

(1) 'Germany Stands...

reassuring Afghans "that we will continue to work for a peaceful resolution to conflict and the economic development of the region," he said in a prepared statement.

Improved rights situation

He said that negotiations with the Taliban should not mean "a return to a painful past."

He hailed advances made by Afghanistan in the field of human rights and establishing the rule of law, giving special mention to the improvement made in the lives of young women, above all.

This progress was to be retained, he said, calling it a "prerequisite for our future cooperation."

Germany's mission

There are discussions in Berlin on the future of the German mission, and the Bundestag is debating whether to extend the mandate for Afghanistan. The minister has argued for Germany's engagement in Afghanistan to continue, while there are other voices calling for an exit strategy.

The German mission is largely dependent on US infrastructure in Afghanistan. Washington has announced plans to withdraw half of the US military's 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, and this would have an effect on the German mission. Retired General Harald Kujat told the media at the time that a US withdrawal would render Germany's continued presence futile.

However, Maas warned that everything that the German military had achieved in the country "would very quickly collapse" if Berlin were to withdraw its troops now.

Peace is possible

However, Maas said he sees this as the "start of a new phase," saying, "Peace is possible in Afghanistan."

He refers to elections as a sign of progress: "The landmark presidential elections in Afghanistan are scheduled for July, and there has been movement in the quest for a peace process with the Taliban, also thanks to the US initiative."

Maas considered his journey "right now as an important and necessary sign."

After Afghanistan, Maas will visit Pakistan this week. (DW)

(2) President 'Won't...

the final results of the elections for 15 provinces.

Mirza Mohammad Haqqparat, the deputy spokesman of the IEC said that the commission has three missions going forward including the announcement of final results for parliamentary elections. (ATN)

(3) Kabul Rejects...

Omar was living just three miles from a major US Forward Operating Base in Zabul province, where he died in 2013.

The Dutch journalist Bette Dam says in the book that the Taliban chief lived as a virtual hermit, refusing visits from his family and filling notebooks with jottings in an imaginary language.

Dam spent more than five years researching the book and interviewed Jabbar Omari, Omar's bodyguard who hid and protected him after the Taliban regime was overthrown.

The author spent years reporting in Afghanistan and also wrote an earlier book about former Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 which led to the fall of the Taliban, the US put a \$10 million bounty on Omar and he went into hiding in a small compound in the regional capital Qalat, Dam writes.

The family living at the compound were not told of the identity of their mystery guest, but US forces twice almost found him.

At one point, a US patrol approached as Omar and Omari were in the courtyard. Alarmed, the two men ducked behind a wood pile, but the soldiers passed without entering.

A second time, US troops even searched the house but did not uncover the concealed entrance to his secret room.

Omar decided to move when the US started building Forward Operating Base Lagman in 2004, just a few hundred meters from his hideout.

He later moved to a second building but soon afterwards the Pentagon constructed Forward Operating Base Wolverine -- home to 1,000 US troops, and where American and British special forces were sometimes based -- close by.

He dared not move again, Dam says, rarely even going outside and often hiding in tunnels when US planes flew over.

Though he listened to the BBC's evening Pashto-language news broadcasts, even when he learned about the death of al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden Omar rarely commented on the outside world, the book says.

The book goes on to claim that Omar became ill in 2013, did not see a doctor and refused to travel to Pakistan for treatment, later dying in Zabul.

"We strongly reject this delusional claim and we see it as an effort to create and build an identity for the Taliban and their foreign backers," President Ghani's spokesman Haroon Chakhansuri said. "We have sufficient evidence which shows he (Mullah Omar) lived and died in Pakistan." (Tolo news)

(4) Deputy Interior...

situation which he called as unacceptable.

"Current security situation of Kabul city is not acceptable. District chiefs were unable to fulfil their duties professionally. I decided to change 11 of the Kabul district chiefs and appointed new ones. If they don't change the status quo in 90 days, they will be fired too," Gen. Sadat said.

He did not provide further information and it is yet not clear in which police districts that changes have been incorporated.

This comes as efforts are underway to improve the security situation of capital Kabul and other key cities and provinces of the country. (KP)

(5) No Compromise...

Abdullah said there is no difference among Afghans on the principle of the republic system in the country.

He stressed the need for government and political groups' coordination in the peace talks and said defending the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan means defending the president and the chief executive.

Abdullah, who is part of the National Unity Government based on an agreement with President Ghani following the 2014 elections, said the people are concerned about an "ambiguity" in the peace talks between the US and the Taliban in Doha.

"Peace negotiations are ongoing between US and Taliban representatives. Afghan people are hopeful, but they are concerned as well," Abdullah said.

He added that Taliban should realize that they cannot ignore the existence of terrorists in Afghanistan like the past.

