

(1) Russia Raises...

In recent years, Russia has emerged as an influential power broker in Afghanistan where it fought a disastrous war in the 1980s.

Russian officials have been mediating between feuding factions, and even spoke for lifting international sanctions against the Taliban.

The Taliban has waged bitter battles against the followers of the Khorasan Province, most often in eastern Nangarhar province but also in the north of Afghanistan. (AP)

(2) Balkh Commercial...

each ton of food is sold \$50 cheaper from the bazaar, for example a sack of flour is sold 200 afghanis cheaper from the bazaar price."

He said if the government also reduced taxes on exports in Ramadan, traders would also offer the same to people on discount. Trader Haji Khiruddin Mail told Pajhwok they wanted to assist people through their discounted rates in each ton of food items.

He said each trader has been trying to provide further facilities to people in the on-going holy month of Ramadan.

He said traders had promised to deliver such food-item to the governor's house and commerce department officials so the items were distributed equally to all parts of the city.

Haji Mail added the prices of flour and rice were not increased this Ramadan compared to the previous years.

Mohammad Sharif, a resident of Mazar-Sharif city, expressed his happiness over the offer in Ramadan and thanked traders for the initiative.

A number of other residents also expressed similar views and thanked traders for the discount. Meanwhile, deputy governor Mohammad Bashir Tawheedi also thanked traders for addressing people problems and bringing discount in food items. (Pajhwok)

(3) 3.5 Million...

Laurence Hart. "This is why IOM, with the financial support of the European Union, has been actively engaging in the creation of self-employment opportunities and private sector support in areas of high return, including Nangarhar."

Over the same six-year period, 3.5 million Afghans were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations or natural disasters. In 2016 and 2017 alone, an estimated over a million Afghans were displaced each year, based on IOM interviews.

"According to a recent UN report, 2018 also saw a record high in civilian casualties in Afghanistan - another key driver of displacement," Hart noted. Most people who have fled Afghanistan since 2012 went to neighboring Iran. Out of 2.3 million Afghans in total who left the country, 63 percent (1.4 million) went to Iran, 22 percent to Pakistan (500,000) and only 12 percent to Europe and Turkey (270,000). There is growing pressure on them to return.

"Given the already high levels of internal displacement in many areas of Afghanistan, the absorption capacities of many provinces are already overstretched. The potential mass return of Afghans in the second half of 2019 due to deteriorating protection space in host countries is a major concern for us," Hart added. (Tolo news)

(4) US President...

"But you should know: If you're responsible for the proposed ICC investigation of U.S. personnel in connection with the situation in Afghanistan, you should not assume you will still have or will get a visa or that you will be permitted to enter the United States," Pompeo warned. (Tolo news)

(5) Jailed for Killing...

Initially sentenced to life in prison, his term was cut to 20 years after a hearing in April 2018. Dallas-based attorney Colby Vokey hoped to get Miller pardoned.

In Maryland, the soldier is set to reunite with his two daughters. He hopes the military examines its rules of engagement. (Pajhwok)

(6) Chinese FM...

of shared future for mankind. Rahmon said Tajikistan is ready to further align its national development strategy by 2030 with the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, and to promote bilateral pragmatic cooperation in the economic and trade sector, agriculture, science and technology, humanities, infrastructure construction, among others.

He also expressed readiness for further joint work with China in international and regional affairs, in particular, in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism as well as transnational organized crime.

According to Wang, the two sides reached a consensus on promoting the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). China and Tajikistan are both members of the SCO and participants in the CICA. Wang noted that the two countries will support the SCO to play a more active role in maintaining regional security and stability as well as promoting common development and prosperity.

China firmly supports Tajikistan in holding the fifth summit of the CICA in June and promoting further development of cooperation within the framework of the mechanism, he said.

Wang also held talks with Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhridin on the same day, saying that bilateral relations are at their "best time in history." (Xinhua)

(7) Poor Quality...

He said he has repeatedly warned contractors to be careful about the quality of their work but the warning did not yield any results. Ahmadzai said it was their duty to observe implementation of all road construction projects in the province and take legal action against companies who violate standards.

