

(1) Rouhani...

Constitution, Fazli added. The council, as the high legislative body of the country, will ultimately confirm the results of Iran's presidential election. On Saturday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei thanked the nation for "mass turnout" in the election on Friday. Some 56 million Iranians were eligible for voting, and over 60,000 ballot boxes had been prepared nationwide to receive the votes. On April 21, out of 1,636 registered candidates, six qualified to compete for the four-year presidential term, including three principalists, better known as conservatives, as well as two centrists and one reformist. (Xinhua)

(2) Afghanistan ...

Dunford, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff on Friday. "What I've done is I've gone to Afghanistan. I've met with (Afghan) President (Ashraf) Ghani. I have met with the NATO representatives and I've met with our commander in the field," he said. Mattis had also been in Brussels where he talked to counterparts to collect allied input. "That recommendation is being put together by the chairman and myself, and I expect it'll go to decision very, very soon. But, no, it has not been made yet," Mattis said in response to a question. (Pajhwok)

(3) Ghani to ...

Humayun Qayumi, and others. Ghani left Kabul just hours after U.S. President Donald Trump touched down in the kingdom, in his first foreign trip as president. On arrival in Riyadh, Trump was met at the airport by the Saudi king and later awarded the kingdom's highest civilian honor the gold King Abdulaziz al-Saud Medal. During Trump's two days in the Middle East kingdom, a weapons deal worth more than \$100 billion USD is set to be unveiled. Trump will spend most of the first day of his trip meeting with King Salman and other members of the royal family before an evening banquet. On Sunday, he will meet with Arab and Muslim leaders for the Arab Islamic American Summit, which will focus on combating extremism. (Tolonews)

(4) Survey, ...

in 2015. Officials at Ministry of Mines and Petroleum said that preparation is ongoing for the construction of the project. "Work on survey and design of the project is underway. International firms from TAPI Ltd led by Turkmenistan have been hired and based on our schedule it will be completed within next four or six months," said an official of TAPI project in Afghanistan, Haroon Zarif. The 1,735 kilometers (1,084 miles) pipeline will run more than 700 km across Herat, Farah, Nimruz, Helmand and Kandahar provinces of Afghanistan on its way to Pakistan and India. (ATN)

(5) Dostum ...

that has drawn attention to the culture of impunity that is hobbling Western-backed efforts to instill the rule of law in Afghanistan. Speculation is rife that he has sought temporary exile in Turkey in a bid to escape prosecution, with observers saying it could mark the end of his checkered political career in Afghanistan. But a spokesman for Dostum, Bashir Ahmad Tahyanj, insisted that he would return after visiting Turkey for "medical checkups and to visit his family". Dostum is accused of abducting rival Ahmad Ishchi last year during a game of Buzkashi -- a type of polo played with an animal carcass -- in northern Jowzjan province. Dostum, 63, allegedly kept Ishchi hostage in his private compound for five days, where he was said to be tortured and sodomised, an accusation that Dostum has denied. Nobody was arrested or indicted despite reports that medical evidence backed Ishchi's claims that he was abused. The country's attorney general launched an investigation into the allegations but Dostum evaded questioning by being holed up in his palace in central Kabul, guarded by his armed militiamen. Afghanistan's Western allies initially piled pressure on President Ashraf Ghani's government to prosecute Dostum, who has survived all previous allegations of abuse. But amid the public standoff it was clear the government favoured exile rather than a criminal trial against

Dostum, which could trigger violence from his Uzbek support base. The development highlights what human rights defenders call a sobering reality of Afghan politics -- some strongmen are simply too powerful to prosecute. "It's a stunning example of what has become standard practice in Afghanistan, not just for Dostum but for anyone in a position of power: having promised to deliver justice the government has shown itself ultimately unwilling to do so," said Patricia Gossman, Afghanistan researcher with Human Rights Watch. Despite his human rights record, Dostum was invited to join the National Unity Government in 2014 in a bid by Ghani to attract the support of his Uzbek constituency. (AFP)

(6) NATO Renews ...

