

(1) NATO Can...

"Today we discussed how to take our cooperation forward in the future. We agreed to work together in areas of mutual interest including cyber defense, demining and promoting the role of women in peace and security," he said.

He said Columbia has unique skills to offer NATO including encountering improvised explosive devices.

"The alliance could also benefit from Colombia's expertise with respect to the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. NATO is committed to working with partners like Columbia that share our values and interests," Stoltenberg added.

The Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said his country is ready to help NATO and other allies in Afghanistan.

This comes after NATO's Resolute Support and US Forces Commander Gen. John Nicholson this week compared Afghanistan's current situation with decades ago war in Columbia which began in Columbia's war was a low-intensity asymmetric war between Colombian governments, paramilitary groups, crime syndicates, and far-left guerrillas such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the National Liberation Army (ELN), fighting each other to increase their influence in Colombian territory. (Tolo news)

(2) Women Make...

Mohtat said the process would continue until July 21 and the number of people obtaining their ID cards would probably reach 10 million.

About fake ID cards allegations, Mohtat said a Wolesi Jirga member last week claimed a large number of fake Tazkira had been distributed in some parts of the country.

However, he said such claims without evidence showed the person's weakness.

Mohtat said making fake ID cards was an issue that existed in all countries and the PRD had identified 1,100 such ID cards which involved by ordinary people or some PRD officers.

The cases of fake ID cards had been shared with the relevant organs, he said.

The Independent Election Commission (IEC), while announcing the election schedule, had said that the first phase of voter registration would start in provincial capitals from April 14 to May 12, the second phase in districts from May 12 to May 28 and third phase would start in villages from May 28 to June 12.

The Wolesi Jirga and district council elections are scheduled for October 20. (Pajhwok)

(3) Afghanistan's...

\$700 million in last year," said Musafir Qoqandi, spokesman for the ministry.

Some investors said insecurity and trade problems with a number of neighboring countries are main reasons behind a reduce in the trade volume. (Pajhwok)

(4) Europe Calls for...

May 8 that Washington would withdraw from Iran nuclear deal and reinstate nuclear sanctions on Iran.

This is while most world powers including Russia, China, and European Union have repeatedly stressed that keeping the deal is in the interest of world peace and security.

High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini earlier expressed regret over US decision to abandon the Iran nuclear deal saying the European Union would comply with the full implementation of the deal. (IRNA)

(5) Secretary General...

and promote welfare and prosperity of the people in the SAARC region.

Dr. Motiwal also discussed various challenges in South Asia and opportunities to enhance economic connectivity in the region. He also updated the Secretary General about various potential cross border regional connectivity projects in renewable energy, transport, trade and commerce under active consideration of SDF to co-finance. The Secretary General acknowledged the positive developments and emphasized on the need to overcome various barriers and challenges by working together in close coordination and harmony.

H.E. Secretary General, SAARC appreciated SDF for its tireless efforts to achieve its mandate of promoting the welfare of the people, improving their quality of life and accelerate economic growth, social progress and poverty alleviation in the SAARC region and assured his support to SDF

(6) Pakistan Mulls...

terrorism financing.

The U.S.-led punitive move was part of Trump's South Asia strategy he announced in August to pressure Pakistan to cut alleged ties to the Taliban and other terrorist groups waging deadly attacks on American forces in Afghanistan.

Islamabad denies charges it supports any terrorist groups and rejects "U.S. pressure tactics" as an attempt to blame Pakistan for international failures to end the Afghan conflict.

Terror fight
Bilateral relations have deteriorated to a point where no high-level interaction is happening these days between the two long time allies, Khan told VOA in a wide-ranging interview.

"We have reached an impasse in which we have this very strictly formal diplomatic communication is happening, so the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad comes and speaks to us in the Foreign Office and our ambassador in Washington goes and speaks to the State Department. But that's not really communication, the two countries are not speaking to each other," Khan said
Communication issues

He blamed the Trump administration's "adamant" refusal to communicate for "the low ebb" in mutual ties.

"At the moment Pakistan is not being heard. Pakistan is just being vilified and castigated in Washington without being heard at all. It is this situation."

The only communication that currently exists apart from the formal diplomatic interaction, Khan said, is that U.S. CENTCOM commander General John Votel has been speaking to Pakistan's army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa.

"Formally Pakistan is still a major non-NATO ally and for the United States to actively target Pakistan in FATF, trampling over all regulations and precedents is by necessity forcing us to rethink," lamented the Minister. Pakistan is required under an agreement with FATF reached in February to work on an action plan to get itself removed from the gray list, otherwise the country faces the danger of being moved to the so-called "black list" of nations.

