

(1) Political Leaders...

from its countries, ESCAP is taking steps to advance more balanced, equitable growth in Asia and the Pacific by advocating for the strengthening of social protection systems, enhancing financial inclusion, raising education spending, reducing vulnerability to environmental hazards, and closing the ICT digital divide.

In his video message to the session, UN Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres said, "The Asia-Pacific region is an engine of global growth, trade and investment and the creation of jobs all over the world but profound transformation underway driven by technological innovation and the challenge is to ensure that this transformation is for the better. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our blueprint for success and the Asia-Pacific region can lead from the front."

The 74th session of the Commission is being held under the theme 'Inequality in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' The CS74 theme study launched by ESCAP today assesses the region's inequality trends and policy gaps across the three types of inequalities: outcome, opportunity and impact.

It finds that inequality of opportunity is persisting, despite average progress in accessing basic services. The report shows that had income inequality not increased in 10 countries in the region over the past decade, the Asia-Pacific region could have lifted close to 153 million people out of poverty. It also reveals which groups are left behind, or are disproportionately impacted by external shocks, such as natural disasters, and estimates how new technologies might further impact inequality trends in the region. In his address at the ministerial opening, Foreign Minister of Thailand H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai called for leaders and policymakers to accelerate the pace of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "We need transformative change in our way of thinking, doing and living," he said. "It cannot be business as usual. Thailand stands ready to engage and work constructively with ESCAP and all the Member States to address the region's development challenges and inequality."

President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák highlighted that tackling inequality is part of the fabric of the SDGs. "Not only does Inequality have a whole goal dedicated to it, but is also a driving force behind the entire 2030 Agenda," he said. "ESCAP has adopted a regional roadmap which supports Asia-Pacific countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, bringing together various priorities from climate change to connectivity and offering a platform for sharing lessons learned and mobilizing support. This is multilateralism in action and it is something we need to see more of."

In her address, Chief Executive of Hong Kong Hon. Mrs. Carrie Lam echoed the importance of multilateralism, particularly a free trading system. "We have benefited immensely from free trade which is instrumental in developing Hong Kong into an international trade and business centre as it is today, and we hold the belief that a strong and rule-based multilateral trading system is a cornerstone of the global economy."

President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, H.E. Ms. Hilda C. Heine, who was elected as Chair of the 74th session, added that the theme of inequality is a powerful reminder of the importance of equality as an imperative to achieving the 2030 Agenda. "As small island developing states we rely on our closest development partners, including ESCAP to support our efforts to translate the ambitious 2030 Agenda including its comprehensive range of SDG goals, targets and indicators into tangible outcomes and actions, recognizing our unique challenges and vulnerabilities," she said.

In his statement, President of Kiribati H.E. Mr. Taneti Maamau added, "The path to achieving the 2030 Agenda is long and complex, but one that we all have a duty to give to, through

our efforts and commitments both individually and collectively so that together as a family we can translate the 2030 Agenda into action, supported by partnerships and innovative policy solutions that will 'leave no one behind.'"

More than 540 participants from 44 Member States and Associate Members are attending the 74th Commission session this week. (PR)

(2) Kabul Police...

A coordinated attack in Jalalabad city left at least ten people dead including security personnel while 42 others were wounded.

The militants had earlier carried out a coordinated attack in two different of Kabul city that left several people dead including security personnel while numerous others were wounded.

The Taliban group and ISIS loyalists in Afghanistan both claimed responsibility behind the coordinated attacks in Kabul city last week. (KP)

(3) Iran Vows...

, appreciated Iran for its assistance to Afghanistan in the past four decades, and said, "At present, terrorism and drug trafficking are threatening Afghanistan and the region, and given the close views we share with Iran, we hope that the country will help and support us in fighting terrorism and stopping drug trafficking."

He also called for Iran's all-out support for the peace process in Afghanistan. In relevant remarks on Sunday, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri underlined that Tehran and Kabul were resolved to boost their cooperation in the ongoing campaign against the terrorist groups.

"The shared backgrounds between the two countries of Iran and Afghanistan, including religion and language, have brought them together in such way that no obstacle can undermine their close relations, specially in combatting the terrorist groups," General Baqeri said during his meeting with General Bahrami in Tehran.

The top Iranian commander, meantime, said that his country has spared no effort to help restore security and stability in Afghanistan.

"Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and after Afghanistan was occupied, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always stood by the nation of Afghanistan and the Mujahideen to help them fight against the occupiers," General Baqeri said.

He also expressed the hope that the Afghan military delegation's visit would result in more cooperation between the two countries' armed forces. (FNA)

(4) No One Can...

This is not acceptable for the people and is in fact undermining the sacrifices of the people of Afghanistan who are defending this government," he said.