Friday, the alliance and its partners noted the continued progress made by the Afghan security forces and institutions since assumption of full security responsibility. President Ashraf Ghani, Resolute Support Commander Gen. John Nicholson and the NATO Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan Cornelius Zimmermann attended via video conference. The meeting marked the completion of a process of periodic review of Resolute Support, renewing the commitment undertaken at the NATO Summit in Warsaw last year to sustain the mission as a conditions-based effort. They also affirmed their support to the ongoing force generation process to ensure that the mission was properly resourced, the alliance said in a statement. The participants took stock of efforts by the Afghan government to boost internal reforms and maintain momentum on stability, good governance, rule of law, regional cooperation and the Afghan-led peace process. (Pajhwok)

(7) Takhar ...

years ago, told Pajhwok Afghan News that her spirit behind joining the force was to serve the women. "Our many sisters face a lot of problems, if I was not a policewoman, I would not have been able to help them. Women come to the police headquarters, I help them and search them as well." She said she supported her family financially due to her job. She said policewomen besides security threats faced many other problems.

(8) Over 750 ...

ISIS-K Emir Hafiz Sayed Khan and his replacement, Abdul Hasib. They have also killed over a dozen of their top leadership. Since early March, they have killed more than 750 ISIS-K fighters, recovering territory so that displaced Afghans have been able to return to their homes. As Afghan and U.S. Special Forces make this progress, the full extent of ISIS-K barbarity is being revealed. Particularly heinous has been ISIS-K recruitment and training of child soldiers and kidnapping of young women who they force into marriage with their fighters. Some of the women forced into marriage have escaped as friendly operations progress. In addition to restoring territory to Afghan citizens, the operations have destroyed cave and tunnel complexes, command and control centers and logistics nodes. (Pajhwok)

(9) Govt. Blamed...

elections' safety and providing its budget. "The Independent Election Commission should assess the number of electoral sites which they consider in provinces. It should assess that whether voters will vote with old voter cards or with the new cards. And more importantly, it should assess that how they should decide on their local employees and how they will organize the date of the election," he said in a press conference on Saturday. Meanwhile, a number of electoral watchdog organizations said government and the IEC will be blamed for delay in elections if the polls are not held this year. "The commission wants to blame government. The IEC is happy with preparing the draft and they say they are waiting for government's approval. This issue affects the IEC's independence and meanwhile government uses this situation as a tool," said Yusuf Rasheed, CEO of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan. A number of MPs also criticized the delay in the parliamentary elections. "Election is the right which has been given to the people by the Constitution. Can the IEC divide the electoral sties in insecure areas? For instance in Bughran and Sangin (districts in Helmand)," said Abdul Rahim Ayubi, an MP. (Tolonews)

(10) ACCI Lays...

send us fortified foods if we want to import their goods, but we say that the Pakistani businessmen should bring their goods to Torkham and Chaman border crossings and then they should sell them to us because problems on the other side of the border affect Afghan traders," he said. Meanwhile, officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) said Afghanistan is no longer reliant on Pakistan markets and that Afghan businessmen have found better trading options with countries in the region. According to the ministry, Iran, China and Turkmenistan are proving to be solid markets for Afghan businessmen at the moment. "Many opportunities have been created to facilitate Afghanistan's trade with many other countries including Turkmenistan, Iran and China through Central Asia," said Mohammad Qurban Hajjo, acting deputy minister for commerce at the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. A number of analysts meanwhile called on government to provide better and standard trade opportunities for Afghan businessmen with the regional countries. They said using alternative options instead of Pakistan will give provide Afghans with more opportunities. "We must rely on our own capacities. Government should provide better security for northern provinces in order to make Pakistani and Tajikistani businessmen reliant on Afghanistani trade ways," said Shabir Bashiri, a political affairs analyst. According to the ACCI, much of the Pakistani imports have been replaced by products from other countries including Turkey, Iran and India. (Tolonews)

(11) New ...

of the president. Ten other high ranking officers were employed on 'precautionary' posts. Janan Barakzai has been appointed as first deputy interior minister, Murad Ali Murad as assistant security, Maj. Gen. Aminullah Karim as finance and administrative assistant, Maj. Gen. Abdul Khalil as counter-narcotics assistant. Former finance and administrative assistant Lt. Gen. Ikramuddin Yawar, counter-narcotics assistant

