

(1) Arg Reacts...

the capability of our security and defense forces," Atmar said. "First, we will talk with the leaders to accept our proposed plan and it should find a solution and then we will try to increase public awareness regarding the issue," Atmar said.

A caretaker government suggested by the candidates should be the supporter of peace talks, Atmar said.

Candidates Call for Caretaker Government

In a declaration issued on Monday, the candidates said that the continuation of the tenure of the incumbent government after May 22 is illegal and in contravention of the Constitution of Afghanistan.

Based on the declaration, the president and his deputies would lead the caretaker on condition that they refrain from running as candidates in the elections.

"The legal way is that the government transfers its authorities to a caretaker government," said Shahab Hakimi, a presidential candidate, who is member of the presidential candidates' council. (Tolo news)

(2) Beijing to Host...

University of Singapore, and member of Advisory Council of Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, said dialogue between civilizations helps to solve various problems of human survival and development, and is an important driving force for promoting world peace and development.

"In the 21st century, civilizations will learn from each other, so the best practices of one civilization will go to the other civilization, then the other civilization will share its best practices with other civilizations, too. So there's a process of fusion that can take place, so I hope that as a result of this Dialog of Asian Civilizations, there'll also be greater fusion of civilizations," he said. (Tolo news)

(3) Pentagon Curbs...

In Afghanistan, US military spokesman Colonel Dave Butler confirmed to Newsweek: "Resolute Support and US Forces Afghanistan request a reduction in visitors nearly every year."

Calling the request to reduce visitors a standard protocol during this time of year, he said military resources would be fully employed toward setting conditions for a political settlement. (Pajhwok)

(4) Turkmenistan...

targeted international economic assistance to Afghanistan, primarily through the involvement of Afghanistan in the implementation of large infrastructure projects in the energy and transport sectors.

Examples of this are the projects of laying power transmission lines and fiber-optic communications along the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) route, and the construction of railway lines from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan.

A large-scale project to lay gas pipeline to India and Pakistan for the supply of Turkmen gas is also connected to the territory of Afghanistan, where unstable situation has remained for a long time. Observers believe that the implementation of this project may contribute to the restoration of Afghanistan, as it will allow creating jobs and provide the country with guaranteed income from transit. (Trend)

(5) Women's Rights...

for our work but to focus on how to protect us," Zalma Kharooty, an Afghan female journalist, posted on Facebook. Afghanistan ranks near the bottom of global indices on gender equality, with forced marriages, honor killings and domestic violence prevalent nationwide, particularly in rural areas.

As U.S.-Taliban peace talks gain momentum, many women fear losing hard-earned freedoms since

U.S.-backed Afghan forces overthrew the austere Taliban in 2001. During their 1996-2001 rule, the Taliban barred women from working outside their homes and required them to be accompanied by a male relative. (globalnews)

(6) EU Warns...

government under prime minister Viktor Orban to demonise refugees and migrants, which it views as a national security threat.

The Budapest-based Hungarian Helsinki Committee last August had also documented cases in Hungary's transit zone, along the Serbian border, of people being denied food, sometimes for up to five days.

Despite promises by Hungarian authorities to start feeding the failed asylum seekers, the NGO documented another eight cases between February and April this year.

A total of twenty-one people have gone hungry in what the NGO describes as "starvation cases".

"Pending the enforcement of the expulsion, adults, unless they are pregnant or nursing women, are starved in detention," said the NGO.

Pressed on the issue last September, Orban's spokesperson Zoltan Kovacs took a defiant tone, telling reporters in Brussels that "we are not providing a free meal, free food for any illegal migrants".

Orban earlier this month toured the Hungarian transit zone and razor-wire border fencing with Italy's far-right deputy prime minister, Matteo Salvini.

The pair are ratcheting up the anti-migrant rhetoric ahead of the European Parliament elections at the end of this month. Salvini is hoping to increase the European Alliance of Peoples and Nations political group in the next parliament.

The move seeks to bridge an alliance against immigrants with other far-right leaders like France's Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders of the Netherlands, and Germany's AfD, among others.

Salvini's League party and his wider crusade against migrants has also helped spread the rise of Italian disinformation networks on Facebook.

The social media giant shut down 23 Italian Facebook pages, with over 2.46 million followers, for peddling hate against immigrants and Jews and spreading debunked anti-vaccine conspiracies.

Over a dozen of the pages supported the League party and its populist government coalition party, the Five-Star Movement. (Agencies)

(7) Afghan Taliban...

powers in the last century. The third super power that we are currently confronted with is also on the verge of defeat, inshallah (God willing). You will soon hear they also will withdraw (from Afghanistan) either of their own accord or they will be forced out," Stanekzai told the gathering.