Pakistan's crisis-marred relationship suffered a serious blow on May 11 when Washington barred Pakistani diplomats in the United States from traveling beyond 40-kilometer radius from their posts without permission. Islamabad responded by imposing a similar "permission regime" on American diplomats in the country. It also went a step further and withdrew a set of unilateral concessions Pakistani had granted Washington as a partner in "the war on terrorism" to ensure security cover for U.S. diplomats and officials in the country.

Diplomatic disagreement
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last week told U.S. lawmakers American diplomats were being badly treated in Pakistan, charges Islamabad denied.

Pakistan has been receiving billions of dollars in financial assistance since joining the U.S.-led war on terrorism 17 years ago.

Khan, who also heads the defense ministry, acknowledged that American civilian and military financial assistance programs have over the years helped Islamabad meet its crucial budgetary shortfalls. But the expected financial support from Washington this year, he said, has dropped to 'zero' for the first time in a decade.

Minister Khan noted, however, that despite all the tensions and bitterness in mutual ties, Pakistan has kept its ground and air lines of communications open for U.S. and allied nations to ferry supplies to their troops in landlocked Afghanistan.

"Yes, we have to consider all options that are in front of us because it would appear to us that the U.S. is following what can be termed a non-violent compellence ((compellence is defined as the ability of one state to coerce another state into action, usually by threatening punishment. American economist Thomas C. Schelling, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2005, coined the word in his book 1966 Arms and Influence.)) of Pakistan," the minister said when asked whether his country is close to shutting down the supply lines.

The U.S. State Department had no immediate comment but U.S. Marine Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie, director of the Joint Staff, said the supply lines remain open. "I'm not in a position to talk about what they may or may not have said at the diplomatic level but I can tell you at the military level, those lines remain open and stuff's continuing to flow across them," he told reporters Thursday.

International forces heavily rely on Pakistani routes to haul supplies. Islamabad closed them once before, after a 2011 U.S. airstrike "mistakenly" killed two dozen Pakistani soldiers.

The action had forced the United States and NATO for months to use a mix of ground and sea routes called the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) running through other countries, including Russia.

But in the wake of Washington's current tensions with Moscow analysts are skeptical whether NDN, though a much more costly and time consuming option, can still be availed under the circumstances.

Foreign Minister Khan underscored the need for the two countries to communicate and speak to each other despite maintaining divergent views on the war in Afghanistan, the longest in U.S. history.

"The fact that that longest (U.S.) war shows no sign of turning positive for the U.S. is all the more reason that whatever differences or grievances we might have Pakistan and the U.S. should be communicating at different levels... because ultimately this is a relationship, at least in our view, bigger than Afghanistan and has been bigger than Afghanistan."

Terror fight
Khan said at a time when U.S. and Western partners have "abandoned Pakistan to terrorism" and continue to ignore his country's "unprecedented" sacrifices in fighting terror-

ist groups, Islamabad's traditional ally China has stood by it and brought billions of dollars in historic direct Chinese investment.

"Russians are essentially (also) walking into a vacuum created by the absence of our American friends," the minister said pointing to Pakistan's rapidly improving relations with old rival Russia.

At a public talk in Washington last week, John Sopko, the U.S. Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), stopped short of dismissing Washington's narrative of singling out Pakistan for the Afghan military stalemate.

"We keep referring to Pakistan as being the key problem. But the problem also was that the Afghan government at times was viewed very negatively by their local people and what you really need is to insert a government that the people support, a government that is not predatory, a government that is not a bunch of lawless warlords," observed Sopko.

He went on to say that the U.S. policy of pouring in billions of dollars in these unstable environments contributed to the problem of creating more warlords and powerful people who took the law into their own hands. "In essence, the government we introduced, particularly some of the Afghan local police forces, which were nothing other than warlord militias with some uniforms on, were just as bad as the terrorists before them," said Sopko who is overseeing U.S. spending to identify fraud and to prevent it. (VoA)

(7) Afghanistan...

million others are manual laborers.

Most of the children are from vulnerable families who don't have the ability to pay for their education or give them a better life.

Isa is a child in one of those families in Afghanistan who is the only breadwinner for his family. His father is ill and cannot work. "I work here every day to earn bread for my family," Isa said.

"I don't have anyone at home to work. I have to work," said Husain, a child.

A comparison of scores shows that 95 countries have made progress in the past year in creating conditions for children to have full and stable childhoods.

These successes show that many relatively poor countries are making progress, and political choices can matter more than national wealth.

End of Childhood Index scores for 58 countries declined (42 of them raising its score 21 points, from 680 to 701), mostly by getting more children into school.