He also said the elections are facing security issues and that "the people are also giving sacrifices for it and the people of Afghanistan are taking a risk to register. I am saying responsibly that no pressure must be imposed on the election commission. The election commission makes the decisions and are responsible for transparent elections." On Sunday, the IEC's operational deputy head Wasima Badghisi, IEC financial and administrative deputy head Mazaullah Dawlati, and IEC commissioners Abdul Qadir Quraishi and Maliha Hassan are the four commissioners who oppose the IEC chief and Ghani's new decision regarding the voter registration process.

The four commissioners have signed a letter in which they said they are against the move. According to them, based on the election law the commission does not have the authority to shift or amend electoral approaches during the election process.

The commissioners said they have signed a letter in front of representatives of the United Nations in Kabul and Shahla Haq, acting secretariat of IEC to announce their disagreement over the decision to stamp copies of voters ID cards.

The IEC Chief however refused to comment in this regard.

The issue of stamping copies of voter ID cards was first announced by the Presidential Palace last Thursday and then published on the election commission's website.

A number of MPs and politicians then blasted President Ashraf Ghani over

what they said was an attempt to pressure the IEC and impose plans on the commission. (Tolo news)

(5) HPC Positive...

"Those who endorsed war for twenty years now seem to be ready to announce suicide attacks and explosions as a prohibited act and this is a major development," said senate chief Fazel Hadi Muslimyar.

"We cannot find a solution to this war out of the conference of clerics unless we find a solution from the political and intelligence directions," said senate deputy chief Mohammad Alam Ezedyar.

The Ulema (religious scholars) stated in the declaration that war and violence have no place in Islam and that Islam is the religion of peace and true believers should put into practice what this religion has said.

The religious scholars said they support any peace offer, efforts and declarations in the hope of bringing peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

The declaration stated that the religious scholars of the three countries support the peace offer made by the Afghan government to the Taliban aimed to end war and violence in the country.

"I hope that they stop looking for peace here and there around the world and instead come with strong forces in the trenches and give the Taliban a well-measured response," senate member Afzal Shamil said.

The religious scholars said in the declaration that the Ulema of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia can play a crucial role in promoting peace and that they support such efforts. (Tolo news)

(6) Govt under...

"We are using all resources to promote insurance facilities in the country, we are trying to seek the experiences of other countries in this respect," said finance ministry spokesman Ajmal Hamid Abdul Rahimzai.

Currently, one state run and three private insurance companies are operating in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(7) Ceremony to Inaugurate...

Jerusalem's status is perhaps the thorniest issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel considers the entire city its capital, while the Palestinians see east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. (AFP)

(8) No Investment...

the Afghan war. "Unfortunately, we have not invested in winning peace."

Innocent Afghans and Pakistanis had been suffering since the Soviet occupation of Kabul in 1979, he remarked. Peace was the only way forward, the advisor stressed.

The post-9/11 Pakistan stood with the international community, not with those who attacked the US, Janjua explained. He spurned US allegations that Pakistan was aiding militants.

Thee NSA continued: "The Taliban accuse us of supporting the US and vice versa. So both are blaming us, who's right?" (Pajhwok)

(9) Watchdog Sees...

"Some reports show that certain figures are involved in unlawful activities like distributing money to the poor voters and getting access to government resources," the IECC said.

The commission said that some reports indicated tazkiras, with voter stickers attached, were sold and purchased. The IECC said it had not received any documents about on the issue, but the media reports and parliamentary complaints showed such illegal activities were ongoing in provinces and even in Kabul.

The statement said the Independent Election Commission (IEC) was responsible for preparing a central database for listing voters, informing people and assuaging their concerns.

The long-delayed Wolesi Jirga and district council elections are scheduled for October 20 this year. (Pajhwok)

(10) FEFA Seeks Temporarily...

Therefore, the Afghan government, IEC and all stakeholders must prioritize preparation of an accurate and legitimate voters list."

The government and IEC have recently developed a process of attaching stickers to the back of copies of voters' identity cards at the time of registration, but this decision has created some concerns among citizens. Some felt that attachment of a sticker to the back of their original identity cards posed serious

security threats to them at the time of traveling to insecure areas. Therefore, the decision can prevent the threats but lack of IEC's preparation and practical mechanisms to prevent multiple registration (Through copies of identity cards) is a serious concern. This situation added to the distrust of citizens to the process and can further decrease the level of participation.

Considering the facts, FEFA calls on the government of Afghanistan and IEC to immediately suspend the voter registration process and undertake the following measures before resuming it in the districts and villages:

Development of a specialized information bank/database: The IEC in coordination with the Central Civil Registration Authority must develop a specialized information database to manage all data of registered voters based on their identity cards. The database must be able to identify, track and control the locations where forged identity cards are used. The system must enable the IEC to expedite its measures on dealing with use of fake identity cards.

Establishment information recording unites in provincial level: Establishment of information recording unites in proportional to the population of districts can speed up the process of entering voters data into a database which is connected to the central office of IEC. These unites can enable the IEC to regularly control and audit the data entering process and check the credibility of data. Additionally, the political parties and civil society organizations must have the privilege of monitoring the process in order to enhance public trust on the election process.

