

**(1) Asia-Pacific Not...**

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Armida Alisjahbana called for urgent action to reverse these negative trends. "I hope this report will contribute to targeting our efforts to accelerate progress towards all Goals and to strengthen the region's commitment to improving the quality of data and statistics essential to measuring progress," she said.

Many SDG targets related to the environment and natural resources are registering negative trends. Hazardous waste generation, the reduction in forest areas and the permanent water body extent are the three SDG indicators which are predicted to regress the most by 2030, compared to 2015.

The SDG Progress Report shows major differences in progress between the subregions of Asia and the Pacific which have recorded different successes and face different challenges. Each subregion needs to reverse existing trends for at least three Goals. For example, East and North-East Asia is regressing in sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), climate action (SDG13) and life on land (SDG15). South-East Asia has moved backwards on SDG8, SDG13 and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16).

Meanwhile, South and South-West Asia is moving in the wrong direction on SDG6, SDG12 and SDG13. Since 2000, there has been a decline on gender equality (SDG5), SDG8 and SDG11 in North and Central Asia. The Pacific subregion has regressed on zero hunger (SDG2), SDG8, life below water (SDG14) and SDG16.

The lack of reliable data across all Goals and in all subregions is one of the Asia and the Pacific's biggest challenges. Despite a significant increase in the availability of SDG indicators since 2017, data gaps remain for two thirds of the global SDG indicators. Nearly one-quarter of all SDG targets lacking evidence relate to the environment.

According to the report, there is scope for the region to make greater use of alternative data sources to complement traditional sources such as surveys and build a more accurate picture of progress towards the SDGs. It also calls for Asia and the Pacific to strengthen its global partnerships and means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG17). Progress towards this Goal is necessary to ensure the region has the means to finance, target and implement policy solutions. Failing to do so could jeopardise the achievement of all other Goals. (ESCAP news)

**(2) 'Education Under...**

from their previous opposition to all forms of girls' education, they have faced regular accusations of shutting down schools run in a way they do not approve.

UNICEF said the use of school buildings as voter centres during last year's parliamentary election may have been a factor behind the rise in attacks.

Afghanistan has a young and fast-growing population but about 3.7 million children, or nearly half of all school-age children, are not in formal education, UNICEF said. (Reuters)

**(3) Kandahar-Khakrez...**

had been closed by the Taliban and Afghan forces did not allow people to travel on subways, he said.

"If the road was not reopened at this stage, people of the district would have faced with severe drought and poverty", he added.

Noor Ahmad, another resident of the district, was happy about reopening of the road and said some people were forced to shift their houses to Kandahar city due to pressures from the Taliban.

He asked local security officials to take effective steps for protecting the road against any threats and not let insurgents shut it again.

The Taliban had said they closed the road only for Afghan forces.

Khakrez district where Taliban are partially active is located 60 kilometers north of Kandahar city. (Pajhwok)

**(4) Taliban Say...**

Mohammad Karim Khalili, head of the High Peace Council, the main body charged with pursuing peace efforts, said dozens of people were being killed in fighting every day and it was time for a "dignified and just mechanism" to end the bloodshed.

Taliban officials have been talking to U.S. diplomats for months about the terms of a withdrawal of more than 23,000 U.S. and NATO coalition troops from Afghanistan and have reached a draft agreement on some issues but no new date for the next round of talks has been set and many obstacles remain. Chief among these is the Taliban refusal to deal directly with President Ashraf Ghani's Western-backed government in Kabul, which they dismiss as a "puppet" regime.

Meetings between the Taliban delegation and political figures not formally associated with the government have been seen as a way of preparing the way for full negotiations later. But those contacts are regarded with deep suspicion by many Afghan officials who see them as undermining the legitimacy of the government while reinforcing the position of the Taliban.

The group of politicians attending the ceremony to mark the centenary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Russia included many of Ghani's most powerful political adversaries.

Atta Mohammad Noor, the former governor of the northern province of Balkh and a leader of the mainly ethnic Tajik Jamiat-e Islami party, said it was in the interests of all sides to establish a good understanding.

"We want to have good relations with the Taliban and we expect peace from them," he said.

However, the presidential election in September is expected to put Afghanistan's political system under heavy strain following bitterly disputed parliamentary elections last year that drew widespread accusations of cheating. (Reuters)

**(5) Afghanistan...**

joint investments on it like joint ventures regarding the Afghan shipping route," said Imam Mohammad Warimach, deputy minister of transport.

This comes at a time that the Afghan traders are preparing to send the second shipment of products to the Indian markets via Chabahar Port. (Tolo news)

**(6) Afghan Forces...**

ability to fight against the Afghan defense and security forces. And meanwhile, the Alfta offensive of the enemy has failed," he added.

