

(1) Danish Discusses...

Giles Lever said that media forms the foundation of democracy in a country. "A strong, free, vibrant professional and diverse media is a cornerstone of a democracy," said Lever. He also reiterated Britain's longstanding support to the media in Afghanistan. "Unfortunately everyday journalists in Afghanistan face threats, intimidation and worse as they go about their professional duties as they try to bring the story of what is really happening in this country to the people of Afghanistan and to the wider international audience. We as the British government will continue to do what we can to build the capacity of the media in Afghanistan," added Lever. According to media organizations, at least 14 journalists were killed in Afghanistan since start of the current year. They said that if cases of violence against journalists do not stop, this could endanger the freedom of press in the country in the future. (Tolo news)

(2) Afghan Government...

As of September, it said the government controlled or influenced territory with about 65 percent of the population, stable since October 2017, after a year of heavy fighting in Farah and Ghazni as well as other provinces like Faryab and Baghlan in the north.

However, it reported that only 55.5 percent of the total 407 districts were under government control or influence - the lowest level since SIGAR began tracking district control in 2015.

"While the districts, territory, and population under insurgent control or influence also decreased slightly, the districts, territory, and population 'contested' - meaning under neither Afghan government nor insurgent control or influence - increased," it said. Six months before presidential elections, the figures are a sign of the degraded security situation in Afghanistan, even as the US special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, has met Taliban officials to map out possible peace talks.

As the Taliban have kept up pressure on the government, SIGAR quoted the Resolute Support mission as saying the average number of casualties among Afghan security forces between May 1 and October 1 was "the greatest it has ever been during like periods".

The Afghan government no longer releases exact casualty figures but this month General Joseph Votel, head of US Central Command, said Afghan casualties were increasing from last year and were an issue "we are paying very, very close attention to".

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which has documented civilian casualties in Afghanistan since 2009, said in its latest October report that there were 8,050 civilian casualties during the first nine months of the year, including 313 deaths and 336 injuries caused by US and Afghan air attacks.

The Taliban, who were removed from power by US-led forces in 2001, has been waging a bloody armed rebellion to defeat the Western-backed government in Kabul. (Aljazeera)

(3) We're Going...

the time to start working through the political piece of this conflict."

Speaking from the Resolute Support headquarters building in Kabul, Miller said he knew early on that he needed to turn the tables on the Taliban and go after them.

"We are more in an offensive mindset and don't wait for the Taliban to come and hit [us]," he said. "So that was an adjustment that we made early on. We needed to because of the amount of casualties that were being absorbed."

Afghan Security Forces suffered 1,000 casualties in August and September, according to the Pentagon.

Miller has eliminated layers of approval for the troops advising the Afghans, giving them the authority to make decisions and move quickly around the battlefield as the need arises, and moving troops and equipment to areas where they can advise and empower the Afghan military and police in their fight against the Taliban.

These expeditionary advisory teams are intended to move to areas where they can join up with reliable partners, specific Afghan forces who the US and NATO leaders are confident have stronger capabilities and can take on the Taliban. The US advisers can bring overhead surveillance, fire support, and medevac capabilities with them. (Tolo news)

(4) President Ghani...

"The elections must produce a leader with a mandate to move Afghanistan forward, put an end to the inherited crises of the last 39 years," Ghani said as quoted by Bloomberg.

According to Bloomberg, Ghani said 40 percent of Afghans live below the poverty line and that job creation and the development of labor-intensive industries were vital to the country's future.

This comes after political parties announced that discussions are ongoing

within three big circles, between political parties and movements, and with President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and former president Hamid Karzai on introducing candidates for presidential elections.

The parties said the final decision will be announced next week.

The parties also said that they will continue their efforts to nominate strong candidates for the elections in order to pull the country out of its current crisis.

The discussions are ongoing under the Council for Protection and Stability in Afghanistan (CPSA), the Grand National Assembly, and Hizb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

According to the parties, Ghani, Abdullah, former national security adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Mohammad Umer Daudzai, a member of the CPSA leadership, and former NDS chief Rahmatullah Nabil are preparing to run for president. The parties said they are discussing the issue of whether they will support one of these possible candidates or whether they will introduce another person as their candidate. (Tolo news)

(5) MoPH's Maternal...

infants - including a log for records of vaccinations, which serve as de facto birth certificates.

They also provide information for mothers about pregnancy, delivery, parenting and birth spacing.

These handbooks were well received by both health care providers and mothers, and the retention rate of these handbooks in the pilot areas was 99.5% among families.

