

(1) CEO Abdullah...

Fraidon Khwazon, an advisor to Abdullah, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the CEO would be accompanied by a high-level delegation during his visit to Dushanbe.

Besides attending the conference, Abdullah will also meet with the presidents of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan and will discuss with them issues concerning economy, transit trade and terrorism.

Abdullah will also sign some agreements about extension of railway lines during his trip to Tajikistan, Khwazon said.

The conference was first held in 2015 in Tajikistan capital Dushanbe. The main objectives of the conference include raising awareness of the timely and effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and other water-related SDGs.

The event will discuss further steps to implement the International Decade for Action 2018-2028 at the global, regional and country levels.

Khwazon said the CEO would be accompanied by Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak, deputy foreign minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai, deputy communication and information technology minister, deputy economy minister and some other officials.

Abdullah is currently on a trip to Italy and he will directly fly from there to Tajikistan. (Pajhwok)

(2) China-South Asia...

She also stated that the door of Afghanistan is open to the world for trade and investment. "Our access to WTO sends a clear message that we are open for business," Sidiqi said while speaking at the forum as one of the Afghan representatives.

Sidiqi praised China for its key role in the development of Afghanistan and "being a good friend of Afghanistan". She hoped that the exchanges of views and experiences in the session would "contribute to the identification of challenges" and provide a better opportunity for Asian countries, mainly China and Afghanistan, to reinforce trade and investment.

Afghan high-ranking delegates such as Second Deputy CEO Haji Muhammad Mohaqiq, minister of economy Mustafa Mastoor, governor of Kabul province Mohammad JakubAyday, and governor of Bamiyan province Mohammad Tahir Zohair attended the forum.

Haji Sardar Behzad, chairman of Kabul Behzad Group of Companies, who attended the forum said to Outlook Afghanistan that transportation is one of the challenges Afghan traders face. He said that there is no railroad or land route from Afghanistan to China and, therefore, his company only imports goods from Afghanistan rather than exporting any goods from Afghanistan to China. Answering to the question that if the railroad connecting China and Afghanistan through Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan mitigate the challenges of Afghan traders, Behzad said, "Still this railroad has not been handled appropriately. Besides import, we should also have export and the containers going from China must not return empty from that side. The containers return empty and this is the disadvantage." Other than dried fruit, shipping goods by air will not benefit Afghan traders because it will cost heavily, according to him. Behzad, who used to export lapis lazuli from Afghanistan to China, said that the precious stones such as lapis lazuli lost their market recently and he no more exports them to China.

He was not very optimistic about the achievements of China-South Asia Forum for the country. He said that Afghanistan does not have the agency of Afghan Chamber of Commerce in China and such forums lacked tangible results for Afghanistan in the past. However, he hoped that Afghanistan could make the best use of such opportunities.

Based on interviews Outlook Afghanistan had with Afghan traders in China-South Asia Cooperation Forum, they demand the two countries to facilitate traders with short route for shipping their goods so that the import-export does not cost so heavily. In other words, if Afghanistan and China seek to extend their cooperation in terms of trade and investment, they need to build a direct route or railroad for the easy shipment of goods rather than having connection through a third country. Hence, the two sides are hoped to resolve this issue through such forums. As Sidiqi talked about the "identification of challenges" in this forum, the difficulty for shipment of goods because of no direct land road between China and Afghanistan despite having land border is one of the challenges to be identified and resolved by the two sides. (Outlook Afghanistan)

(3) Italy to Help...

mission because peace and stability in Afghanistan, the region and beyond was of high importance to Italy.

Milanesi declared support for free and fair elections in Afghanistan and hoped that the recent ceasefire would pave lead to durable peace in the country.

He also pledged support to Afghanistan in rehabilitating and reconstructing its historic sites keeping in mind Italy's experience in the field. (Pajhwok)

(4) UN Voices...

government's own ceasefire, which was due to expire on Wednesday, in the hopes that the Taliban would follow suit. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has all along taken the position that the only solution to the conflict in Afghanistan is through an inclusive political process. (PR)

(5) After Afghan...