Kandahar governor's spokesman, Aziz Ahmad Azizi said the governor after receiving complaints about Kandahar-Sping Boldak road has ordered all relevant organs to suspend companies which did not implement projects according to their contracts.

He called corruption in construction projects a major crime and said violators would be taken to justice.

This road construction project contract was awarded to two companies so each one would complete half of its part against 1.3 and 1.2 billion afghanis.

The budget of the project is paid by the Ministry of Public Works. (Pajhwok)

(8) ICC World Cup 2019...

BTV (all Bangladesh), SLRC (Sri Lanka) and Fox Network Group (China and South East Asia), Digi-

cel (Asia Pacific), Radio Television Afghanistan (Afghanistan) and Yupp TV (Continental Europe and Central Asia). (Agencies)

(9) 3 Years on...

having failed to properly design the project and deal with the problems created by locals.

He called the project important and said the entire landscape of Sar-i-Pul City would be changed with its implementation.

Individuals whose properties, shops and homes hamper the execution of the project offer different views.

Dr. Kamran, whose house comes in the way of the project, said he was ready for his home being demolished for the sake of the road scheme.

But Rahim, another resident of the locality, said he would not allow his house to be destroyed because the government would not compensate him. (Pajhwok)

(10) Shanahan, Pompeo...

"Once again it bears repeating, @potus is NOT setting up war with #Iran," Florida Republican Senator Rubio claimed in a tweet Monday. "Faced with steady, consistent & credible stream of information indicating serious threat from #IRGC proxy forces, he has positioned US military in the region to defend Americans & respond to any attack."

Democratic Representative Ruben Gallego, meanwhile, slammed Trump's anti-Iran policy reminding him that Iran can actually "defend itself fairly well."

"What I learned only made me more concerned that this administration is trying to create a situation that will get us into war," House Armed Services Committee member Democratic Representative Ruben Gallego said Sunday on MSNBC. "There's nothing that's, in terms of our security or anything that I saw, that's an existential threat to the security of the United States and even to our interests in the region. While there may be some security threats to them, it's nothing that would require us to actually move so many assets at that area and to threaten an open war with a country actually that can defend itself fairly well."

Iran has time and again asserted that it is not seeking war but stands ready to defend its interests in the region. (Press TV)

(11) Milestone Deal...

environmental compatibility, and the design and manufacturing of aeronautical products. It will help promote policy coordination and technological and people-to-people exchanges.

As a result of many rounds of consultations since August 2013, it is also expected to facilitate the trade of aircraft and related products. Among the measures is removing unnecessary procedural duplications in the evaluation and certification of aeronautical products to reduce cost.

"We believe the newly-signed accord will help establish more efficient, streamlined and standardized aircraft certification procedures and we look forward to the promulgation and implementation of the detailed regulations," said George Xu, CEO of Airbus China.

Moreover, the agreement serves as part of the joint efforts by China and the EU towards a higher level of civil aviation safety, especially after the crashes and the recent exposure of safety hazards of the U.S. Boeing 737 airliners.

"Today's agreements will boost the EU's trade in aircraft and related products, and ensure the

highest levels of air safety," commented Violeta Bulc, the EU commissioner for transport.

Under the agreement on certain aspects of air services signed Monday, all EU airlines are allowed to fly to China from any EU member state with a bilateral air services agreement with China.

"Cooperation, openness and adherence to the promise made by high-level leadership of both sides are delivered by the agreements," said Ambassador Zhang Ming, head of the Chinese mission to the EU.

The two agreements were signed in line with the consensus reached at the 21st China-EU leaders' meeting in April. They are believed to be able to tap into the potential of growth in the aviation sector of both sides.

