

(1) Intra-Afghan...

officials, key political party representatives, civil society and women”.

Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban spokesman, confirmed Khalilzad's comments, telling AFP news agency any new talks would only begin after a deal had been forged with the US, and he reiterated the armed group's long-held position that they would “not talk to the Kabul administration as a government”.

“Intra-Afghan talks will start only after a foreign force withdrawal is announced,” said Suhail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban's political office in Qatar.

The Taliban has been holding peace talks with the US for nearly a year, but refused to meet with the government, viewing it as a US puppet.

The eighth round of US-Taliban talks will take place next week in Qatar's capital, Doha, aiming to end the near 18-year military involvement of the US in Afghanistan.

Washington has said it wants to see a deal inked by September 1, but any deal requires the Taliban to talk to Kabul.

‘Now is the time’

Diplomatic sources told AFP the talks were scheduled to begin in Norway's capital Oslo on August 7.

The sources also said the international community and the Afghan government were still awaiting word from the Taliban.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo agreed in a telephone conversation on Wednesday that “now is the time to accelerate efforts to reach a negotiated end to the war in Afghanistan”, according to a joint statement.

Habib Wardak, a lecturer of government and politics at Kardan University in Afghanistan, told Al Jazeera from Kabul that “the government feels left out” as the Taliban holds talks with the US.

“As he seeks reelection for another five years, President Ghani wanted to show that peace has some level of priority, not just the elections. I think that was the whole point of it [the direct talks announcement],” he said.

Meanwhile, the war continues to flare across Afghanistan, with the Taliban, the US and Afghan forces all fighting at an increased tempo.

At least three police officers were killed and a dozen more were wounded on Saturday when a Taliban suicide bomber drove an explosives-packed, US-made armoured vehicle into a compound in eastern Afghanistan, officials said.

On Thursday, three blasts rocked Kabul, killing at least 10 people and wounding scores more, even as US and Afghan officials pledged to speed up their efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. (Aljazeera)

(2) Pakistan's Kabul ...

women and businessmen until the Afghan government takes action against the gang operating outside the Consular area and extorting money from visa applicants for access to the consular area,” a statement displayed on the website of the embassy said. (Agencies)

(3) Afghans Urged ...

regard to the peace and elections processes in the country.

A number of other participants and ulema urged people to extensively participate in the Independence Day celebrations.

(Pajhwok)

(4) Presidential Campaign ...

illegitimate and “American puppet.”

US-Taliban peace talks

The lingering election-related uncertainty stems from peace negotiations the United States is holding with the Taliban in a bid to end the 18-year-old Afghan war between the two adversaries and prepare the way for intra-Afghan peace talks.

American and Taliban negotiators are said to be on the verge of announcing a final agreement after nearly a year-long dialogue. Such an eventually, it is widely perceived, would mean the election will be overseen by transitional government in Kabul, where the Taliban will also have a say.

Some presidential candidates have supported a deadline to allow the peace process take root. But in his speech Sunday, President Ghani rejected any compromise on the elections, saying they will go ahead as planned.

The election campaign started a day after the Afghan government announced direct talks with the Taliban will begin in the next two weeks. But the insurgent group swiftly rejected the claims, raising questions about the motives of Ghani's administration as some critics said Saturday's official announcement was aimed at subverting the U.S.-led peace process. A spokesman for the Taliban's negotiating team, Suhail Shaheen, while talking to VOA, stressed again that only if an agreement is reached with Washington on a U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the insurgent group would negotiate peace with Afghans, where Kabul would have its representation but not as a government.

(VoA)

(5) Nangarhar ...

Agriculture Director Samiullah Nasrat told Pajhwok Afghan News 33,000 onion had been collected mostly from Rodat, Chaparhar, Khewa, Sara Rud and Kama districts so far.

He assured that cold storages would be established in the province to preserve agricultural products.

He said most part of the onions was consumed in Nangarhar but some was exported to Kabul, other provinces and Pakistan.