"It is now for the U.S. to cut through this blockade," he said, although that would be a departure from U.S. policy that talks to end the 17-year-old war must be wholly Afghan-led.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appeared ready to tweak the policy when he welcomed Ghani's 10-day extension of a ceasefire that is currently due to end on Wednesday. The Taliban said its ceasefire ended on Sunday.

"As President Ghani emphasized in his statement to the Afghan people, peace talks by necessity would include a discussion of the role of international actors and forces," Pompeo said. "The United States is prepared to support, facilitate, and participate in these discussions." Richard Olson, former U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, described the statement as significant "in that it signals that the U.S. is prepared to ultimately discuss the issue that is paramount to the Taliban, which is the withdrawal of foreign forces."

A senior U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity before the start of the ceasefire, however said there were a number of issues that made direct talks between the Taliban and the United States unlikely in the short-term.

The official said there was a substantial gap in knowledge about the Taliban - for instance as to who had the authority to negotiate on their behalf.

"There is not enough intelligence or resources on this issue," the official said.

A second official said there was still a question of what would happen with headline elements of the Taliban. "There are Taliban that won't come to the table," the official said.

TALIBAN CALL

The Taliban, in a statement marking the end of their ceasefire on Sunday, said the organization was unified and called on "the invading American party" to "sit directly for dialogue with the Islamic Emirate to find a solution for the ongoing imbroglio".

A senior diplomat with knowledge of the negotiations leading to the ceasefire estimated the chances of eventual talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government at "50-50".

"The Taliban want to talk to the U.S. directly on withdrawal (of foreign forces) because they do not want to share the credit of withdrawal with the government," the official said.

And while Washington has long resisted direct talks with Taliban, the official said that recent developments indicate "the U.S. now seems less and less averse to it". In August, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled a more hawkish military approach to Afghanistan, including a surge in air strikes. Afghan security forces say the impact has been significant, but the Taliban roam huge areas of the country and, with foreign troop levels of about 15,600, down from 140,000 in 2014, there appears little hope of outright victory.

Ghani, never widely popular, met his predecessor, Hamid Karzai, on Sunday to secure support for peace talks. He visited a restaurant in Kabul where he met diners and took selfies with children, trying to capitalise on the unprecedented party atmosphere created by the ceasefire to mark last weekend's Eid al-Fitr festival.

But Amrullah Saleh, the former head of intelligence and head of a political party, said Ghani had committed a blunder by allowing insurgents to pour into government-controlled areas.

"Thousands of Taliban fighters were allowed to enter with guns and some of them could be hiding in civilian areas, planning attacks," Saleh told Reuters.

Ghani has also come in for praise.

"Now we can say that our president is making an absolute honest attempt" for peace, said Anwar-ul-HaqAhadi, the chairman of the outspoken New

National Front of Afghanistan. (Reuters)

(6) NATO, OIC...

to discuss peace and reconciliation and socio-economic development in #Afghanistan," he tweeted.

It is for the first time that NATO and OIC envoy talked about Afghan issue. (Pajhwok)

(7) 50 PC Registration...

Ibrahimi said during the registration process 6,185 persons had registered as possible candidate for Wolesi Jirga and District Council election.

Among them, he said, 2,454 had registered as possible candidates for Wolesi Jirga and 3,731 for district councils.

The candidates included 391 women for Wolesi Jirga and 271 for district council election.

She added that eight persons, including a woman, had registered as Khochi candidates for upcoming lower house polls. (Pajhwok)

(8) Colombia Opens...

both a red card and a likely goal against. A recent rule change exempts players who make attempts to legally play the ball.

But a deliberate handball doesn't qualify, and therefore can warrant both a penalty and a red card. The laws of the game specify that "denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball" is a red card offense.

So Sanchez's right arm movement sent Japan to the spot. Shinji Kagawa stepped up, sent David Ospina the wrong way, and slotted home the penalty. Colombia was in a hole. (Agencies)

(9) Ex-FIFA President...

after numerous FIFA officials were indicted by United States authorities on corruption charges. That picture of Blatter and Putin above was taken just two months before Switzerland officials announced criminal proceedings against Blatter.

That ban would ostensibly extend to being present for FIFA-sanctioned games - especially World Cup games - but Blatter apparently doesn't think so. Or care. When you're being investigated by Swiss authorities for corruption during your FIFA reign you probably don't really care if you're violating the terms of your suspension or not.

