

(1) Afghanistan ...

Security of the election will be the responsibility of the government and security agencies," he said. Preparations for the polls were hit by infighting within a government struggling to contain the Taliban insurgency. Parliamentary and council elections have been a headache ever since a disputed 2014 presidential vote that saw the creation of a national unity government led by former rivals President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. There have been disagreements between the Ghani and Abdullah camps and issues around voter registration, electoral fraud and security. The U.S. embassy in Kabul and the United Nations both welcomed the decision on the new election date, which comes at a time of growing political and ethnic tensions. "The people of Afghanistan have made clear their desire for credible, inclusive elections," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. "We welcome the IEC's commitment to a realistic date for holding parliamentary and district council elections, and to an improved and transparent electoral process," he said. The current parliament's five-year mandate ended in June 2015 but, amid worries over security and disputes over how to hold a fair vote, the president issued a decree extending its term until new elections could be held. (Reuters)

(2) China FM ...

regarding reportedly US plans to review its policy towards Pakistan, the spokesperson said Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with the United States which are longstanding. He said we believe continued cooperation between the two countries is critical for promoting peace and security in the region and beyond. The foreign ministry spokesperson also said Pakistan is carrying out operations against terrorists without any discrimination. These operations are driven by the national interests, Zakariya said, adding that the country will not allow its territory to be used against any other nation. He also said that Pakistan's position on the US drone strikes is very clear. These attacks are counterproductive and amount to violation of Pakistan's sovereignty, he said. (IRNA)

(3) President ...

process for fundamental changes in governance and determination of citizens' status and a responsible government. A senior advisor to the president in the United Nations, Farkhunda Zahra Naderi, said the debate would turn the government from a traditional style of power to a citizen-oriented and accountable institute. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghanistan, ...

over villages in the area. Pakistani forces were asked to avoid harassing travellers and closing the border gate. District chief Haji Syed Ali asked Pakistani authorities to revoke the Sunday holiday so that goods of Afghan businessmen entered the country without any delay. The border crossing in Kandahar was closed twice by Islamabad in recent months after Afghan and Pakistani forces exchanged gunfire. (Pajhwok)

(5) US, EU ...

welcomed close IEC collaborative efforts with Afghanistan's civil society and the full spectrum of political actors to achieve the consensus and ensure transparency and integrity of the elections. Meanwhile, the European Union said broad consultations with Afghan political stakeholders underlined the government's commitment to ensuring a transparent electoral process. "We expect the Independent Electoral Commission, political stakeholders and civil society to continue working closely together towards inclusive, transparent and credible elections, and to further democratic developments," the EU said in a statement. The EU said key decisions on electoral reform would now have to be taken by the Afghan authorities in a timely manner. "Broad-based political support for and clear communication on

these reforms will help to restore public confidence in the elections and electoral bodies". The European Union was committed to supporting the Afghan electoral process and the right of Afghan citizens to exercise their civic and democratic rights, the statement said. It added the EU intended to adopt a €3.5 million project to strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions, funded under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. "This project will help to enhance the integrity of the electoral process, and will complement existing and upcoming European Union electoral assistance in Afghanistan." The statement said the European Union was committed to a peaceful, stable and democratic Afghanistan, to the benefit of all Afghans, of the region and beyond. (Pajhwok)

(6) Ramadan Deadliest...

wounded over 800 others. In this month, in addition to military places, insurgents targeted sacred places such as mosques which faced serious reaction from religious scholars. "This never can be called Jihad. It is the murder of the people, it is not rational, it is unfaithful. It shows they (insurgents) have not realized religion and Islam," said Ghulabuddin Rashikh, a religious scholar. The following are the deadly incidents happened during the Ramadan month this year: Explosion in Khost province - 18 killed and six wounded Truck bombing in Zandab Square in Kabul - at least 150 killed and 600 wounded Suicide attack in burial ceremony a lawmaker's son - seven dead and 87 wounded Armed attack on a mosque in Paktia - three killed and five wounded Suicide attack in front of the Great Mosque of Herat - eight killed and 16 wounded Suicide attack on al-Zahra Mosque in Kabul - five killed and 10 wounded Taliban's coordinated attack on Police Special Unit in Paktia - six killed and 34 wounded Suicide attack in Lashkargah city in Helmand province - 34 killed and 60 wounded "If such attacks had happened elsewhere in the world, the entire world would have been sad, but in Afghanistan, the blood of the people worth only a condemnation," said Lal Gul Lal, head of the Afghan Commission for Human Rights. Of those who lost their family members in the deadly incidents, Abdul Fatah, is one of them, who says he is still searching for the body of his son who disappeared after the massive truck bombing in Kabul city earlier this month. Fatah's son, Farhad, 32, was taxi driver in the city. "I tried not to cry, because other family members of him (Farhad) will cry too. I am trying to stay calm and give morale to my family members. Killing an innocent is allowed in no religion," Fatah said. (Tolnews)

