needed to improve the business environment, ensure a smooth election process, and prevent corruption and mismanagement of scarce fiscal resources over the difficult months to come," said Henry Kerali.

"The international community can also play a vital role in supporting private confidence and growth by committing to security and aid support and ensuring that this support is closely coordinated and aligned with government plans" Kerali added.

Any political settlement with the Taliban could bring major economic benefits through improving confidence and encouraging the return of Afghan capital and skilled workers from overseas. Realizing such benefits, however, will depend on achieving a sustained and substantial improvement in the security situation. (Pajhwok)

**(2) Parliament Yet to ...**

the house on Saturday, July 20, with a one-month delay while the MPs will begin their summer recess on Tuesday, July 22.

"The document arrived here today [Saturday] and tomorrow [Sunday] we will refer to the leadership committee and it will be discussed there and it is possible it may take some days to be reviewed," Ghalib said.

"No one cares about the parliament's approval," said Ramazan Bashardost, an MP from Kabul. "The Ministry of Finance and other ministries are not paying attention for implementation of the bills which are approved by the parliament."

The Ministry of Finance has not revealed details of the amendments in the mid-year budget.

"Some amendments have happened in the [mid-year] budget and also some new budgetary units have been added to the national budget," said Shamroz Khan, a spokesman for Ministry of Finance.

The Finance Ministry has allocated Afs399 billion (\$4.98 billion) for the 1398 fiscal year's budget, 69 percent of which has been allocated for the standard budget while the remaining 39 percent has been allocated for the development budget.

According to the ministry, from the Afs399 billion, Afs 275 billion (\$3.4 billion) will be allocated to the standard budget and the remainder will be put aside for the development budget. (Tolo news)

**(3) Election Has...**

"If things are agreed upon between the Afghans themselves on top of what is going on between the Taliban and the United States then that is a different situation. Do we see all the signs of it around? At the moment, unfortunately, it does not seem to be happening that way," he further said.

This comes as the electoral campaigns will begin soon but there is no report of the final agreement regarding the important conditions of the Afghan peace talks. (ATN)

**(4) Lasting Peace...**

Qamar Bajwa are in Washington for talks with American leaders.

The talks, according to reports, will be mainly focused on the Afghanistan

peace process. (Pajhwok)

**(5) IDLG Suspends All...**

replacing with former chairperson Sima Samar, who ran the post for the past 18 years. (Tolo news)

**(6) Taliban's Shadowy ...**

companions who were currently with the Shaheen Military Corps, the statement said.

However, a reliable source said the brother of Taliban's shadowy district had been arrested along with five others.

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

**(7) Peace Only Way ...**

(not a real name), another resident of Sharana, said that war had affected all aspects of life of the Afghans and there was immediate need for peace.

About women's participation in elections, she said, "Many women here do not have Tazkira (national identity card), but even if they have it, their men would not let them participate in polls because women are traditionally not permitted to go out of their homes."

Noor Mohammad, a resident of Gomal district of Paktika, said the only demand of Afghans from the Taliban and the government was peace and the two sides should support the public voice.

"We are impatiently waiting for the moment to see a real peace and stopping of those groups who kill Afghans under different names," he said.

Islam Shah, a resident of Sharana, said if real peace was agreed between the Afghan government and the Taliban, there would be no chance for other extremist groups such as Daesh to operate in Afghanistan.

He said peace would also help all Afghans to participate in the election process as no one would fear security threats.

Lal Mohammad, a soldier in Paktika, called the Afghan forces and the Taliban as brothers and voiced on them to put the war to an end and choose the path of peace.

"Both we and the Taliban have lost a large number of youths in this purposeless war, this should stop," he said.

Paktika civil society members also emphasis on peace

Jamil Ghairat, a civil society activist in Sharana, said that peace was the only way to end the ongoing miseries in the country.

"I am thirsty for peace, when would the moment come when I see it, when would the fears go away and people live in peace," he said.

Meanwhile, Mualvi Ghazi, an Islamic scholar, said that peace was a divine order and a demand of the public.