That corruption could have extended to the awarding of the 2018 World Cup to Russia. It's naive to think there weren't any backroom dealings that helped lead to Russia getting the World Cup, especially in the wake of how the World Cup was awarded to Qatar for 2022. Besides, we all understand that Vladimir Putin will do what he needs to do to get what he wants, right?

Perhaps Blatter's invitation is a thank you of sorts from Putin. And we'll see if FIFA issues a rebuke of Blatter's presence at the games. Given that he's a guest of the president whose country is hosting the World Cup, FIFA may have to tread fairly lightly. (Agencies)

(10) Kane Grabs...

Fakhreddine Ben Youssef.

Despite enjoying the bulk of the possession in the second half, England created few clear-cut chances and looked as though they would be forced to settle for a share of the spoils.

But captain Kane had the last word, heading in a corner at the back post in the 91st minute.

"It's massive," said Kane. "I'm so proud of the lads. It's tough. We played so well, especially in the first half, and we could have scored a few more."

"We kept going. It's a World Cup, you go to the last second. I'm absolutely buzzing."

England fans outnumbered

Southgate's young charges arrived in Russia quietly confident after a solid qualifying campaign and encouraging friendly results, determined to end a woeful run that has seen England fail to win a knockout match at a major tournament since 2006.

The manager's lack of experience was widely discussed when he was appointed but the former Under 21s coach has cultivated an atmosphere of unity and a determination to bury past failures.

England fans were outnumbered by Tunisian supporters in Volgograd after fewer than 2,000 tickets for the match were sold in Britain.

The England supporters were given a warm welcome in the city formerly known as Stalingrad and were largely well-behaved although two fans were charged with public drunkenness after being detained on a train.

Lukaku double

Earlier, Belgium showed England, their main rivals in Group G, the way with a

comfortable 3-0 win against Panama in Sochi as Dries Mertens scored just after half-time before Lukaku headed in on 69 minutes and pounced again six minutes later.

Belgium showed they might finally be ready to realise the promise of a talented crop of players as they gave Panama a torrid time in the Central American side's first-ever appearance in a World Cup finals. (Agencies)

(11) More Than 300,000...

Balkhi said that at the moment more than six million Afghans are living as migrants or refugees in other countries.

This comes after the UNHCR released a report on Tuesday that stated wars, violence and persecution uprooted record numbers of men, women and children worldwide last year.

The UN Refugee Agency's annual Global Trends survey found 68.5 million people had been driven from their homes across the world at the end of 2017, more people than the population of Thailand.

Refugees who have fled their countries to escape conflict and persecution accounted for 25.4 million.

This is 2.9 million more than in 2016, also the biggest increase UNHCR has ever seen in a single year.

Afghanistan is the source of the second-largest refugee population globally with 2.6 million people having fled by the end of 2017, the UNHCR report stated.

New displacement is also growing, with 16.2 million people displaced during 2017 itself, either for the first time or repeatedly. That is an average of one person displaced every two seconds, the report stated.

The number of asylum-seekers awaiting the outcome of their applications for refugee status had also risen by about 300,000, to 3.1 million, by the end of December 2017.

People displaced inside their own country accounted for 40 million of the total, slightly fewer than the 40.3 million in 2016.

"We are at a watershed, where success in managing forced displacement globally requires a new and far more comprehensive approach so that countries and communities aren't left dealing with this alone," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said.

Large-scale displacement across borders is also less common than the 68 million global displacement figure suggests. Almost two-thirds of those forced to flee are internally displaced people who have not left their own countries.

Two-thirds come from just five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. (Tolo news)

(12) Taliban Say...

them back home. The ongoing propaganda in this regard is not true," Mujahid said.

After the government announced a week-long ceasefire with the Taliban before Eid-ul-Fitr and the rebels also announced a three-day truce that ended yesterday.

In many parts of the country, government forces and Taliban affiliates were seen greeting each others on Eid and offering Eid prayers together. (Pajhwok)

(13) Drought Takes...

"Recent droughts in many parts have had negative effects, especially in the livestock sector," said Mohammad Omar Mohammadi, spokesman for the ANDMA.