India's reduced rate of child marriage helped increase its score 14 points, from 754 to 768. Afghanistan's score fell 10 points, from 602 to 592, because of conflict-related displacement and children out of school.

"War, poverty and discrimination are the three criteria which unfortunately shows children's situation to be worse than last year," said Mariam Atahi, spokesperson for Save the Children. (Tolo news)

(8) Taliban 'Talking...

network were behind the attack, even though Daesh claimed responsibility.

In his remarks to Pentagon reporters, Nicholson sought to underscore data and events he said point to forward progress in America's longest war. Critics warn the US-backed Afghan army cannot promise to defeat the Taliban or overcome Afghanistan's vast political divisions and entrenched corruption.

More than 2,400 US forces have died in the conflict.

Nicholson pointed to unreleased data showing a 30 percent decline in attacks initiated by the insurgents between February and April, compared with the average over the previous five years. Attacks increased after the Taliban announced their spring offensive on April 25 but the violence was still 10 to 12 percent lower, he said.

US officials in recent years have declined to offer data on levels of attacks initiated by insurgents, saying that the United States no longer had a big enough intelligence gathering operation in Afghanistan to publish reliable estimates.

Nicholson acknowledged much of his data drew upon the Afghan government's estimates, which the US government has long considered less reliable. But when pressed during the news briefing, Nicholson said he was still confident in the trend suggested by the data.

"If this were a matter of a few percentage points, I'd have less confidence," he said. He also drew comparisons to Colombia, where insurgents from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and government forces were fighting before a 2016 peace agreement.

Still, many experts say there are huge differences between the Colombian and Afghan conflicts.

"The idea that we're making the same kind of progress (as in Colombia) is grasping at straws for justification," said Jason Dempsey, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for New American Security think-tank who deployed twice to Afghanistan.

Nicholson highlighted a grassroots "peace movement," which he said was not aligned to any party in Afghanistan's nearly 17-year-old conflict. He said it has held events in 20 Afghan provinces, calling for ceasefires and peace talks.

"And this has never happened before in Afghanistan, to my knowledge, over 20 provinces," he said.

Asked about how this would affect the US mission in Afghanistan, Nicholson said: "The end state of the policy is to achieve a reconciliation." (Tolo news)

(9) Wednesday's...

of the attackers.

Barmak said it was being investigated from where the attackers came and how they were able to find two armored vehicles. The minister alleged still terrorists were being kept at private homes.

Meanwhile, Kabul police chief Daud Amin said the vehicles used by the attackers did not carry registration numbers but an investigation was underway in this regard. Vehicles similar to those used in the attack plied Kabul roads, he added.

He said lawmakers, generals and some senior government officials used armored vehicles. (Pajhwok)

(10) Govt Aske...

a driver.

The Ministry of Public Works meanwhile said it has allocated budget for maintenance of 235 kilometers of roads in the country's highways.

"The roads which are included in our plan this year are 200 kilometers and we have a special budget for 35 kilometers of Salang (pass) from the normal budget," said Abdul Rahman Salahi, deputy head of roads maintenance of Ministry of Public Works.

This comes after last month some sources blamed corrupt customs officials for the state of the Kabul-Kandahar Highway.

The sources claimed that truck drivers have a 40-ton limit, but for just \$80, officials will waive them through with up to 80 tons. (Tolo news)

(11) UMEF...

Kabul University amid rumors that other students may also find their way to the Kabul University under the name of UMEF University students, he added.

He said shifting of UMEF University students to Kabul University was against the law and should be investigated.

"We ask the government and the president not to allow any third party to interfere in this issue until the judiciary decides the university case," he said.

Zubair Momand, a master's degree student of economy at UMEF University, talking on behalf of other students, said rumors against the university were spread about one and a half years ago to create problems.

He said around 60 students of the university had been shifted to Kabul University illegally. Momand warned of staging protests if their future was not decided in the next 15 days.

However, Mohammad Zia Sahil, MoHE spokesman, said the ministry had sent a letter to the UMEF University on January 14, 2017 that the university had no academic accreditation in the ministry.

He said the ministry had suggested to the president to shift those master's degree students of UMEF University to Kabul University who pursued their education before January 14, 2017.

The president a week ago released a decree shifting 150 students from UMEF University to Kabul University, he said.

The MoHE cannot help students who had started education in UMEF University after January 14, 2017 because the ministry had already announced that the university was no longer credible, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(12) Insecurity on...

they had started shooting passengers. He said people wanted complete security on the Ghor-Herat highway.