"No one should disobey the order of God and peace should be ensured as soon as possible," he said.

Paktika governor's spokesman, Ziar Khan Yad, said that the local administration and the government in general supported a dignified peace in the country.

"The government and we all want a peace that can protect the interests of the country," he said.

On the other hand, Suhail Shaheen, a spokesman for Taliban's political office in Qatar, last week said that they would talk with the Afghan sides once they agreed with the US on all issues.

He said most problems in the last round of peace negotiations with the US had been resolved and only a limited number of issues remained for next talks.

The next or eighth round of US and Taliban negotiations are likely to begin soon. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Increasing ...**

and wounding over two dozen people early June this year.

Dozens of people, mostly civilians had also been killed and wounded during Taliban attacks in the eastern Ghazni and western Ghor Afghan provinces couple of months ago, while hundreds of households have been forced to leave their houses for safer places in eastern Kunar province due to bloody clashes between Taliban and the rival Islamic State group.

Similarly, a car-bomb attack near the Kabul University on Friday left at least eight people, including two of the university's students and a taxi driver dead and more than 30 others injured.

Suraya Raiszada, a Kabul resident, who usually takes her nephew to school every day, told Xinhua that she didn't dare anymore to escort her small nephew to school due to growing bomb blasts and suicide attacks in the city.

"My nephew, Ahmad Masih, needs me to help him join school as his father leaves for work, early morning, and I several times witnessed deadly terrorist incidents on my way to the child's school, so I don't know what to do," Suraya regretted.

Shukria Kohistan, another Kabul resident, said she was scared many times by increasing suicide attacks and bombings, when leaving for office.

"I am a journalist and have to cover events under my routine works for a government newspaper, but this is too difficult to continue my job, due to increasing terrorist attacks in the country," lamented the young woman. (Xinhua)

**(9) After Winless in ...**

and said that being aware of what they need to bring to the table against top-flight opposition would be an important step towards improving Afghanistan's performance next time around.

But the next World Cup is four years away. In the more immediate future, Afghanistan have the ICC T20 World Cup, which takes place in Australia next year, to look forward to.

"That [2023 World Cup] is something that is a very big challenge for us. As I said, we have the skills and talent, but we need to improve. We need to know how to play against the big teams and what should be the proper preparation against them," Rashid said. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Mahsa's killers ...**

The father stressed "we don't want any punishment except execution of the two murderers."

Defense lawyer of the accused, said Sajad Agha and Rohullah had been tortured by police to extract confession. He added Rohullah was not present at the time Mahsa was murdered. (Pajhwok)

**(11) Logar: 2 ALP ...**

a resident of the area, told Pajhwok the ALP check-post was destroyed in the overnight airstrike.

He claimed seeing the bodies of four ALP personnel being taken to the police headquarters after the incident. The foreign forces have not yet commented in this regard. (Pajhwok)

**(12) U.S. Adviser...**

Trump for help at their summit in Seoul on June 30.

Bolton will visit South Korea from July 23 to 24, South Korea's presidential office spokeswoman Ko Min-jung said. He will meet South Korean national security adviser Chung Eui-yong on Wednesday to discuss a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and a strengthened alliance between Seoul and Washington.

During his trip, Bolton is also likely to seek support for a U.S. initiative to heighten surveillance of vital Middle Eastern shipping lanes, which has been greeted warily by allies reluctant to raise tensions with Iran. Washington blames Tehran for recent attacks on tankers.

Japanese media have said the issue could be on the agenda when Bolton visits Japan, where any military commitment abroad would risk inflaming a divide in public opinion in a country whose armed forces have not fought overseas since World War Two.

A South Korean official said last week Washington had yet to make any official request to Seoul on the issue.

The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine General Joseph Dunford, said this month Washington hoped to enlist allies in a military coalition to safeguard strategic waters off Iran and Yemen.