Former US defense chief warning On Saturday, former U.S. Defense Chief Robert Gates said there is a "real risk" that if American troops withdraw from Afghanistan before the Afghan government is stable, the Taliban might retake control of the country.

Gates told CBS News that the Afghan insurgent group still wants to rule over the country. "The question is, can you negotiate an arrangement whereby the Taliban agrees to operate under the Afghan Constitution, becomes a part of the political process?" Gates, who served as the secretary of defense under President Barack Obama from 2006 to 2011, spoke after the U.S. announced it was transferring \$1.5 billion designated for the war in Afghanistan to build a border wall.

U.S. Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad last week tweeted that the sides are making "steady but slow progress on aspects of the

framework for ending the Afghan war." He said, however, that the current pace of talks isn't sufficient "when so much conflict rages and innocent people die."

"We need more and faster progress. Our proposal for all sides to reduce violence also remains on the table," he said. The Taliban's Stanekzai said, "We pray to God they (U.S.) withdraw in a manner that results in peace and stability in Afghanistan, and an Islamic system or Sharia is established in Afghanistan, and there is no further bloodshed among Afghans."

Mocking Ghani

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told VOA the internal gathering was organized to commemorate the day in April 1992 when Afghan Mujahideen (holy warriors) overthrew the Communist regime in Kabul.

Stanekzai criticized Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and compared him as well as other pro-government leaders with those who had supported Moscow during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. "The ill-fated Ghani did not participate in the jihad (holy resistance) against Russians but he still takes credit and says, 'I am an Afghan and we defeated Russians,'" Stanekzai said, taking note that Ghani lived outside Afghanistan throughout the Russian occupation of the country. Ghani returned to Kabul after the U.S.-led military coalition ousted the Taliban from power in 2001 for sheltering the al-Qaida network.

"You will see that tomorrow when, God willing, Americans are defeated the same Ashraf Ghani and the same [former president Hamid] Karzai, who are their [US] stooges and were brought to power, they will again take pride in claiming we are Afghans and we defeated the Americans," said the Taliban chief negotiator.

No mention of past CIA support Stanekzai did not mention Washington's support for the anti-Soviet Afghan resistance in his nearly hour-long speech.

The Central Intelligence Agency funded training camps that were set up in neighboring Pakistan for Afghan Mujahideen who were waging resistance against Soviet forces. The CIA also supplied modern weapons, including heat-seeking U.S. stinger missiles, assistance that observers believe played a crucial role in forcing Moscow to withdraw from Afghanistan.

The ongoing peace dialogue between Washington and the Taliban started nearly one year ago and both sides say they have prepared a preliminary draft agreement. The proposed document exclusively focuses on how and when U.S. troops will withdraw from Afghanistan in return for assurances the Taliban will not allow transnational terrorists to use Afghan soil for attacks against other countries.

Ambassador Khalilzad, however, has linked a final agreement to a comprehensive cease-fire by the Taliban and the insurgent group's participation in an intra-Afghan dialogue to permanently end decades of hostilities. The Afghan government has been excluded from the talks, a move that has angered Ghani.

The Taliban want Washington to agree to and announce a withdrawal plan. The insurgent group says it will reject cease-fire calls and formal intra-Afghan peace talks until all foreign troops leave the country. The insurgents have dismissed the Afghan government as a product of an "American occupation" and say that the administration has no decision-making authority. (VoA)

(8) Dabs Loses...

This comes as residents in various regions of Afghanistan including the southern province of Helmand, once a key Taliban stronghold in the south, said the insurgents were seen collecting electricity bills in many areas in the province. (Pajhwok)

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(9) Daudzai Discusses...

meeting German officials. The trip comes amid efforts for creating regional and international consensus on peace in Afghanistan.

To drum up regional support for stability in the war-torn country, US Special Envoy for Afghan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad also traveled to several counties recently. (Pajhwok)

(10) Putin Looks...

strategic leadership and direction of the two heads of state.

Wang told Putin that he and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier on Monday made adequate preparations for Xi's upcoming visit. (Xinhua)

(11) US Wants India...

for the emerging power. He believed that the THAAD and Patriots have been offered to India in the past don't meet "the full spectrum of the defense needs that we have."

US companies may offer any weapons systems to customers all around the world, but they are wary of doing technology transfer, Chaulia explained.