The European aviation industry supports 5.1 million jobs and contributes 2.4 percent of the European gross domestic product, while China envisions a growing market of civil aviation as well as an emerging industry of aeronautical products, according to the five-year EU-China Aviation Partnership Project, which was initiated in 2015 by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

"The (Monday) agreements conform to the development needs of aeronautical industries in China and the EU ... and provide a legal basis for airlines operation of both sides," CAAC chief Feng Zhenglin told Xinhua. (Xinhua)

(12) Bomb-Carrying...

already on edge. The U.S. has deployed bombers and an aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf over still-undefined threats from Iran. In the drone attack, the Houthis' Al-Masirah satellite news channel said early Tuesday they targeted the airport in Najran with a Qasef-2K drone, striking an "arms depot." Najran, 840 kilometers (525 miles) southwest of Riyadh, lies on the Saudi-Yemen border and has repeatedly been targeted by the Iran-allied Houthis.

A statement earlier on the state-run Saudi Press Agency quoted Saudi-led coalition spokesman Col. Turki al-Maliki as saying the Houthis "had tried to target" a civilian site in Najran, without elaborating.

Al-Maliki warned there would be a "strong deterrent" to such attacks and described the Houthis as the "terrorist militias of Iran." Similar Houthi attacks in the past have sparked rounds of Saudi-led airstrikes on Yemen, which have been widely criticized internationally for killing civilians. (AP)

(13) Brexit Shifts...

Deputy First Minister Mark Durkan as a candidate to run in the Dublin constituency in this week's European elections.

"The unity debate has gained legs in the context of Brexit," Durkan, a former leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), one of Northern Ireland's two main pro-unity parties, told Reuters while campaigning in the Irish capital.

In the 2016 Brexit referendum, nearly 56% of voters in Northern Ireland voted to stay in the EU but the province will leave when the rest of Britain departs -- on a date that has not yet been set. Ireland, which won independence from Britain a century ago and joined the EU in 1973, will remain in the bloc as its most committed member, according to recent polling.

Opinion polls in Northern Ireland have for many years shown insufficient support for reunification,

but politicians and political analysts point to a growing number of factors that could push public sentiment in the direction of reunification.

The first is the possibility that Brexit will lead to a "hard border" between Northern Ireland and Ireland, meaning the re-emergence of checks on goods and a potential risk to two decades of delicate peace in the province -- a prospect that alarms many people both north and south of the border.

Another is the economic and political situation. Recent business surveys suggest that despite record low unemployment, Northern Ireland's economy is stalling, partly because of uncertainty over Brexit. The province's devolved government, created under a power-sharing agreement in 1998, collapsed more than two years ago. (Reuters)

(14) Spain: Jailed...

relations Raúl Romeva was ferried to the Senate from a jail some 40 kilometers outside of Madrid. The Supreme Court has allowed them to attend the opening sessions in Madrid but they are likely to be barred from future meetings by the chambers' governing bodies elected on Tuesday.

Dressed in suits and exchanging embraces and greetings with other lawmakers, Junqueras and the three others took seats in the Congress of Deputies among political opponents, including two far-right Vox party deputies who are also prosecutors in their ongoing trial for rebellion and other charges that could land them in prison for decades.

Vox is the first parliamentary party that openly espouses Spanish nationalism since dictator Gen. Francisco Franco died in 1975. It wants to use its 24 seats among the 350 lower house lawmakers to propose legal reforms on abortion, violence against women and migration.

The eruption of Vox in the late April election split the right-wing vote into three groups, which together fell short of the 176 majority. As a result, competition for the leadership of the opposition has intensified between two parties -- the once-dominant conservative Popular Party and the center-right Citizens.

The Socialists were the leading party in the election with 123 seats. But with Citizens ruling out any pacts to support a Socialist administration, Sánchez's efforts to form a government are centered on the anti-austerity Unidas Podemos, which holds 42 seats, and some other smaller groups. (AP)

(15) Hong Kong...

requests to countries with no existing extradition treaties, including places like Taiwan, and crucially, mainland China.

Taiwan has said the bill would extend China's reach into Hong Kong, putting at risk any Taiwanese who pass through the city. Criticism has also poured in from the business, legal, media and diplomatic communities in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government insists the extradition law has safeguards to protect human rights, including the need for all extradition requests to be approved by a local court.

During the past week, Beijing has hardened its stance, with senior officials saying the law was urgently needed, though Lam said the initial push for the law had come from her government. (Reuters)