"Taliban's stance in the past was that there was no terrorist in Afghanistan but neither the Afghan people nor the world will accept it if they (Taliban) try to have the same stance today and say that there is no terrorist (group) in Afghanistan," Abdullah said.

He said Afghanistan will not need the presence of international forces if there is no terrorist group in the country but added that the country will need the international community's cooperation in that case. (Tolo news)

(6) Afghanistan...

foreign ministers was launched in 2017 at the initiative of China.

In December last year, Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani was presiding the meeting in Kabul with his Pakistani and Chinese counterparts Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Wang Yi. The delegates reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening relations, deepening cooperation, and advancing connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and other regional economic initiatives. (ATN)

(7) Afghan Women's...

to efforts and works followed by the ministry in connection with providing better opportunities in relevant affairs.

Hasina Safi added that as a result of women's struggles, good opportuni-

ties have been prepared for the country's women and such opportunities have let the people of Afghanistan in particular women and international community to take a step towards development by supporting the elected system.

In the ceremony, the message of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani was read out by advisor to the President Malalai Shinwari.

In his message, the country's President congratulated the International Women Day to all the people of Afghanistan in particular Afghan women."

"Afghanistan constitution that forbids discrimination among citizens of the country has provided equal opportunities to man and woman in social life and Afghan women have positively made use of the opportunities despite of continued war," the message added.

In the ceremony, video message of the country's First Lady was played. In the video, the country's First Lady said: "18 yeses back, Afghan women were isolated due to political problems, but today the Afghan women have lot of power and ability in social and political level."

Meanwhile, the message of the country's chief executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah was also read out in the ceremony. (BNA)

(8) Govt Faces...

said Zabi Sadat, deputy spokesman to the IEC.

This comes few days after government vowed to inaugurate the new parliament once the Independent Election Commission announces the final results of October 20 parliamentary polls which were marred by widespread allegations of fraud and major irregularities that finally led to the dismissal of the entire members of the election commissions.

President Ghani's deputy spokesman Shahussain Murtazawi told TOLONews on Wednesday that the President will inaugurate new parliament once the final result of parliamentary elections is announced.

The Afghan parliament's term expired on 22 June 2015. But Ghani in a decree extended the parliament's term which faced questions by some Afghan law experts and election monitoring institutions at the time about the legal grounds of this matter.

Humayun last week said the incumbent members of the parliament will continue their job as usual until the new members come in.

Legal experts said that if the incumbent parliament continues its tenure after March 7, this would be in contravention of the Constitution of Afghanistan and in that case, the incumbent government will take the shape of an authoritarian administration. (Tolo news)

(9) Ireland Beats...

as it looked to settle on its final squad for the Cricket World Cup in May.

But the rotation policy didn't work well for Afghanistan. The top order couldn't settle down enough to counter the spinners of Ireland on wickets that suited slow bowlers.

"We are targeting the World Cup, so we made changes in every match," Afghanistan captain Asghar Afghan said as his team made five changes in the previous match on Saturday. "Top order's (batting) is a concern, but the test match should offer an opportunity."

Just as in the previous games, Afghanistan stuttered to 40-4 early in its innings against the spin of George Dockrell (2-46) and Andy McBrine (1-30).

Experienced Mohammad Shahzad started the innings with a straight six off Tim Murtagh's first ball but three balls later he got a leading edge off the seamer and was caught at mid-off. Despite dropping multiple catches, Ireland bowlers kept on coming back with Dockrell removing Rahmat Shah and Samiullah Shinwari off successive deliveries.

Captain Asghar Afghan fought a lone battle with an innings of 82 off 111 balls before he retired hurt in the last over due to a hamstring injury.

Afghanistan then benefited from two let-offs in the 30s when Balbirnie and captain William Porterfield dropped

skiers. The chances proved costly as Afghanistan added 76 runs with Mohammad Nabi (40) and added a further 65 runs with Rashid Khan, who remained unbeaten on 35.

Stirling and Porterfield featured in a solid opening stand of 57 runs before the Ireland captain was bowled by debutante left-arm spinner Zahir Khan (2-55).

Stirling hit seven boundaries and two sixes in his 88-ball knock but was unlucky to be given out lbw off Rashid in the 31st over as the television replays showed the ball could have missed the off stump.

Balbirnie, who smashed a century in the third ODI, was clean bowled by Mujeeb Ur Rehman with Ireland needing only 10 runs for victory. Stuart Poynter raised the victory with a four off Nabi's offspin.

The teams will next play in a one-off test starting next Friday. (AP)

(10) Woman Arrested...

Commandment said, adding that the victim has been identified as Shamsuddin son of Fazaluddin.

The main motive behind the murder of the man by his husband has not been ascertained so far. (KP)

(11) UN Environment...

"Innovations are urgently needed to tackle pollution and adverse impacts of climate change on our planet," he said.