He said they have many plans on hand to maintain the security of the district. (Tolo news)

**(7) Rashid Khan Puts...**

took 43 wickets in 16 ODIs in 2017, second only to Pakistan's Hasan Ali, before topping the 2018 charts with 48 scalps in 20 matches.

The bowler achieved the feat of being the fastest to 100 ODI wickets, reaching the landmark in 44 matches, beating Australian paceman Mitchell Starc's record by an eight-match margin. Afghanistan coach Phil Simmons acknowledges Rashid's importance as a bowler.

"Rashid... has got the mind of a 30-year-old. He knows exactly what is expected of him," Simmons said.

Former captain Asghar Afghan, who was recently controversially replaced as skipper by Gulbadin Naib, made Rashid his go-to bowler. He took 10 wickets -- joint highest with India's Kuldeep Yadav and Bangladesh's Mustafizur Rahman in the 2018 Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

"Rashid is our main bowler and he will be an asset in the World Cup, a

true game changer and he knows his responsibilities," Asghar said after the Asia Cup. "We have sounded warning bells for teams in the World Cup."

Rashid is confident he can make the difference for Afghanistan.

"To be the best you need to believe in your skills," he said. "How we played in the Asia Cup was totally different and we showed that we can beat any side.

"The only thing is to believe in your skills. Just to be relaxed in big matches and enjoy your game, that's how we should be in the World Cup." (AFP)

**(8) As Shanahan...**

Karlin said it was not just conflict with Iran that would distract the Pentagon from its own strategy, but that planning itself can consume resources.

A U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Pentagon leadership was spending time discussing the question of what a large-scale conflict with Iran could mean for the focus on China and Russia.

The official said the hope was that the deterrence measures being used by the Pentagon - sending aircraft and ships to the region - would be enough to stave off a major conflict with Iran. U.S. allies in Asia, as well as China, are highly sensitive to the degree of American focus on their region, said Abraham Denmark, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia.

"They watch very closely our rhetoric, investments, our deployments toward any area outside of Asia, looking and raising questions about the sustainability of American commitment to Asia," said Denmark, currently with the Woodrow Wilson Center think-tank. (Reuters)

**(9) Energy Watchdog...**

has remained constant at 36 percent. As more of the world's 452 nuclear reactors close their doors, expanding the production of other renewables to make up the difference would be "hugely expensive," requiring five times current investment levels. Such a paradigm shift would encounter "public resistance" and require "major power grid investment," according to the IEA.

Compared to building new wind and solar facilities, upgrading existing reactors is cheap, according to IEA Energy Markets head Keisuke Sadamori - though "cheap" is admittedly relative, with reactor life extension costing \$500 million to \$1 billion per gigawatt capacity. The US has extended some of its reactors' lifespans from 40 to 60 years, and France is looking to follow suit.

While nuclear is certainly not most people's first thought when they hear "clean energy," IEA director Fatih Birol said on a webcast that it is the only way to bridge the gap between current energy usage and global sustainability goals. He added that the IEA is not asking countries that have done away with nuclear power entirely to restart their programs - only for countries with operational reactors to invest in that industry. (RT)

**(10) Indian Military...**

Rawat said over the weekend. "Some kinds of radar cannot see through clouds because of the manner in which it is operating. Sometimes we can, sometimes we can't."

Critics, however, immediately dismissed the explanation as ridiculous, claiming that any advanced military radar features all-weather capabilities and doesn't stop working on cloudy days - despite the fact that in higher frequency radars, accuracy can indeed be affected by weather conditions. (RT)

**(11) Trump Expects...**

The Kaga and the Izumo are the biggest aircraft carriers Japan has operated since its wartime defeat, but its Self Defence Forces designate them as destroyers, as constitutional curbs forbid possession of weapons that could

be used to attack other countries.

Trump is winding up a four-day state visit meant to underscore the U.S.-Japan alliance, but shadowed by friction over Tokyo's big trade surplus with America.

On Monday he told a news conference that Washington supported Japan's efforts to improve its defense capability and touted Tokyo's purchases of American military equipment.

Japan last year unveiled a plan to buy 45 more F-35 stealth fighters, including some B variants, worth about \$4 billion, adding to the 42 jets it has already ordered.

Japan says it eventually wants to field a force of around 150 of the advanced fighter jets, as it tries to keep ahead of China's advances in military technology.

"This purchase would give Japan the largest fleet of F-35s of any of our allies," Trump said on the Kaga, docked at the Yokosuka naval base near Tokyo.

The base is the headquarters of the Japanese fleet and also the home port of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. (Reuters)

**(12) Taiwan Lands...**

Beyond that, he faces the risk of Israeli President Reuven Rivlin opting to give the task of forming a new government to someone other than him.

