

**(1) Ghani Rules out...**

he announced.

Youth constituted a majority of Afghanistan's population, he noted, remarking the future belonged to them. Economic prosperity and political activism also belonged to the youth, he continued.

Slamming corruption as a sinister conspiracy, the president acknowledged some official did not provide him correct information on the issue.

The Hairatan Port would be expanded after the completion of a survey, saying more industrial parks would be constructed for businesspeople.

Ghani made it crystal clear that the war in Afghanistan would never be privatised and the natural resources of the country belonged to the people.

Business centres would be created at universities and no tax would be imposed on them, the president said, adding Balkh would become a corridor for the export of Afghan products.

He said investment in the textile sector was ongoing. In future, uniform and other equipment for the security forces would be manufactured locally. (Pajhwok)

**(2) Russia Jockeying...**

the conflict in Afghanistan.

He said: "I think what they [Russia] are trying to do is they are pursuing a strategy which is to compete with us by trying to exert their influence wherever they can."

Russia was using disinformation to create the narrative they it wanted, not just in Afghanistan, but in Iraq and Syria as well, blaming the US for aiding ISIS, he added.

Votel spurned as ridiculous the notion that the United States was somehow promoting the Islamic State, also known by its Arabic acronym of Daesh.

The Iranians had also "hedged their bets" in Afghanistan by seeking relationships both with the Afghan government and its armed opponents, the top US military commander said.

"They [Iranian leaders] don't have any love for us here, but I do think Iran shares concerns along their eastern border, the western part of Afghanistan..." (Pajhwok)

**(3) IMF Completes...**

with notable progress in fiscal management and financial sector reforms.

Given the uncertainties associated with the electoral cycle, the statement said, policy discipline and strong donor support to the country would be critical over the next six months.

An IMF team led by Christoph Duenwald visited Tashkent from September 25 to October 2 to conduct discussions on the fourth review of Afghanistan's economic program supported by a three-year ECF arrangement.

During the mission, the team met Afghan authorities to discuss the latest economic developments and review implementation of reforms under the ECF.

At the end of the mission, Duenwald said: "Following productive discussions, the IMF team and the Afghan authorities reached staff-level agreement on the completion of the fourth review under the ECF arrangement."

The agreement is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board, which is expected to consider the staff report for the fourth ECF review in early December.

Upon completion of this review, SDR 4.5 million (about \$6.1 million) will be made available to Afghanistan, bringing total disbursements to SDR 22.5 million.

Afghanistan's GDP growth for 2018 is projected at 2.3 percent, below the 2017 growth rate, owing to the impact of the drought and the challenges brought about by political uncertainty and deteriorating security conditions.

Growth is projected to pick up to 3 percent in 2019 as agricultural production recovers. Inflation is expected to average 3 percent during the current year, according to the statement.

Donor grants continue to finance large budget and trade deficits allowing treasury cash balances and international reserves to remain at comfortable levels.

The statement said: "Afghanistan continues to face daunting challenges, with the perilous security situation hurting confidence and growth. The drought, which affects two-thirds of the country's provinces, as well as regional economic difficulties that are spilling over to Afghanistan, are compounding these challenges..."

During next month's donor conference in Geneva, Afghanistan will have an opportunity to showcase the reform progress it is making and to explain to the international community why it deserves its continued backing. (Pajhwok)

**(4) Kabul Beats...**

On Saturday, Nangarhar Leopards will play Kandahar Knights at 4pm and at 8pm Kabul Zwanan will play Balkh Legends.

The league involves several of the game's most recognizable players, including Shahid Afridi, Chris Gayle, Brendon McCullum, Rashid Khan and Mohammed Shahzad.

"It is a kind of dream," Rashid, the Afghanistan leg-spinner, told the UAE's The National.

"Every country has their own league, and finally we have this, thanks to the hard work of the [Afghanistan Cricket Board]. It felt impossible to have it in such a short period of time, but they have done it."

One UAE player, Mohammed Naveed, is part of the league and is playing for Kandahar Knights. Run by the ACB, the league is being hosted at Sharjah Cricket Stadium, which has played host to the majority of Afghanistan's "home" international matches in the past.