But with allies reluctant to commit new weaponry or fighting forces, a senior Pentagon official told Reuters on Thursday the aim was not to set up a military coalition but to shine a "flashlight" in the region to deter attacks on commercial shipping.

Kathryn Wheelbarger, who briefed NATO allies in the past week on the U.S. proposal, said it was less operational and more geared toward increasing surveillance capabilities.

Japan is the world's fourth-biggest oil buyer and 86% of its oil supplies last year passed through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route linking Middle East oil producers to markets in Asia, Europe, North America and beyond.

Japan's position is complicated by its friendly ties with Iran. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made an unsuccessful bid to ease tensions in the region when he met Iranian leaders in Tehran last month. (Reuters)

**(13) Hammond to...**

May sealed with Brussels and UK lawmakers voted down three times.

But parliamentary opposition to a no deal is growing and the EU is refusing to budge over that withdrawal agreement. "I am sure I am not going to be sacked because I am going to resign before we get to that point," Hammond told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show, adding he would resign to May before she tendered her own resignation to the Queen on Wednesday.

"Assuming that Boris Johnson becomes

prime minister, I understand that his conditions for serving in his government would include accepting a no-deal (EU) exit on the 31st of October. That is not something I could ever sign up to." Johnson has said his most senior ministers "would have to be reconciled" with the possibility of a no-deal Brexit on Oct. 31, a departure he does not want to see happen, but one he says must be planned for to try to increase pressure on the EU.

That stance means several more ministers who want to leave with a deal may seek to quit before facing the prospect of being sacked by Johnson.

Justice minister David Gauke has indicated he will also step down on Wednesday, and some lawmakers say they expect more pro-EU Conservatives to leave their positions to hold talks in parliament to find a way to prevent a no deal.

Keir Starmer, Brexit policy chief in the main opposition Labour Party, said on Twitter he respected Hammond's decision.

"I want to work with all those MPs (members of parliament) who, like me, want to ensure parliament can stop a disastrous no-deal exit," Starmer said.

Hammond, who according to sources close to Johnson often infuriated the former mayor who felt the finance minister was "talking Britain down", said he did not believe his former colleague could win a deal with the EU by the deadline. He instead advised the new prime minister to ask the EU for a little longer if there were signs that the two sides could agree on a compromise position - something Johnson's rival for the premiership, Jeremy Hunt, has said he is open to.

But the EU has so far been steadfast in its view that it cannot open the withdrawal agreement, and Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said both sides would be "in trouble" if the new prime minister was intent on tearing up the deal.

He suggested the new leader could secure changes to the political declaration on future ties to get rid of the Northern Irish backstop - an insurance policy to avoid the return of a hard border between the British province and Ireland.

"We hope that the backstop that many in the UK don't seem to like can be avoided," Coveney told the BBC. "(But) we are simply not going to move away from that withdrawal agreement." (Reuters)

**(14) Japan's Ruling...**

Opposition parties have focused on concerns over household finances, such as the impact from an upcoming 10% sales tax increase and strains on the public pension system amid Japan's aging population.

Abe has led his Liberal Democratic Party to five consecutive parliamentary election victories since 2012.

He has prioritized revitalizing Japan's economy and has steadily bolstered the country's defenses in the backdrop of North Korea's missile and nuclear threats and China's growing military presence. He also has showcased his diplomatic skills by cultivating warm ties with President Donald Trump.

Abe hopes to gain enough upper house seats to boost his chances for constitutional revision, his long-cherished goal before his term ends in 2021.

But Abe and his conservative backers also face challenges because voters seem more concerned about their jobs, the economy and social security.

The main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and three other liberal-leaning parties teamed up in some districts. They stressed support for gender equality and LGBT issues - the areas Abe's ultra-conservative lawmakers are reluctant to back.

At a polling station in Tokyo's Chuo district on Sunday, voters were divided over Abe's 6 1/2-year rule.

A voter who identified himself only as a company worker in his 40s said he chose a candidate and a party that have demonstrated an ability to get things done, suggesting he voted for Abe's ruling party and its candidate, as "there is no point in casting my vote for a party or a politician who has no such abilities."