The Afghan government in cooperation with the international forces must devise a cohesive security plan for elections to provide full security for the process and make sure voters feel safe to take part in the process after resuming of the voter registration process. Expediting the recruitment process of first grade and top echelons of secretariat of IEC and delegation of all executive and operational duties to secretariat is also recommended.

Considering the fact that officials may ask questions about this, it is worth mentioning that FEFA's technical assessment indicates that temporary suspension of the process will have no impact on the polling date. It will only impact on the electoral events like publication of voters list, candidates registration process, scrutiny of collected information about candidates registration, publication of candidates preliminary list, recording complaints on candidates preliminary list, handling the complaints on candidates preliminary list, the final date for withdrawal of candidates and publication of candidates final list which are projected to take place until August 14, 2018.

The voter registration process can be suspended for 20 days to one month, until the IEC and government in cooperation with the international community implement the above mentioned recommendations.

Once again, FEFA requests that the international community, particularly the United Nations, support expansion of the technical capability of the IEC to foster credible, legitimate and trustworthy elections. (Pajhwok)

(11) Pakistan-Trained...

Lashkar leaders like Hafiz Saeed and Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi were treated like heroes. "In the 1990s, the freedom struggle began in Kashmir...At that time, Lashkar-e-Taiba and 11 or 12 other organisations were formed."

About the 2008 Mumbai attack masterminds Saeed and Lakhvi, he said Saeed was among the most wanted men by India, but they roamed free in Pakistan. Lakhvi and six other are facing trial for planning and executing the devastating Mumbai attack, which killed 166 people. Saeed was granted bail by a Pakistani court this year. (Pajhwok)

(12) Afghan Woman...

But later on, she became the subject of a heated debate in the social media. Mohammad Shoab, a Facebook user, wrote: "Petty the people who went to welcome her at the airport. You gain nothing by just defaming eastern Afghanistan. We know Dewa inside out. There is no place for her in Nangarhar." Some other social media users got screen shots of Niazi's posts

against Islamic teachings and Afghan values. She is originally from Laghman province but lived in Nangarhar. Her husband also hails from Nangarhar.

She is likely to run for Wolesi Jirga elections from Nangarhar, as her husband has already hinted at her candidacy.

Abdullah Sahar, a civil society activist and journalist from Nangarhar, shared her photo with a long text on his Facebook wall. "O, God! Now she will be my representative. She has brazenly insulted Prophet Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH)."

Habib Ashna wrote: "Dewa Niazi has not been complicit in killings or civil war. She hasn't issue a fatwa against anyone. I expect all women to support her."

Another civil society activist expressed a similar view. Abdullah Hood characterized her as a moderate Muslim woman of merit. "Additionally, she is qualified to contest the parliamentary elections."

Khushal Khalil said about women's role in social media: "On freedom of speech, we don't have restrictions on women. Difficulties for them are largely rooted in our culture."

Khalil remarked: "Unfortunately, very few girls used their real names while campaigning on Facebook. And they too are living as refugees in foreign countries."

In response, Nizai said: "While having critics, I also have many supporters. I am annoyed by misplaced criticism, but not pay so much attention to hostile remarks. My struggle will continue."

She vehemently denied ridiculing Islam, saying she was ready to answer her critics. "Fake accounts had been created to post and attribute profane things to me." (Pajhwok)

(13) 50 Acres Land...

He said gas for the plant would come from Shiberghan and the electricity generation would begin in two years. Samiullah, a resident of Mazar-i-Sharif, expressed happiness over the investment of Ghazanfar Group and said it would help create jobs for common people. (Pajhwok)

(14) Effective Steps...

Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs regarding proper use of water and avoiding its wastage. (Pajhwok)

(15) Samangan Flood...

kilometres of canal from sands, damaged some parts of the road and destroyed standing crops on tens of acres. Rajab Ali Yousufi, head of the Natural Disaster Management Authority for Samangan, said the Sunday flood inflicted damage to 15 homes in the Zwandon valley of. In addition, standing crops, canals and roads also danged in the flood.

He said a team had been tasked to survey the losses and provide aid to the affected families. (Pajhwok)

(16) Efforts On to Free...

He did not name anyone but alleged that some government officials cooperated in the abduction of DABS engineers for the sake of money.

Governor Abdul Hai Namati also said efforts were underway for the release of Afghan and Indian engineers.

"We held meetings with some tribal elders for the release of engineers, they assured to talk with the Taliban to ensure their safe release of foreign engineers." He said.

Tribal elders tasked to negotiate the release of abducted engineers refused to talk to the media. The Taliban have also not spoken about the abduction of Afghan and Indian engineers. (Pajhwok)

(17) Taliban Ask...

The governor added he had ordered police to ensure the security of oil tankers.

Niamati acknowledged the Taliban had demanded 25,000 to 30,000 afghanis in tax from each tanker owner. Niamati denied telling traders to sort out the issue with the Taliban.

He said police were ready to cooperate with the business community and they should not pay the insurgents. The Taliban have not yet commented on the allegations. (Pajhwok)