"We feel proud to be associated with them, and proud they are up in the top 10 teams in the world," Mazhar Khan, the Sharjah Cricket Council administrator, said.

"Afghanistan has had very good support right from Day 1 in this part of the world. I am sure there will be a lot of crowd to handle." (Tolo news)

**(5) Strongmen won't...**

The process would be completed in the next two years.

Ghani made clear that strongmen would not be allowed to interfere in the entry test for admissions to universities and higher education institutes.

The education system would be reformed, he vowed, saying two women deputy ministers of education would also be appointed.

"Reforms in education are important to us and that is the reason teachers are employed on merit," the president was quoted as saying.

Ghani ordered the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) to draw up a clear plan for building a township for teachers. He also directed the Balkh governor to spend the allocated budget on repairing schools.

The president, stressing the importance of playgrounds, directed the Ministry of Education to work in coordination with the Physical

Training Department on such facilities.

He allocated 150 million afghanis for Balkh, asking the governor to spend the amount transparently on basic projects in consultation with the relevant organs.

Balkh provincial council members also met the president and discussed helping the drought and floods-affected people. They called for focus on unstable districts, constructing the central jail building and stopping the erosion of Amo River banks.

Ghani asked the provincial council to provide him a list of the affected people so that the government assisted them.

"Security in Balkh is the government's priority and military operations are currently underway in unstable areas of the province," Ghani said.

About the provincial central jail's building, he said the cost of the construction had to be estimated before the government decided on the issue. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Kabul, Islamabad...**

Prime Minister Imran Khan's statement on awarding citizenship to Afghan refugees also came under discussion. Former diplomat Aziz Ahmed Khan said even if citizenship was not offered, some middle way like resident cards could be found. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Iran, Afghanistan...**

from the Afghan ambassador to Tehran, saying this shows a lack of serious resolve on Afghanistan's part.

The Afghan side implied that his country would begin practical cooperation with Iran before winter. The Islamic Republic of Iran has lived up to all of its commitments with respect to issuing visas aimed at authorizing the entry and exit of Afghan nationals, yet, the Afghan side has not taken any practical measures in this regard, the Iranian official complained.

The Afghan minister, for his part, thanked Iran for its services during the forty long years of hosting Afghan refugees, voicing his country's readiness to send workforce for assistance and paying for their accommodation. (Agencies)

**(8) UNHCR Welcomes...**

of Pakistan for hosting Afghan refugees for nearly four decades.

"Pakistan has been an exemplary host throughout these times," she said, adding that UNHCR will continue to support any future government policy which supports voluntary repatriation in dignity and safety.

Ms. Menikdiwela said UNHCR will continue to call for international support to Pakistan for Pakistani host communities and Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. Ms. Menikdiwela briefed the advisor on the upcoming ministerial conference being organised by the government of Afghanistan and the United Nations on 27-28 November 2018 in Geneva.

Ms. Menikdiwela said preparations for the conference are underway adding the objective is to firmly show the solidarity of the international community with the people and government of Afghanistan. (Agencies)

**(9) Badakhshan Gold...**

Nargis Nehan, talked about transparency in contracts and approval of new laws in her ministry.

She said that partnership between the government and the private sector would help create jobs.

Sayed Sadat Mansour Naderi, a shareholder of Central Ltd and Enhananam, executive chief of the company talked about the importance of foreign trade and development of the private sector.

He said that the contracts signing would attract more investors for investment in Afghanistan.

Pajhwok findings show that there are many conflicts of interests in these contracts. Afghanistan mines oversight associations dubbed the Badakhshan gold and Balkhab copper mines contracts 'an international conspiracy about Afghanistan mines'.

Article 16, clause two of the mining law says the president, his deputies, ministers, head and members of the Supreme Court, Attorney General Office, members of the parliament, heads and members of the independent commissions and their relatives could not obtain permission for the license under this law.

Also article 16, clause five of the mining law explains the above individuals could only get the mining license after five years of leaving their job.

The two contracts are clearly in conflict with article 16 of the mining law. Afzali said the president and his aides had clearly violated the mining law.