Another voter, Katsunori Takeuchi, a 57-year-old fish market worker, said it was time to change the dominance of Abe and his ultra-conservative policies. "I think the ruling party has been dominating politics for far too long and it is causing damage," he said. (AP)

**(15) Israel to Make...**

any area under its control," in reference to the settlements built in the West Bank. The Foreign Affairs Ministry can grant exemptions as a denied entry could affect Israel's foreign relations. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who faces elections in September, was urged by some to ban the women from entering, but the optics of barring the

first two Muslim US congresswomen and a Palestinian American could tarnish Israel's international reputation.

Tlaib, whose parents are Palestinian, came up with the idea for a congressional trip to Israel and the West Bank as an alternative to the annual trips run by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) lobby group, which will take place in August. Omar said earlier this month she would visit along with Tlaib. (RT)

**(16) Hong Kong...**

which is generally lower.

Large protests began early last month in the Chinese territory in opposition to a contentious extradition bill that would have allowed Hong Kong residents to stand trial in mainland China, where critics say their rights would be compromised.

Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam, has declared the bill dead, but protesters are dissatisfied with her refusal to formally withdraw the legislation. Some are also calling for her to resign amid growing concerns about the steady erosion of civil rights in the city.

A former British colony, Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997 and was promised certain democratic freedoms under the framework of "one country, two systems." Fueled by anger at Lam and an enduring distrust of the Communist Party-ruled central government in Beijing, the current demonstrations have ballooned into calls for electoral reform and an investigation into alleged police brutality.

Walking in sweltering heat, protesters dressed in black kicked off Sunday's march at a public park, carrying a large banner that read "Independent Inquiry for Rule of Law."

"Free Hong Kong! Democracy now!" the protesters chanted, forming a dense procession through Hong Kong's Wan Chai district as they were joined by others who had been waiting in side streets.

"I think the government has never responded to our demands," said Karen Yu, a 52-year-old Hong Kong resident who has attended four protests since they started. "No matter how much the government can do, at least it should come out and respond to us directly."

Marchers ignored orders from police to finish off the procession on a road in Wan Chai, according to police and the Civil Human Rights Front, the march's organizers.

Protesters repeated the five points of their "manifesto," which was first introduced when a small group of them stormed the legislature earlier this month. Their main demands include universal suffrage - direct voting rights for all Hong Kong residents - as well as dropping charges against anti-extradition protesters, withdrawing the characterization of a clash between police and protesters as a "riot" and dissolving the Legislative Council.

Protesters read the demands aloud in both English and Cantonese in videos released Saturday.

"We did not want to embark on this path of resisting tyranny with our bare bodies," they said, "but for too long, our government has lied and deceived, and refused to respond to the demands of the people."

While the demonstrations have been largely peaceful, some confrontations between police and protesters have turned violent. In Sha Tin district last Sunday, they beat each other with umbrellas and bats inside a luxury shopping center. Demonstrators broke into the Legislative Council building on July 1 by moving past barricades and shattering windows. Meanwhile, police officers have used pepper spray, tear gas, bean bag rounds and rubber bullets to quell the crowds. (AP)

**(17) British Airways...**

spokespeople would not elaborate on what motivated the suspensions.

They come as Britain weighs its response to Iran's seizure Friday of a British-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz and rising tensions stemming from U.S. sanctions' effect on Iran's economy and oil exports.

The Strait and Cairo are separated by 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles).

Lufthansa spokesman Tal Muscal said the company has two flights a day to Cairo, one each from Frankfurt and Munich. (AP)

**(18) Sink-Or-Swim...**

puts forward a proposal or else he throws in the towel. If he does that, then everything will blow up," said Luca Zaia, the League head of the northeastern Veneto region.

The dispute dominated Italy's newspapers at the weekend: "Government blocked," financial daily Il Sole 24 Ore said in a frontpage headline. "Close to a breakdown," said Il Messaggero. (Reuters)