According to information provided by MAIL, the country's livestock sector is currently estimated to be worth about \$7 billion - which includes over 20 million goats and sheep.

A number of experts believe that the effects of this year's drought will cause severe damage to the sector.

In April, Reuters reported that Afghanistan faces the threat of serious drought this year after recording the lowest snowfall and rain in years over the winter.

Of the 34 provinces in the country, 20 recorded a serious shortfall in rain and snowfall during the winter season.

"This year drought has reached a level that we will have to announce an emergency in several parts of the country," said Hashmat Khan Bahaduri, another ANDMA spokesman, at the time.

Bahaduri said funds would be allocated to mitigate the impact but that the country would have to import, or receive donations, to overcome food shortages.

According to Famine Early Warning Systems Network, a group set up by USAID to help planning for humanitarian crises, snowfall in Afghanistan's last winter season was the lowest since 2002.

Snowmelt is an important source of water for crops and irrigation in a country where food is scarce for many households.

Relief Web also reported in April that Badghis, Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Hel-

mand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, Kunduz, Takhar, Herat, Ghor and Farah were among the worst affected provinces.

The organization said the population in these affected provinces are most likely to need support in the areas of nutrition and food security, water and sanitation, emergency shelter and non-food items in the coming months.

In the 20 provinces most affected by the drought, nearly 15 million people rely on farming, livestock or labor opportunities in agriculture.

Of these, an estimated two million people will become severely food insecure due to the drought. (Tolo news)

(14) 9 Security...

He said seven ANA soldiers and two ALP members were killed and four ANA soldiers and many ALP men wounded during the nighttime fire-fight.

He added Taliban insurgents also seized some weapons and a Haumavee from Afghan forces and torched two security posts.

But Niamatullah Timori, the governor's spokesman, said two ANA soldiers and four ANA soldiers and two ALP men wounded during the overnight attack.

He said Taliban militants had also suffered heavy casualties but he did not provide exact figures.

Akhtar Mohammad, a resident of the area, confirmed the firefight between security forces and Taliban militants and said the clash continued until Tuesday morning.

He said, "I personally have no information about casualties, but I saw a number of Taliban militants onboard on a Humvee vehicle and they possibly going somewhere for attack other Afghan forces."

On the other hand, Taliban militants also confirmed the clash and the group spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed killing 19 ANA soldiers and 11 ALP personnel in Adisa locality of the district on Monday night.

He did not provide information about the Taliban casualties. (Pajhwok)

(15) Kunar Residents...

none of them honoured their commitment.

Ezatullah, another resident of Asadabad, said daily activities of the resident and business badly affected as there was no electricity in the province. He said when there electricity for at least two hours their business could earn up to 2,000 afghanis but when there is complete outage they do no work.

He added there is fuel based electricity facility which is expensive they could not afford it.

Maulvi Syed Walli, the resident of Kunar, want the government to provide imported electricity to Kunar province as well.

He said if the government could not do this than it should construct hydro-power dams on Kunar River so that the people could benefit from the water.

Tribal elder Hayatullah said every governor and minister who came to Kunar pledged the construction of dams but they never implemented their promise.

Fazal Wahid Afkari, the resident of Shegal district, said the construction of electricity dams on Kunar River is the priority of every candidate during election campaign but after the election they forget their pledges.

He said Former President Hamid Karzai during his second tenure pledged the construction of Sur Taq Dam which was not implemented so far.

Omaidullah, the resident of Narang district said in the past 18-year the government officials often pledged with the people of Kunar to construct small and big dams for them but they never implemented their pledges.

He said the Sur Taq dam could supply electricity to all eastern provinces.

Eng. Abdullah Wali, head of the Da Afghanistan Breshana Shirkat (DABS) acknowledged the complaints of the people of Kunar regarding electricity in the province.

He said currently 350 kilovolts of electricity was being generated in Kunar which was only supplied to government institutions. He added Kunar needed 50 megawatt of electricity.

Wali said the survey to supply imported electricity to Kunar had been completed and 15 acres land had been identified for the construction of a sub-station, the land acquisition paper work had been completed as well, he added.

Wali added 80 percent work on the hydropower dam which will generate 2.1 megawatt electricity had been completed. The dam is being built in Mangi area of Paich Dara. (Pajhwok)