(7) IEC has no...

codified programmes for district council, parliamentary and presidential elections. Abdullah appreciated FEFA for spreading awareness on the subject and said reforms had been implemented at the commissioners' level, with improvement in the technical fields. The reforms would help the two panels ensure transparency in the upcoming elections, the CEO hoped. "Conducting elections is certain and necessary, the government has a strong will for that. "Our international friends support the government in holding parliamentary and district council elections," he said. The IEC is expected to announce Wolesi Jirga and district council election schedule today (Thursday). (Pajhwok)

(8) Taliban Say ...

in comments which echoed similar messages the movement has sent in the past. While not explicitly acknowledging the recent debate in Washington over U.S. policy in

Afghanistan, the message appeared to address several of the arguments made for maintaining or even boosting support for the Western-backed government in Kabul.

In particular, it rejected the concerns that Afghanistan could once again become a haven for foreign militants seeking to attack the United States and its allies as al Qaeda did when it struck the Twin Towers in 2001. Calling for "complete independence of the country and establishment of an Islamic system", he warned against plans under consideration to increase the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan by up to 3,000-5,000.

"The more they insist on maintaining the presence of their forces here or want a surge of their forces, the more regional sensitivity against them will intensify," he said. However, he also promised "constructive and good relations with you and the world" once "your illegitimate occupation of Afghanistan comes to an end". He dismissed widespread accusations that the Taliban benefited from aid from other countries including Pakistan and, more recently, Russia, saying it would "not allow anyone else to intervene in Afghanistan". "Likewise, we don't permit others to use the soil of Afghanistan against anyone," he said. He urged the United States to accept the "legitimate demands of the Afghan people" and seek peace through diplomatic means but appeared to offer no concession on the Taliban's central demand that foreign forces must leave before peace talks begin. "The solution of the Afghan issue through peaceful means is part and parcel of the policy of the Islamic Emirate, should the occupation come to an end," he said. The statement had harsh words for the government of President Ashraf Ghani, which it dismissed as a "stooge" of America and blamed for rising ethnic and factional tensions in Kabul and elsewhere.

It also urged Taliban fighters to avoid civilian casualties, a call likely to be dismissed by the government and its allies following Thursday's attack on a bank in Helmand that killed at least 34 people and last month's deadly truck bomb in Kabul that killed at least 150 civilians. Although the Taliban have denied responsibility for the Kabul attack, Afghanistan's main intelligence agency said it was planned and carried out by the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network. (Reuters)

(9) Hekmatyar ... to rescue the nation and the country from decades of misfortunes. He said both the government and the opposition should not let the war to be prolonged because its victims were only the Afghans. The HIA leader also asked the US president to choose an effective new strategy for Afghanistan that could end the war quickly. He said the new strategy should bring the warring sides to the negotiating table to find a mutually accepted solution. He said the new strategy should frustrate the nefarious designs of war-mongers who had no concern for US or Afghan interest. Hekmatyar also asked Kabul officials who insist on continuation of the war to show mercy on the long oppressed nation. (Pajhwok)

(10) 30 Killed ...

the provincial governor's spokesman. He said 34 people had been killed and 60 others wounded in the blast. Without going into details, he said, the dead and wounded included civilians, military and police officials. Zwak said media official of the fourth border police brigade, Azhar Khan, was among the dead. Eyewitness Gul Ahmad Tanha, who was inside the bank when the blast took place outside, told Pajhwok Afghan News that it was a powerful blast. He saw dead and injured people outside the bank. The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the blast, with the group's spokesman, Qari

Yousaf Ahmadi, claiming dozens of security men were killed and wounded and their ranger vehicles were destroyed. President Ashraf Ghani strongly condemned the attack in a statement issued by the Presidential Palace. The president said the perpetrators of the attack once again showed they had nothing to do with religion and humanity.