According to 2018 United Nations estimates, Afghanistan has witnessed about a 50 percent reduction in maternal deaths between 1990 and 2017. Child mortality has decreased by 62 percent. Despite these achievements, Afghan mothers' and children's mortality remains among the highest in the region. The introduction of the handbook is vital at this time and will play a role in reduction of maternal and newborn deaths in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(6) UNESCO Releases...

On journalists' protection, the reports says, Afghanistan reported providing support through national security forces.

The report also analyzes the status of judicial enquiries of the killings recorded by UNESCO since 2006, based on information made available to UNESCO by Member States.

Three regions recorded the highest numbers of killings in 2016-2017: Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific. In 2017, killings in Asia and the Pacific surpassed those that occurred in the Arab States. In both years, less than 10% of overall killings took place in Africa, Western Europe and North America, and Central and Eastern Europe, respectively, the report said.

In 2017, UNESCO recorded the highest number of killed women journalists (11 victims) since the organization started reporting on killings of journalists in 2006, the report said. Men continue to represent an overwhelming majority (86% in 2017) of victims of fatal attacks against journalists.

The report says that in 2017, local journalists represented 90% of all killed journalists and in 2016, 94%. In both years, less than one in 10 of the journalists killed was an international reporter. Of the 14 foreign victims in 2016-2017, half were killed in countries experiencing conflict.

Compared to media staff, freelance journalists are widely considered more vulnerable, since they often lack adequate protection and support from the media organization(s) they are working with. Over the two-year period, 34 out of 182 journalists killed were freelancers, accounting for 19% of all fatalities, the report says.

The report says that in 2017 for the first time in recent years, more journalists (55%) were killed in countries with no armed conflict than in countries experiencing armed conflicts. This trend may possibly be explained by the absence of new armed conflicts and less journalists reporting from long-running conflict areas.

While in the last four years the response rate by Member States had been steadily increasing, from 27% in 2014 to a peak of 74% in 2017; 2018 was marked by a drop in the response rate, with only 64% of Member States providing a reply.

Of the 1010 cases condemned by the Director-General between 2006 and 2017, 115 cases were resolved according to the information provided by the national authorities of the country, the report says, adding that this represents an overall resolution rate of 11%. (Tolo news)

(7) Afghan Forces...

over districts, population, and territory this quarter", the agency said.

As of September, it said the government controlled or influenced territory with about 65 percent of the population, stable since October 2017, after a year of heavy

fighting in Farah and Ghazni as well as other provinces like Faryab and Baghlan in the north.

However, it reported only 55.5 percent of the total 407 districts were under government control or influence, the lowest level since SIGAR began tracking district control in 2015.

"While the districts, territory, and population under insurgent control or influence also decreased slightly, the districts, territory, and population 'contested' - meaning under neither Afghan government nor insurgent control or influence - increased," it said.

Six months before presidential elections, the figures are a sign of the degraded security situation in Afghanistan, even as the U.S. special envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, has met Taliban officials to map out possible peace talks.

As the Taliban have kept up pressure on the government, SIGAR quoted the Resolute Support mission as saying the average number of casualties among Afghan security forces between May 1 and Oct. 1 was "the greatest it has ever been during like periods".

The Afghan government no longer releases exact casualty figures but this month General Joseph Votel, head of U.S. Central Command, said Afghan casualties were increasing from last year and were an issue "we are paying very, very close attention to".

On Sept. 24, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said that while he could not confirm reports that about 500 police and soldiers had been killed and 700 wounded over the previous month, the figures "sound about right".

The Taliban are fighting to expel foreign forces and defeat the Western-backed government in Kabul. (Reuters)

(8) China, Pakistan...

cooperation of CPEC project another platform for a better regional cooperation or connectivity. This economic development of Pakistan in fact is an opportunity for the whole up-gradation of the regional economic development," says Chinese Ambassador to Islamabad, Yao Jing.

During the past four years CPEC, the flagship and fastest growing project of President Xi Jinping's global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has created more than 75,000 local jobs and has helped Pakistan increase its economic growth rate from more than three percent to 5.8 percent in 2017. The construction of power plants has almost ended the crippling electricity crisis in the country.

"Time has come" Officials say the second phase of CPEC will be launched in coming weeks to construct special economic zones to help Pakistan advance and revive industrial development.