"We must also give priority to cleaner production and promote resource-use efficiency as a prerequisite to achieve sustainable development," Tobiko added. (Xinhua)

(12) Trump Open to...

an imagery analysis from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank.

"I would be very disappointed if that were happening. It's a very early report ... We'll take a look," Trump told reporters on Wednesday regarding the imagery analysis.

Bolton earlier said it was premature to make a judgment on the reports of the activities of DPRK rocket launch site. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a senior State Department official on Thursday told the press that Tongchang-ri facility is "not a critical part" of DPRK's nuclear infrastructure at this point, and the United States has not "reached any specific conclusion" on those reports.

The official confirmed that Washington would seek clarifications on the purposes of those activities.

Trump and Kim Jong Un held their second summit in Hanoi, Vietnam on Feb. 27-28, without reaching an agreement.

Nevertheless, the White House said the two leaders had "very good and constructive meetings" and discussed various ways to "advance denuclearization and economic driven concepts." (Xinhua)

(13) Russian Defense...

campaign in Syria that Russia has waged since 2015 showcases its military might and allowed the military to test its new weapons in combat, including shipborne and air-launched long-range cruise missiles. (Fox News)

(14) China Grounds...

also killed everyone aboard.

"Safety is our number one priority and we are taking every measure to fully understand all aspects of this accident, working closely with the investigating team and all regulatory authorities involved," Boeing said in a Monday statement.

The company added that the investigation is still in its early stages and there is no need to offer additional guidance to 737 MAX 8 aircraft operators, Reuters reported.

Body bags were spread out nearby while Red Cross and other workers looked for remains.

Around the world, families were gripped by grief. At the Addis Ababa airport, a woman called a phone number in vain. "Where are you, my son?" she said, in tears. Others cried as they approached the terminal.

At the Nairobi airport, hopes quickly dimmed for loved ones. "I just pray that he is safe or he was not on it," said Agnes Muilu, who had come to pick up her brother.

Henom Esayas, whose sister's husband was killed, told The Associated Press they were startled when a stranger picked up their frantic calls to his phone, told them he had found it in the debris and promptly switched it off. (Fox News)

(15) 'Lucky Day'...

Mavropoulos was not the only passenger who was thanking his lucky stars on Sunday. Ahmed Khalid also missed his flight to Nairobi, after his connecting flight from Dubai to Addis Ababa was delayed. (RT)

(16) UK Prime Minister...

British lawmakers' opposition to the deal centers on concerns over arrangements for the Irish border. May's government has been seeking changes, but the EU refuses to reopen the 585-page agreement that it spent a year-and-a-half negotiating.

European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said Monday that "no further meetings at political level are scheduled," but that the EU is "open and willing" to hold talks with the U.K. at any time.

"It is now for the House of Commons to take an important set of decisions this week," Schinas said.

May's spokesman, James Slack, said "talks are ongoing" at a technical level, and there is "a shared determination by both sides to find a solution."

The British leader has spoken by phone to eight EU national leaders since Friday, including French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, without any sign of a breakthrough. A rumored trip by May to meet EU leaders in Brussels on Monday has been shelved for now, though she spoke by phone to European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

If Parliament throws out the deal again, lawmakers will vote on whether to leave the EU without an agreement -- an idea likely to be rejected -- or to ask the EU to delay Brexit beyond the scheduled March 29 departure date.

May warned last week that any delay could mean "we may never leave the EU at all."

Hard-line Brexit supporters in May's Conservative Party said she should postpone Tuesday's vote rather than risk another crushing defeat. (AP)

(17) Malaysia Court...

Indonesian officials mounted a major diplomatic effort to free Aisyah, which included pressure from the president. The Indonesian justice minister had written to Malaysia's attorney general seeking her release, citing problems with the case, and he agreed last week.

The women had always denied murder, saying they were tricked by North Korean spies into carrying out the Cold War-style hit using VX nerve agent, and believed it was a prank for a reality TV show.

Their lawyers presented them as scapegoats, saying that authorities were unable to catch the real killers. Four North Koreans -- formally accused of the murder alongside the women -- fled Malaysia shortly after the assassination.

The trial, which began in October 2017, had been due to resume Monday with the defence stage of proceedings after a break of several months.

But at the start of the hearing at Shah Alam High Court, prosecutor Muhammad Iskandar Ahmad requested that the murder charge against Aisyah be withdrawn and she be given a discharge, without providing a reason.

The judge agreed to a discharge not amounting to an acquittal, and ordered Aisyah's immediate release. This means Aisyah has not been formally cleared of the charge and could, in theory, be re-arrested. The news was a surprise as the court had only been scheduled to hear Huong testify Monday, and the Vietnamese woman was left in shock that she was not released alongside Aisyah. (AFP)

(18) Israeli Researchers...

According to the researchers, there are many genes that can be used to improve modern wheat. Finding new ways to improve genetically modified crops will help ensure future worldwide food security. (Xinhua)