(12) Afghan Taliban...

on the highway linking the capital Kabul with the southern city of Kandahar, ramps up the Taliban's spring offensive and comes as U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis prepares to present recommendations to President Donald Trump on future troop levels in Afghanistan. In the north of the country, the Taliban has stepped up its operations and targeted Kunduz, a city that they have twice managed to seize for brief periods in the past. The Taliban have had a strong presence in the province of Ghazni for years, but provincial police chief Aminullah Amerkheil said the overnight attack from three directions was the fiercest launched by the insurgents. However, he said his men had held out. Hashim Zwak, the police chief of Waghaz district, was wounded in the hand during the fighting. He described how the militants drove a Humvee packed with explosives into the entrance of the district governor's compound and blew it up before other fighters tried to overrun the police defenders. "They put all their effort into it but they could not defeat us," Zwak told Reuters from a hospital in Ghazni city. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, however, that the fighters had gained control of Waghaz district, straddling the highway to the south of the city and fighting was continuing in other areas. He said several members of the security forces had been killed and many vehicles destroyed along with weapons and ammunition. The provincial police chief said the Taliban had suffered far heavier casualties, with 25 fighters killed, while only two members of the security forces died. "The Taliban put all their pressure on Afghan security forces to take control of at least one district but we fought well and pushed them back," Amerkheil said. (Reuters)

(13) Eshchi Rejects ...

asylum in return for control over all Afghan Turk schools in the country. However, Bashir Ahmad Tahyanj, a spokesman for Dostum, rejected these allegations and said the first vice president will return to the country within the next three weeks. "We assure the people of Afghanistan that they should not be concerned in this respect. Mr. vice president as an elected first vice president will be in Afghanistan and will be at the service of the people in the upcoming weeks," he said. Meanwhile, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman Shahussain Murtazawi confirmed Dostum had left the country and said it was for health reasons but that he would return soon. "You know that the first vice president he has a case at the judicial organizations and we hope that the fate of the case will be clear. For now, we all pray for his health as he has left the country for medical treatment and we pray that he will return soon," he said. (Tolonews)

(14) Hekmatyar, ...

could resolve their issues themselves. The two leaders stressed intra-Afghan talks for peace, saying the reconciliation process with the Taliban should also be conducted this way. (Pajhwok)

(15) Flour, Ghee ...

Haji Rahmatullah, a tea dealer in Kabul Mandavi, said a kilogram of Indonesian green tea cost 220afis and the same amount of African black tea 240afis, the same rates as of last week's. Ehsanullah, who owns a grocery store in Taimani neighborhood, sold a 50kg bag of Kazakhstan flour for 1,500afis and the same quantity of Pakistani sugar for 2,400afis and 24kg of Pakistani rice 2,200afis. He sold 16 liters of Khurshid ghee for 1,250afis, a kilogram of Indonesian green tea for 270afis and the same quantity of African black tea for 290afis -- higher than wholesale prices. Abdul Hadi, a worker at Wazirabad Fuel Station, said one liter of diesel cost 41afis and the same amount of petrol 44afis, no changes compare to the last week's prices. Ahmad Javed, a gas seller in the Sixth Taimani Road area, said the price of a kilogram of gas was 47afis. Haji Fawad Ahmad Salehzada, a jeweller in Timor Shahee area, said the price of one gram of the Russia gold increased from 1,800afis to 1,850afis while the price of the same quantity of Arabian variety stood stable at 2,300afis. According to moneychangers' union in Sara-i-Shahzada, one US dollar was accounted for 68.18afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 637afis against last week's 68.10afis and 638afis respectively. (Pajhwok)

(16) Taliban Leader...

recently arrived to Nad-e-Ali district from Kajaki and Musa Qala district to plan and coordinate a large attack on the security check posts, the statement said. The operations were launched based on the intelligence information available with the security forces regarding the planned attack, the statement said, adding that three more militants were killed during a separate operation conducted in Loy Bagh area of Nad-e-Ali district. Helmand is among the volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban insurgents are actively operating in its various districts and often carry out insurgency activities. The Taliban insurgents have been attempting to carry out large attacks as parts of their spring offensive launched earlier last month. The group vowed to carry out more attacks across the country, ignoring the calls and ongoing efforts to end the violence through reconciliation. (KP)