Late Monday and overnight, Israel's parliament took its first steps toward dissolving itself and holding new elections. Two further votes are needed to finalise it.

The prime minister has sought to pile pressure on Lieberman, whose nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party's five seats are crucial to the coalition Netanyahu wants to form, but he has refused to back down.

On Monday night, Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party called on its parliament members to attack Lieberman.

The dispute hinges on Lieberman's demand that legislation he supports aimed at having ultra-Orthodox Jews perform mandatory military service like other Jewish Israelis be approved without changes.

The issue is highly sensitive in Israel and the legislation is opposed by ultra-Orthodox parties, who control 16 seats in parliament and are set to become a key member of Netanyahu's coalition.

"We are not looking to bring down Netanyahu and we are not looking for an alternative candidate, but we will not give up our principles and promises to the citizens of the state of Israel," Lieberman wrote on his Facebook page on Tuesday.

Netanyahu said in an address late Monday that Lieberman was being unreasonable and that there was "no reason to drag the country to unnecessary elections that will cost a fortune and paralyse us all for another half a year." (AFP)

**(13) Satellite Images...**

Chief Security Minister Wiranto, State Intelligence Agency chief Budi Gunawan, Widodo's intelligence and security advisor Gories Mere and cabinet minister Luhut Pandjaitan were the assassination targets, according to police.

"The plot to assassinate national figures was meant to create fear," Wiranto, who goes by one name, told a press briefing Tuesday.

Authorities -- who said Widodo was not a target -- did not reveal when the alleged plot was to have been carried out.

Last week's protests were sparked by official election results that showed Widodo easily beat rival Prabowo Subianto, a retired general who has launched a court challenge over claims that the April 17 poll was rigged against him.

Various groups converged on central Jakarta, including Subianto supporters and hardline Islamic militants who wanted to spark chaos by setting off bombs during the protests, authorities have claimed.

Also Tuesday, police said they had arrested 10 people for spreading fake news and hoaxes about the riots, which is a crime under Indonesia's electronic information law. (AFP)

**(14) Ten Contenders...**

agreement while still trying to negotiate a better deal than the one May signed.

Britain must "calmly demonstrate unflinching resolve to leave when the extension to negotiations ends in October -- at the latest", Raab wrote in The Mail on Sunday newspaper.

-- ANDREA LEADSOM

Leadsom stole a march on her rivals by quitting her position as leader of the House of Commons last week, hastening the prime minister's demise and staking out her pro-Brexit credentials.

The 56-year-old got down to the final two in the 2016 leadership race, but pulled out before the decision was handed over to party members, with whom she was popular, after coming under fire for saying that being a mother would give her an advantage as prime minister over the childless May.

- No to no-deal in October -

-- JEREMY HUNT

The foreign secretary supported remaining in the European Union in the 2016 referendum but has switched since then.

A former businessman who speaks fluent Japanese, he is a resilient politician, having headed up the National Health Service for six years during a funding crisis.

The 52-year-old has said he will push hard for a new deal with Brussels without taking the possibility of a no-deal outcome off the table.

- Against no-deal -

-- MATT HANCOCK

The 40-year-old health secretary is one of the party's rising stars, a moderate who is widely seen as competent at his job and skillful at handling the media.

He is one of several ministers who opposed Brexit during the 2016 referendum before switching sides and defending the withdrawal agreement May struck with the EU.

He entered government in 2013 and has moved up the ladder quickly.

-- RORY STEWART

The international development secretary, 46, is a former Foreign Office official who served in the coalition administration in Iraq following the US-led invasion in 2003. Says no-deal policy would be "damaging".

- Yet to say -

-- MICHAEL GOVE

Brexit campaigner Gove initially supported Johnson's leadership bid in 2016. His last-minute decision to enter the race himself caused both men to lose out to May.

After a year in the political wilderness, he was appointed environment minister in 2017 and has stayed in the headlines with a series of eco-friendly policy announcements.

The cerebral 51-year-old is among the most ardent eurosceptics left in May's government but is seen as a possible unifying figure between the two wings of the party.

-- SAJID JAVID

A former investment banker and the son of a Pakistani immigrant bus driver, Javid, 49, wants to be the face of a modern, multicultural and meritocratic Britain.

On the economically liberal wing of the Conservative Party, Javid voted for Britain to stay in the EU in 2016 but has since become an advocate of Brexit.

-- KIT MALTHOUSE

A former deputy London mayor to Johnson, the 52-year-old is running as a Brexit unity candidate, having headed up the so-called Malthouse Compromise strategy designed to keep the party together and get a deal over the line. (AFP)