He said the attack was carried out in the holy month of Ramadan that called for forgiveness and peace and the motive was to make the countrymen mourn ahead of Eidul Fitr. The president directed the provincial officials to ensure the injured were provided every possible facility. (Pajhwok)

(11) Afghanistan...

executive David Richardson said the countries deserved their elevated status because of "their dedication to improving performance both off and on the field resulting in the significant development and growth of cricket in their respective countries". Ireland and Afghanistan have been playing as associate members since 1993 and 2013, respectively. "For a nation like Afghanistan, it is a huge and remarkable achievement," said Shafiq Stanikzai, chief executive of the Afghanistan Cricket Board. "Afghanistan cricket has gone from strength to strength and we dared to dream that this would happen and today it has become a reality."

While Afghanistan gained ODI status only in 2011 and has appeared in one Cricket World Cup (in 2015), Ireland has enjoyed more success at the limited-overs format, appearing in the last three World Cups and beating Pakistan and England in that time.

Warren Deutrom, chief executive of Cricket Ireland, said the vote was a "reflection not just of our past achievements but of our potential to grow our great game." The ICC said it has also unanimously agreed to a new financial model to give greater equality in the distribution of the governing body's income. For the cycle 2016-2023, the Board of Control for Cricket in India will receive \$US405 million (\$A536 million) across the eight-year cycle, the England and Wales Cricket Board will get \$US139 million, Zimbabwe Cricket gets \$US94 million and the seven other existing full members get \$US128 million each. (AAP)

(12) UNAMA ...

to a realistic date for holding parliamentary and district council elections, and to an improved and transparent electoral process." Under Resolution 2344 (2017), the (UN) Security Council requested UNAMA to support Afghan authorities in the organization of elections, the statement said. Supporting strong and independent electoral management bodies will be a key feature of these efforts in the lead up to elections. The statement said the UN mission remained committed to working with Afghan institutions as they implemented reforms to enhance transparency and build trust in Afghanistan's democratic processes. "UNAMA encourages the Commission, Afghanistan's political leaders and civil society to unite their efforts in preparing credible parliamentary and district council elections in 2018." (Pajhwok)

(13) Play Role ...

in Kabul but also condemned them. Khalili said the recent Kabul attacks showed a lot of work was required to achieve peace and asked the government to intensify the peace process and encourage voices raised for peace. The HPC chief said politicians, parties and influential figures through their cooperation should steer the country out of the current bad situation because they had the ability to do so. He also said protests should be carried out according to the Constitution and they should not be aimed at ousting the govern-

ment. "Is there any alternative if the current system is collapsed." He said the enemy wanted to divide the Afghans on ethnic lines. He said the Afghans should not return to the past and instead should learn from the past because the current situation required harmony and unity. He said the role of religious scholars in uniting the Afghans was critical, praising the Afghanistan Ulema Council's recent stance against the conflict. About the announcement of the election date, Khalili said the elections should be free of fraud. He said the Election Commission should not allow powerful individuals to interfere in the electoral process in order to revive people's trust in the democratic exercise. (Pajhwok)

(14) Atmar, McMaster...

Afghan government. The advisors also conferred on preparations for a meeting between the leaders of the two countries. They exchanged views on the agenda of the meeting. Atmar and McMaster also spoke on the framework of the security and political cooperation. McMaster said talks on the new cooperation framework would continue to help the US expanded cooperation on Afghanistan's security. The US advisor said the Trump administration supported the Afghan government efforts and policies to enforce good governance, fight corruption, restore peace and ensure economic growth. (Pajhwok)

(15) Turkish Aid ...