(17) Senior ...

during the operations. The operations are being conducted in the center of Laghman province and Pahlawan Baba, Qala-e-Najaran, Sarketaban, Qala-e-Fatullah, Noor Mohammad Khan Band, Mir Osman, Qala-e-Sufian, and Khas Harmal village of Alingar district, the officials said. The anti-government armed militant groups including the Taliban insurgents have not commented regarding the report so far. Laghman is among the relatively calm provinces in East of Afghanistan but the anti-government armed militant groups have increased their insurgency activities in some parts of the province during the recent years. (KP)

(18) 31 Taliban ...

commanders as Samiullah Dar-

wish, Qari Muhib, Nasir and Qari Mubarez. It claimed another two group leaders of Taliban, Qari Roohullah and Qadir, had been arrested and eight big and small villages cleared of insurgents. The statement claimed the government forces had so far suffered no casualties in the operation, but some officials said six security personnel had been killed and as many wounded. The governor's house statement said so far 46 insurgents had been killed and 20 others wounded during three days of the operation. Twenty five motorcycles, five pick up vehicles, one rocket launcher and artillery shells were confiscated by the security forces. Elsewhere, in southern Kandahar province security officials said seven militants were killed and eight others were wounded after they stormed security posts in Maroof and Arghistan districts last night. Four police were killed and as many wounded in the clashes in Maroof district, said Kandahar police spokesman Zia Durrani. Another five rebels were killed during a clash with police in Arghistan district, said Durrani. The clash erupted after a group of militants attacked police posts in the district's Narghal area. In southern Zabul province, an airstrike killed five militants including a commander in Sarkhano area of the provincial capital, Qalat, late on Friday. Zabul police spokesman Gul Islam Sayyal told Pajhwok Afghan News said a commander, Nangyalai, was killed along with his four friends in the airstrike. He also said one Taliban militant died in a blast caused by his own bomb in Nawbahar district of the province. The Taliban have so far said nothing about the government's latest claims. (Pajhwok)

(19) Not all Issues...

delegations were more mixed however. The head of the Syrian government delegation, Bashar al-Jaafari, said earlier Friday that none of the four baskets were discussed. (Xinhua)

(20) Trade Rep...

practices utilized by third-countries," it said. Lighthizer has in the past criticized China for what he described as unfair practices, although Trump has dropped the anti-China rhetoric of his election campaign. (Reuters)

(21) UN, U.S. ...

the height of double-dealing standards," he said. "The UNSC has kept mum about the U.S. test-fire of an ICBM which flew more than 6,000 kilometers across the ocean, even while crying out for 'denunciation' and 'sanctions' for ballistic rocket test-fires the DPRK carried out," Kim said. The DPRK tested a Hwangsong-12 ICBM May 14 which the council criticized in a press statement while the United States tested ICBMs April 26 and May 3 without criticism, the Pyongyang envoy said. "If the UNSC does not call the U.S. to account for its aggressive and provocative large-scale joint military exercises and ICBM launches, the DPRK will never recognize any UNSC 'resolution' taken over the DPRK's ballistic rocket launches but continue to disclose the absurdity of the UN 'sanction resolutions,'" Kim said. (Xinhua)

(22) Polish, German...

needs it can come to Poland and will be offered assistance, but I hope that no one will be ever forced to stay here," he added. The German president called Poland "the core of Europe", and said it was necessary for Europe to be united in order to overcome the European crisis. "It is very important now for 27 EU countries to be united, and Poland is needed to reach this goal," Steinmeier said. Duda also expressed hope that French President Emmanuel Macron would issue an invitation for a trilateral meeting of the Weimar Triangle, a cooperation formula between France, Germany and Poland. (Xinhua)

(23) Trump Renominates

same time as Dunford. He was previously the head of the military's transportation command, and from 2008 to 2011 he was assistant to the chairman and top military adviser to then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Under the U.S. legislation, the Joint Chiefs chairman, who commands no troops, is the senior military adviser to both the president and the secretary of defense. (Xinhua)