Officials tell VOA, China could initially propose capacity building training programs for Afghans and funding for linking a Pakistani motorway to Afghanistan's border cities of Jalalabad and Kandahar. The Chinese are helping Pakistan build the motorway linking the northwestern border city of Peshawar to the southern port of Karachi, which Kabul uses for its international trade. The proposed motorway would provide a much shorter route for Afghanistan to the Chinese-operated port of Gwadar, known as the gateway to CPEC.

Mushahid Hussain, head of the Pakistani Senate's foreign affairs committee, says despite U.S.-led foreign skepticism and suspicions about CPEC, all 22 "early harvest" projects under the initiative have been successfully completed or are on route to completion.

"Now the time has come for CPEC to move beyond Pakistan and China, and the natural extension or expansion of CPEC should be towards Afghanistan because Afghanistan has a border with Pakistan and China and these three countries have a natural correlation in terms of economy, culture and geography," Hussain told VOA.

He said later this month in Islamabad an unofficial trilateral think tanks conference of China, Afghanistan and Pakistan will also discuss how to include Kabul into CPEC.

Beijing initiated official trilateral dialogue with Afghanistan and Pakistan last year in an effort to ease regional tensions and promote a peaceful settlement to the Afghan war.

"China's role is extremely important ... in bringing Pakistan and Afghanistan together because China has very strong relations with Pakistan. China is one country which has no extra baggage in Afghanistan," Hussain noted. BRI, CPEC skepticism

Both Chinese and Pakistani officials dismiss as "misplaced and irrelevant" criticism that CPEC and the BRI initiative is a debt trap for developing nations and an effort to increase Beijing's political influence in the region.

Speaking at the Chinese embassy with CPEC project directors, Ambassador Jing

said, "There is a kind of force in the world who do not want to see a rising China, who don't want to see a prospering China. Naturally, there are some forces who don't want to see this kind of a partnership between China and Pakistan. We should be alert against these kind of negative forces or elements."

Islamabad and Beijing have also rejected reported concerns that Pakistan's economic woes are forcing Prime Minister Imran Khan's government to slow down or revisit CPEC projects.

Jing said the investments under the multi-billion dollar CPEC is a "new demonstration of China's confidence and trust" in Pakistan.

Responding to CPEC critics, senior Pakistani Cabinet minister Shireen Mazari has stated the government is committed to the project and pushing for involving neighboring countries to make Pakistan a hub for regional development

CPEC is estimated to bring more than \$62 billion in Chinese investment to Pakistan during the next decade.

Jing says Khan's first official visit to China this week will take the friendship between the two countries to "new heights." He added that agreements expected to be signed during the visit would help ease the bilateral trade-deficit. Beijing also plans to announce an unspecified financial "grant" for Pakistan to help it deal with a looming balance of payments crisis. "We want to invest more in Pakistan and buy more from Pakistan. China's capital, China's technology and also China's huge market could offer a bigger contribution towards Pakistan's future development," said the Chinese ambassador. (VoA)

(9) 20 Taliban...

able so far to remove their dead," he said. He said the two injured policemen were under treatment and they were in stable condition.

The Taliban also confirmed the clashes. Their spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said 20 police, including a local police commander Muhiuddin, were killed in the conflict. (Pajhwok)

(10) 273 Civilians...

October and most of the human losses caused in eastern Nangarhar province where 61 civilians were killed and 67 others wounded.

Most of the casualties in Nangarhar caused during election campaigns and Afghan forces night raids, the statement said, adding Helmand was the second province with highest casualties caused last month.

In Helmand, 35 people were killed and 45 others wounded in attacks on election campaign and Afghan forces operations. Based on CPAG casualties figures from 23 provinces of the country, 273 people were killed and 550 others wounded in all security incidents happened in October.

The source added 70 or most of the casualties children suffered this year were in October when 40 children were killed and 30 others injured, which shows trifold minors fatalities compared to previous month of September.

According to the statement, 128 people including children and women suffered casualties in Afghan forces night raids as 83 people were killed and 45 others wounded.

The rest of other casualties happened in suicide attacks, roadside bombs, mortar attacks and clashes between Afghan forces and the Taliban.

In September, 590 civilians had suffered casualties as 240 people were killed and 351 others wounded, the source said. (Pajhwok)

(11) Russia Reaches...

senior Afghan officials said the government was unhappy that Moscow was pressing ahead with plans for talks. "We requested Russia to cancel the summit because talking to the Taliban at multiple forums will further complicate the peace process backed by the U.S., but they rejected the request," said a senior Afghan official who has been holding discussions with Russia.

Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday that she hoped to be able to announce details of the conference "in the coming days".

Zakharova told reporters at a briefing that the date and participant list were being finalized, but that Russia wanted to be absolutely sure before announcing anything publicly. (Reuters)

(12) Taliban's...

killed and five others were wounded during a separate clash with the security forces in Niazi area located in the outskirts of the provincial capital of Ghazni province. The anti-government armed militant groups including Taliban militants have not commented regarding the report so far. (KP)

(13) Hours on, Kabul...

still smoldering. More than 600 businesses were destroyed in the blaze. There were no reported injuries in the

blaze that began when most of the stores selling electronics and household appliances were closed. (Pajhwok)

(14) Victims of Helicopter...

1st Lt. Sherin, 1st Lt. Niazullah, 1st Lt. Gulalai, Masum, Mobin, bodyguard of Jamila Amini, ANA soldier Ahmad Rashad, Raof, bodyguard of Farah provincial council head and.

Six government officials were also killed in the incident. They included Farid Bakhtawar, the provincial council head, Jamila Amini, the provincial council member, Ghulam Haidar Bomdi, former commissioner, Arif Khidmat, a customs official in Farah, Haji Jilani, a worker of Farah Hajj and Islamic Affairs Department and Aziz Rahman, head of the technical board.

The seven civilians killed in the helicopter crash included Haji Qadir, a money-changer, Haji Mamor, Asif, Kudaidad, SalimBomdi, Haji Rahmatullah and Imam of Farah Military Corps.

Local officials in Farah on Thursday said the bodies of the victims were yet to be transferred from the incident area to the provincial capital despite the passage of 24 hours due to security threats.

Meanwhile, an ANA spokesman in Farah told Pajhwok Afghan News they were trying to shift the bodies to the provincial capital, but the area was fully under Taliban's control and going there was risky.

He said the governor and military officials during a meeting with elders had decided to transfer the bodies with mediation of local elders. (Pajhwok)

(15) 3 Children...

where local people were searching for the missing child's body.

He said hailstorm also lashed some areas and the sudden floods damaged farmland.

Obaidullah Laghmani, a resident Aini village, said the children were drowned in floodwaters at 5am Thursday morning and the bodies of two dead children were found around 8am. He also said crops on large areas were destroyed by the flash floods. (Pajhwok)

(16) Afghan Refugee...

have been taken in recent years (most notably in 2015 when the Supreme Leader ordered public schools to accept refugee children), many still fall through the cracks. The language barrier is one of the biggest obstacles preventing Afghan refugee children from finishing their education in Iran. Most are not fluent enough in Farsi to follow their coursework and there are limited resources to help them learn. There are some schools run by the Afghan community where instruction is in Dari or other languages spoken in Afghanistan, but these schools only recently gained official recognition, having previously been subject to regular closures by the authorities. The integration of Afghans into Iranian public schools also remains a challenge.

Lack of money is another hurdle. Iranian public schools charge entry and tuition fees that most refugee families can't afford. Books and basic school supplies are also out of range for most.

Afghan teenage boys are particularly at risk of dropping out of school because they are targeted by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) for recruitment. The IRGC wants young fighters to send to Syria, and they bolster their ranks with vulnerable Afghan boys who have few options for employment otherwise. As reported by Radio Farda and other outlets, the Liwa Fatemiyoun, an Afghan Shia militia that is funded, trained, and equipped by the IRGC, frequently targets Afghan boys from undocumented families for recruitment, often under threat of deportation or the promise of residency permits. Watchdogs such as the Human Rights Watch have reported boys as young as 14 are enlisted this way.

Pressured to enlist in the militias and facing grim prospects on the labor market, some teenage boys drop out of school to attempt the perilous journey to Europe to seek better opportunity.

While challenges persist, there are signs public sentiment towards Afghan refugees is warming in Iran, and activists have begun demanding the government do more to ensure refugee children can go to school.

A 2017 Twitter campaign calling for better inclusion of Afghan children in Iran's schools launched by Iranian journalist Sadra Mohaghegh, an editor at the reformist Shargh daily, gained the backing of prominent Iranians, including the education minister. Campaigners used the #Don'tLeaveThemOutOfMehr hashtag to spread their message. Mehr translates to love or kindness in Persian and is also the name of the month the Iranian school year begins.

Nevertheless, the government's inertia on the issue remains the biggest roadblock for Afghan refugee children. Until there is a concerted effort by those in power to remove the barriers refugee children face at school, they will continue to be left behind. (RFE/RL)