Ali Hassan, another resident of Sarjangal district, said insecurity on the Herat-Ghor highway was not acceptable to them.

He added insecurity and killing of passengers by Taliban on the highway had become a routine with the government playing the role of a silent spectator.

The protesters passed a six-point resolution, asking the government to ensure security on the vital highway and investigate incidents of passenger murders.

Local government officials could not be reached for comment. (Pajhwok)

(13) Ghazni Residents...

demands of the people, but maintaining security and retaking the districts under Taliban control are out of the authority of the commission, therefore we referred the issue to the office of the president and we expect that the Presidential Palace kindly engages in talks with the people regarding the issue," the IEC spokesman Sayed Hafiz Hashimi said.

Fourteen districts are currently under threat in the province and only Nahor, Malistan and Jaghori districts are stable in terms of security. Election materials so far have not been delivered to all districts in Ghazni.

"Discussions will held and we will see what is the resolution, based on the law; the issue to make constituencies smaller is excluded and lets see what other options exist to find a settlement to the public problem," IEC commissioner Maazullah Dawlati said.

"We expect that they tackle the situation with accuracy and patience, otherwise, social, political and technical damage will spread across the country, said Yousuf Rashid, CEO

of Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA).

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Martin O'Donnell, a spokesman for the US-led coalition in Afghanistan has pledged that the foreign forces in the country will also cooperate in maintaining election security.

"We continue to be in a position of support to them (ANSF). So we haven't been asked for direct support with regards to the elections, we are again optimistic about four million voters registered right now, I think the latest numbers that the independent electoral commission has announced. So we are seeing progress now and we will stand by our Afghan partners," said Martin O'Donnell

The IEC sent its proposal about the constituency issue a year ago to government. But government rejected the plan two weeks ago saying that the time to implement the plan had expired.

The commission has scheduled parliamentary and district council elections for October 20. (Tolo news)

(14) RS Urges...

the group to enter into peace talks.

"At the end of the day, we want the same thing that Afghans want which is peace, so how do we get to peace, we have got to fight, we have got to talk and the hope is that the Taliban realize that they can't win, because now we are conditions-based. Based on US president's South Asia strategy, we are in this and that will bring them to the table to talk and that peace will be possible," added O'Donnell.

"Anytime we can target the Taliban, we will," he said.

Resolute Support has said such precision strikes are very helpful in terms of destroying Taliban's safe havens and that the mission will continue operations against the group.

According to initial reports, a number of Taliban's Quetta Shura members were also among those killed in the operation.

"I don't have the names, but by positions, there was intelligence leaders, there was other district and shadow governors and there was key provincial or key Taliban leadership from six provinces including Farah, Helmand, Uruzgan, Herat, Kandahar and Kunduz," said O'Donnell.

"This has dealt a major blow to the terrorist groups and it broke the backbone of the enemy in that area," said interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish

Military analysts have said that Afghan security forces and their foreign counterparts should work together while carrying out such operations.

"It can be proved helpful if there is good coordination on the ground," said Bismillah Nadim, a military expert.

Musa Qala district is one of the Taliban's main strongholds in southern Afghanistan. The Taliban has controlled the district for the past two years.

The Taliban however rejected the claims of so many leaders having been killed and that said only five civilians were killed in the strike. (Tolo news)

(15) 120 Voter...

We will launch military operations in those areas after demand from local residents," said Enamuddin Rahmani, spokesman for Kunduz Police Headquarters.

The IEC statistics show that more than 4.2 million people have registered to vote since the beginning of the process in mid-April. (Tolo news)

(16) Girls Pursuing...

Girl students in the district urged the government to provide facilities for local residents particularly female students to have full access to schools as well permission from their parents to get education.

They claimed the lack of female teachers and instability were major challenges that kept girls from attending classes.

Meanwhile, Rukhsan, a student of the Patu school, said: "Our school has not recruited female teachers and male teachers lack experience, even most of them don't have 12th class certificate."

Haider Ali Dawlatyar, a civil society activist, said: "Sixty percent of school teachers have been recruited in the district without having 12th grade degree."

In the past, Patu district education affairs would be managed by the education department of Gezab district in central Uruzgan province.

But at the beginning of the ongoing year, the Patu district was established. Daikundi education department says empty posts in Patu schools had been announced to recruit new teachers via an open completion

Rahmatullah Seerat, the provincial education director, also confirmed a number of schools in the district lacked trained teachers.

He said qualified teachers from others districts did not want to teach in the district against low salary.

He said female schools were active in Patu district and soon some new female teachers would be recruited to resolve the issue.

Currently, there are 49 schools across the district and all of them are open for students. (Pajhwok)