This doesn't look particularly attractive for New Delhi which is encouraging foreign vendors to produce their armaments on Indian soil as part of the 'Make in India' effort. Russia, for its part, has already localized production of critical weapons systems, be it the T-90 main battle tank or the newer-generation AK-203 assault rifle.

Unlike Turkey, which is a NATO member state, India doesn't even need to consider the option of buying both S-400 and THAAD to complement each other and keep Washington happy, the analyst offered. (RT)

(12) US Plans to Deploy...

military force against Tehran, even penning an op-ed in 2015 titled "Top Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran."

The proposal to send additional reinforcements comes amid accusations from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Tehran has been engaging in "an escalating series of threatening actions and statements in recent weeks." To counter the unspecified threat, the Pentagon has already deployed the USS 'Abraham Lincoln' carrier strike group and bomber task force, including B-52s, to the region.

The deployment came exactly a year after Washington unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), and renewed sanctions against the Islamic Republic's financial, oil and banking sectors. The US has also labeled Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards Corps a "terrorist organization," triggering a tit-for-tat response from Tehran.

Meanwhile, Iran said it will cancel part of its obligations under the nuclear agreement, and urged the European signatories to tackle Washington's pressure.

The US sabre rattling is "attempting to magnify the shadow of war," Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi explained on Sunday night, noting that American military buildup in the region is "theatrical and useless." (RT)

(13) Trump Says It...

to Moscow on Monday and instead stopped in Brussels to share information on "escalating" threats from Iran with European allies and NATO officials, the U.S. special representative for Iran said. (Reuters)

(14) UK Unemployment...

"Why would you invest large sums in new plant or machinery in such uncertain times, when you could hire an extra worker and get broadly the same result?"

Growth in average weekly earnings, including bonuses, meanwhile slowed to 3.2 percent in the three months to March, the ONS

added.

And they increased by only 1.3 percent when adjusted for inflation, down from 1.6 percent in the three months to February.

"This is unwelcome news for hopes that the consumer can keep spending at a robust rate over the summer and help the economy weather prolonged Brexit uncertainties and a challenging global economic environment," said EY ITEM Club economist Howard Archer. (AFP)

(15) US Targets \$300B...

The latest U.S. list of 3,805 product categories is a step toward carrying out Trump's May 5 threat to extend punitive 25% duties to all Chinese imports, the USTR said. It said a June 17 hearing would be held before Washington decides how to proceed.

The list "covers essentially all products" not already affected by punitive tariffs, the USTR said.

It includes laptop computers, saw blades, turbine parts, tuna and garlic. The USTR noted it excludes pharmaceuticals and rare earths minerals used in electronics and batteries. (AP)

(16) Sudanese Union...

It was not immediately clear what punishment he might face. Protest organizers say security forces killed around 100 demonstrators during the four months of rallies leading to al-Bashir's overthrow on April 11.

Al-Bashir is also wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes and genocide linked to the Darfur conflict in the 2000s, but Sudan's ruling military council has said it would not extradite him to the ICC at The Hague.

The Sudan Doctors Committee, which is part of the Sudanese Professionals Association that has been spearheading the protests since December, said the latest six fatalities included an army officer. The clashes took place in several locations across the country, including the ongoing sit-in area outside the military headquarters in the capital, Khartoum, the union said.

In Khartoum, the clashes erupted as the protesters were expanding their sit-in area and setting up barricades to block off major streets. The barricades were meant to keep up the pressure on the army generals as the protesters resumed negotiations with the military earlier on Monday on a transitional government, while also calling for more demonstrations nationwide.

The ruling military council confirmed the death of an army major and said three troops were wounded at the sit-in. (AP)

(17) UN Mission...

Mission on Myanmar.

Myanmar authorities have razed deserted Rohingya villages and members of the minority remaining in the country live in displacement camps and in fear of further military reprisals.

"Due to the gravity of the past and continuing violations, attention must be given to the political, economic and financial ties of the Myanmar military — to identify who and what should be targeted so we can cut off the money supply as a means of increasing the pressure and reducing the violence," Christopher Sidoti, a member of the mission, said in the statement.

The mission found that the military has committed atrocities against many ethnic groups living within Myanmar. It also faulted armed ethnic groups for committing human rights abuses.

Myanmar denies allegations of human rights violations in Rakhine, saying its security forces have not targeted civilians and have taken action only in response to attacks by Rohingya militants. (AP)

(18) Chinese FM Calls...

constructive role in denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, so as to achieve the security and economic development of the DRPK and the long-term stability of the peninsula, Wang said. (Xinhua)