Sureyya Er said: "Our relationship is not one-sided. We cannot ignore the help Afghanistan has [given us] us in history, therefore, TIKA has opened three offices in the country to show our interest." He added TIKA has so far put almost 1,000 projects into effect and will continue to create new initiatives. (AA)

(16) Afghan War ...

from that attack rose to 34 people, most of them civilians, provincial government spokesman Omar Zwak told The Associated Press. In the Taliban message this year, the militant leader seemed to harden his stance, saying the Afghan government is too corrupt to stay on and warning of another civil war in Kabul - along the lines of the 1992 fighting when mujahedeen groups threw out the Communist government in Afghanistan and turned their guns on each other. That conflict killed more than 50,000 civilians and gave rise to the Taliban. The Taliban say they are waging war against the Kabul government and not targeting civilians. In their claim of the Helmand attack, they insisted no civilians died. Zwak, however said, most of the dead in the attack in the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, were civilians, although there were soldiers inside the bank at the time of the explosion. Witnesses said children were among the dozens wounded. Earlier, the Defense Ministry had urged soldiers to collect their salaries from banks located inside army bases. If they do go to banks elsewhere, they should refrain from wearing their uniforms, the ministry's deputy spokesman Mohammad Radmanish told the AP.

Outside a hospital in Lashkar Gah, Esmatullah Khan, 34, said Friday he had donated blood to help some of the nearly 70 wounded in the attack. Akhunzadah, the Taliban leader, also boasted of allegedly growing international support, saying "mainstream entities of the world admit (the Taliban) effectiveness, legitimacy and success," an apparent reference to reports of overtures by Russia and China to the Taliban amid concerns of an emerging Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan.

While the IS affiliate's stronghold is in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, the branch has managed also to stage high-profile attacks in Kabul and other cities. The presence of battle-hardened Uzbek militants in the ranks also further worries Moscow.

After urging Afghans to embrace holy war, or jihad, to oust foreign troops, Akhunzadah's rambling message went on to touch upon the conflict between Gulf Arab states and Qatar, saying he was "saddened" by the feud. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have accused Qatar of supporting extremists, a charge that Doha denies. (AP)

(17) Taliban Loses ...

killed along with his nine companions during the operation. At least nineteen Taliban insurgents were also wounded during the operations, the statement said, adding that the group's two senior commanders identified as Mullah Abdul Hadi and Mawlawi Belal were also among those wounded.

The Taliban insurgents group has not commented regarding the report so far. Takhar is among the relatively calm provinces in northeastern Afghanistan which rarely witnessed insurgency since the fall of the Taliban regime. However, the insurgent groups have increased their activities in this province during the recent years and often carry out insurgency activities, including coordinated attacks.

The province borders some of the restive provinces in the north from where the insurgents are frequently commuting for the insurgency activities. (KP)

(18) Taliban Release...

recorded on June 16. Timothy John Weeks asked Australian politicians to discuss his release in the country's parliament. Weeks said discussing the issue between the Australian prime minister and the Taliban was the only way of their release. "I hope the Taliban prisoners would be freed soon and they would celebrate the Eid with their families. I would also go home and join my family and friends," he added.

This was the second video the Taliban have released about the AUAF professors. US authorities previously said they would target the Haqqani network fighters in Pakistan if the two professors were killed. (Pajhwok)

(19) 'Impartial Body...

and injuring several others. Then a large number of people erected protest tents in the main square of Kabul to demand resignation of top government officials over their failure to protect citizens. Some of the tents were removed following talks and the last one had to be removed by force. Collective Justice society group members on Friday told a press conference that the government should appoint an impartial commission to investigate the recent attacks in Kabul.

They said those involved in the incidents should be brought to justice because it was the responsibility of the government to protect people's lives and properties. One of them, Zaki, said continued insecurity was of great concern because it claimed dozens of lives on a daily basis. He said the people were not happy with the government because the regime paid no attention to their security and rights. (Pajhwok)

(20) All Options...

of consequences if the government approves the execution of the Taliban and Haqqani network members. Earlier, reports had emerged suggesting that the Afghan government has signed the execution orders of several Taliban and Haqqani network members in response to the deadly attacks in Kabul city. The vehicle bombing near the Embassy of Germany and coordinated suicide attack on a funeral in Kabul earlier this month and late in May left more than 150 people dead and hundreds more wounded. The relentless attacks sparked furor among the government officials and the Afghan people who were demanding the execution of the Taliban and Haqqani network prisoners, including Anas Haqqani, a close relative and one of the most senior leaders of the network. (KP)