Vegitable produce has recently increased in Nangarhar but according to farmers they could not benefit fully from their harvests due to lack of market and other facilities. (Pajhwok)

(6) Afghanistan to ...

defeated Kyrgyzstan 2-0 on Saturday and got 1-1 draw against Uzbekistan in their first match.

Iran with two wins against Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has six points and is on top of the list.

The championship started on Friday with the participation of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. (Tolo news)

(7) 4 Pro-Govt ...

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed dozens of security forces had suffered casualties in the bombing in Aab Band district.

Six car bombings have been carried out by the insurgents in the past six months in Ghazni province. (Pajhwok)

(8) Explosion Rocks Kabul...

Sources said that four attackers are involved in the attack which happened at around 4:40 pm on Sunday evening, targeting the Green Trend office, a political movement run by former NDS chief and vice-

presidential candidate Amrullah Saleh.

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that Mr. Saleh is unhurt and has been evacuated from the area. (Tolo news)

(9) World Powers...

announcements that it had exceeded the amount of low-enriched uranium allowed under the deal nor its revelation it had begun enriching uranium past the 3.67% purity allowed, to 4.5%, are seen as such gross violations that they are likely to prompt Europe to invoke the deal's dispute resolution mechanism.

Both of Iran's actions have been verified by the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran, meanwhile, has taken increasingly provocative actions against ships in the Gulf, including seizing a British tanker and downing a U.S. drone. The U.S. has expanded its military presence in the region and fears are growing of a wider conflict. (AP)

(10) Israel, US...

one deployed was an older version and the upgraded system will provide more advanced protection.

The Arrow system, partly financed by the United States, was developed and produced by Israeli Aerospace Industries in partnership with Boeing.

Arrow-3 is intended to serve as Israel's highest-altitude missile interception system.

Systems for intercepting incoming missiles at lower altitudes also exist.

Since 2015, Israel's main enemy Iran has continued developing and testing ballistic missiles which it says are for defensive purposes only.

Israel has the most powerful military in the Middle East and is widely considered to be its sole nuclear-armed power, though it has never acknowledged the capability.

The tests come with tensions high between the United States and Iran.

Those tensions followed Washington's sanctions against Tehran after US President Donald Trump's withdrawal from a nuclear deal between the Islamic republic and world powers. (AFP)

(11) 'From Deep...

interceptor missile test, Modi vowed to continue reforming the armed forces to keep up with modern threats.

India's defense budget this year is US\$49.7 billion, with a substantial portion distributed under the 'Make In India' national program. Other funds were channeled towards the purchase of French Rafale fighters, and Russian S-400 missile defense systems. India is also seeking to purchase additional warships and helicopters.

The S-400 deal has faced stiff opposition from Washington, which is seeking to capture India's arms market, traditionally reliant on Soviet and Russian-made hardware. However, similar to Ankara, New Delhi has defied Washington's pressure, stressing that national security is a priority, especially amid growing tensions with its nuclear-armed neighbor, Pakistan. (RT)

(12) 1,400 Arrested...

that demonstration, investigators raided the homes and headquarters of a number of disqualified candidates. Top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was jailed for 30 days for calling the fresh protest. Navalny on Sunday was taken to hospital from jail after suffering

what his press secretary said was a “severe allergic reaction”, despite having never suffered from allergies.

Leonid Volkov, an ally of Navalny, said he had a similar allergic reaction after serving time last month in the same jail. But he suggested hygiene conditions rather than a “conspiracy” was to blame. Several would-be candidates were detained before or during the protest on Saturday.

OVD-Info, an organisation that monitors protests, reported Sunday that 1,373 people were arrested.

It said this was the highest number since mass demonstrations in 2012, when tens of thousands protested Putin's return to the Kremlin after four years as prime minister.

Opposition activists have called for another rally for open elections next weekend. (AFP)

(13) Russia's Lavrov...

Cuba. Maduro has denounced Guaido as a U.S. puppet who is seeking to foment a coup.