He claimed some government officials, including Presidential Advisor Ajmal Ahmadi, had facilitated the signing of the contracts and even attempted to change the law so that President Ashraf Ghani may not Naderi's vote bank.

Pajhwok strived to get the view point of Ajmal Ahmadi in this regard, but could not succeed.

"The government often talks about transparency, but the biggest mining contract are being inked in violation of the law, this is an alarming and dangerous for the future of mining sector in the country."

Yaseen Setez, member of the Environment and Natural Resource Monitoring Network (ENRMN), said government officials were committing 'a legal burglary' by signing the contracts, which he said should be prevented. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Taliban Close...**

through the areas, he added.

Taliban also confirmed highway closure, with their spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied blowing up the bridges. He also said there was a diversion civilians could use, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

**(11) 2 Killed...**

Alokhel area of the capital at around 8am. A second blast occurred after police and rescuers gathered at the site.

He feared the explosions might have resulted in casualties. However, he said, police cordoned off the area and no one was allowed to enter. (Pajhwok)

**(12) Four Individuals...**

Ataullah son of Hazrat Omar and Omran son of Rahman Gul.

In line with the election laws and the Penal Code, electoral violations are considered as crimes and the cases are referred by the Independent Election Complaint Commission (IECC) to the AGO which ultimately refers it to the corresponding courts for deliberation. (ATN)

**Yemen's Houthis Arrest Protesters in Sanaa**

ADEN, Yemen - Yemen's Houthi group arrested a number of people in Sanaa on Saturday, following demonstrations over economic hardship.

Sanaa residents told Reuters dozens were arrested, including 16 female students.

The students were released at the end of the day after signing a pledge not to take part in demonstrations again, one of them said,

asking not to be identified for fear of retribution.

She said female Houthi supporters "attacked us with electric shock batons and clubs, supported by armed men".

"They beat me until I fell to the ground and I received an electric shock in the back when I stood up again. I wasn't able to move when they took me to the police station," she said.

The Iran-aligned Houthis took control of Sanaa in 2014, ousting the internationally-recognized government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. A Saudi-led U.S.-backed international military coalition intervened in 2015 to restore it.

"Security services in the capital detained a number of mercenaries tasked by the aggressors to plant rumors and disturb public peace," the Houthi-controlled Saba news agency said.

Both sides of the Yemen conflict have been accused of serious human rights violations.

Soaring prices have put some basic commodities out of reach for many Yemenis and the central bank has struggled to pay public-sector salaries, on which many depend, as foreign exchange reserves dwindle. (Reuters)

**Populist Party Set for Gains in Latvian Election**

RIGA - Latvians headed to the polls on Saturday in a parliamentary election in which the rise of a populist party could reshape the political landscape and open the door for the Baltic country's long shunned pro-Russia party.

According to the latest polls the ruling coalition of the Union of Greens and Farmers, the National Alliance and the Unity party looks to be well short of forming a majority government.

Ethnic Latvian parties have resolutely kept the pro-Russia Harmony party from power in the former Soviet republic as they sought ever closer ties with the West.

But dissatisfaction with Latvian politicians, widely seen as corrupt and inefficient, has seen the government parties lose voters to KPV LV, a populist party that has promised a fresh and more efficient government.

Its leader, Artuss Kaimins, whose popularity has soared as he railed against corrupt politicians, has sent mixed messages on whether he would rule out a deal with Harmony, set to be the biggest party due to its support base among the Russian-speaking minority.

"I will be one of those good people who elect bad politicians," said Raivis, a man in his late thirties, before casting his vote for Harmony in a Riga suburb.

"I try not to think about it because it's been so complicated that it's hard to understand who's playing the chess board."

Latvia, a member of the European Union and NATO, shares a 276-kilometre (167 miles) border with Russia which makes it a frontline state in the increasingly hostile relationship between the West and President Vladimir Putin.

NATO currently has more than 1,000 troops deployed in the Baltic country of 2 million and even the potential of a minor shift in allegiance in Latvia will worry both Brussels and Washington.

Harmony wants to remain in the EU and NATO but have closer economic ties with Russia and only canceled a cooperation agreement with Putin's United Russia party last year. (Reuters)