“We, just like our Surinamese friends, are convinced that it can result through a direct dialogue between the government and opposition with no preconditions, and without any threats that we hear coming from various capitals,” Lavrov said alongside Surinamese Foreign Minister Yldiz Pollack-Beigle in the capital Paramaribo.

The reference to “threats” was a jibe at the United States, which has said military intervention is “on the table” to resolve the crisis in Venezuela, which is marked by a hyperinflationary economic collapse and an exodus of more than 4 million people to neighboring countries.

Earlier this week, Lavrov said Venezuela's opposition was in contact with Moscow, and that the world should foster dialogue in Venezuela rather than impose its own agenda.

Pollack-Beigle did not mention Venezuela during her remarks. During a meeting of the Mercosur trade bloc earlier this month, Suriname's ambassador to Cuba, Marciano Edgar Armaketo, said the country's position on Venezuela was based on “non-interference in the affairs of states.” (Reuters)

(14) Egypt Sends ...

Another satellite of the same kind will be sent to space within two months, he revealed. (Xinhua)

(15) Mexico to ...

Central America if more is not done to contain the flows.

Speaking after the Honduran and Mexican leaders met in the eastern state of Veracruz, Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said Lopez Obrador had given instructions to help Honduras create 20,000 jobs between now and December.

He did not provide further details, but afterwards the two presidents offered more insights into their plans in speeches in the eastern city of Minatitlan.

Hernandez said he was hoping a “great international coalition for mass job creation” in Central America could be forged, while Lopez Obrador stressed that Mexico would support the region with funds and employment schemes.

In particular, Lopez Obrador said, Mexico would assist Honduran coffee farmers, whose businesses have suffered this year from a drop in international prices.

“We'll help improve coffee production in whatever is needed,” he said, “so you have no problem selling coffee.”

Lopez Obrador did not offer more

details, but also said schemes he has championed in Mexico to create jobs via youth apprenticeships and tree planting would come to Honduras too.

There has been a surge this year in migrant apprehensions on the U.S. southern border with Mexico. Most of the people caught trying to enter the United States illegally come from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

On Friday, Trump said he had reached a deal with Guatemala to curb migration, though that plan was called into question on Saturday by the two politicians vying to become Guatemala's next president in an election next month. (Reuters)

(16) Think The Heatwave...

avoiding climate breakdown.

With study-after-study showing climate impacts from extreme weather to polar melt and sea level rise outstripping initial forecasts, negotiators have a fast-closing window to try to turn the aspirations agreed in Paris into meaningful outcomes.

“There's so much on the line in the next 18 months or so,” said Sue Reid, vice-president of climate and energy at Ceres, a U.S. non-profit group that works to steer companies and investors onto a more sustainable path.

“This is a crucial period of time both for public officials and the private sector to really reverse the curve on emissions,” Reid told Reuters.

In October, the U.N.-backed Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned emissions must start falling next year at the latest to stand a chance of achieving the deal's goal of holding the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

With emissions currently on track to push temperatures more than three degrees higher, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is working to wrest bigger commitments from governments ahead of a summit in New York in September.

Telling world leaders that failing to cut emissions would be “suicidal,” the Portuguese diplomat wants to build momentum ahead of a fresh round of climate talks in Chile in December.

By the time Britain convenes a major follow-up summit in late 2020, plans are supposed to be underway - in theory at least - to almost halve global emissions over the next decade.

“In the next year-and-a-half we will witness an intensity of climate diplomacy not seen since the Paris Agreement was signed,” said Tessa Khan, an international climate change lawyer and co-director of the Climate Litigation Network. (Reuters)

(17) Deploying Joint ...

the safety of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf with the Indian Ocean.

German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said that Berlin will consider joining the mission once there is “clarity” over its form. France, Italy, and Denmark have also reportedly expressed interest in joining.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has accused foreign policy hardliners in Washington of trying to push London into a conflict with Iran “in hopes of dragging it into a quagmire.” On Saturday, he warned US officials against touting the prospects of a limited military action against Tehran. “Short war with Iran is an illusion,” he said. (RT)