

(1) India Supports ...

This comes as a delegation of the Taliban visited Islamabad last week, meeting with Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

According to Reuters, the group also met with the US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Islamabad. (Tolo News)

(2) UN: 14,000 ...

Antonio Guterres condemned "the alarming level" of grave violations against children by all parties and said he is "deeply disturbed by the scale, severity and recurrence of grave violations endured by the children in Afghanistan."

The U.N. chief said in the report circulated Thursday that he is "extremely concerned" especially about the significant increase in child casualties resulting from aerial operations conducted by government and pro-government forces.

According to the report, child casualties from aerial attacks have increased every year since 2015, reversing a downward trend. They totaled 1,049 for the four-year period through 2018. (Tolo News)

(3) US Holds Talks ...

war in American history.

"Negotiations in some ways are still ongoing," he told reporters traveling with him from Washington a day after he discussed Afghanistan with President Donald Trump.

Esper declined to talk about his meeting with Trump other than to say it covered a range of issues. He said political decisions are pending.

"I don't want to say anything that gets in front of that or upsets that process," he said.

The US envoy to Afghanistan said earlier this week that a deal had been reached in principle to end the war, amid concerns by the Afghan government that American forces will leave too quickly and without requiring the Taliban to reduce violence.

Trump on Wednesday restated his intention to end the conflict prompted by the Sept. 2001, 11, attacks.

"We have great warriors there. We have great soldiers, but they are not acting as soldiers, they are acting as policeman, and that's not their job," Trump told reporters at the White House. "So, we would like to get at least a big proportion of them home." The president added that he'd also like to get "a big portion" of the NATO troops out of Afghanistan. "We're talking with the Taliban. We're talking to the government. We'll see what happens," he said.

Esper said he would discuss Afghanistan over dinner Wednesday in Stuttgart with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to give the alliance's civilian leader "a sense of where I think things are" in the push to close a peace deal.

NATO countries have had troops in Afghanistan through the nearly -18 year conflict, and they have agreed that they would coordinate any final withdrawal.

Esper planned to meet with his British counterpart in London on Friday and with his French counterpart in Paris on Saturday. Both countries have played important roles in Afghanistan.

In the in-flight interview, Esper cited "sensitive negotiations" as he declined to talk about specifics, such as the timing of an initial American troop pullout or, more broadly, his level of confidence that the Taliban would live up to their end of any peace agreement.

Among the unanswered questions is whether an agreement with the Taliban will allow for some number of US counterterrorism forces to remain after conventional troops depart. The timing of a Taliban cease-fire also appears in doubt.

"The conflict continues on," he said. "They are conducting attacks. The Afghans are conducting attacks. We're supporting Afghan attacks. That's why we think the best way forward — if we can get the right deal — is a political agreement that leads to a viable outcome." (Tolo News)

(4) Zaman: Any ...

addressing a press conference in Kabul, the Taliban delegation met with US officials to discuss the release of American hostages held by the

militant group.

"We do not consider any trip which is made without the consultation or presence of the Afghan government as essential. The Taliban's visit to Pakistan cannot relate to the peace process," he said. "We don't want the Afghan peace process to move forward without the consensus of regional countries."

He stressed that any talks about peace should be conducted under the leadership and ownership of Afghans, and a ceasefire should follow.

But on Thursday a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sibghatullah Ahmadi, made a comment that the Foreign Affairs ministry "continues to support the peace process and efforts to facilitate the peace talks."

The Palace spokesperson Sediq Seddiqi countered this, saying that it is a breach of international norms for Pakistan to host the Taliban, a terrorist organization, and he said that Ahmadi was not speaking as a representative of the Afghan government, to which Ahmadi responded with new tweets, affirming his position and claiming that he speaks for the entire ministry. Zaman, during Saturday's press conference, provided the latest word on this, saying that the remarks of Ahmadi are the MoFA spokesman's personal comments.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the implementor of (Afghanistan's) foreign policy... Any comments which go against government policy must be the personal view of an individual, and not the stance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Zaman explained.

But the deputy minister hinted at some tacit support by the Afghan government for the Taliban delegation, mentioning that the Afghan government has provided some help to the Taliban for the sake of talks between the group and the US:

"The Afghan government can take back the passports anytime that it wants, and meanwhile the United Nations and the sanctions committee can prevent their trips," he said.

"We allowed for this (the passports) to facilitate the US-Taliban talks, which were in progress."

The original US-Taliban talks lasted almost a year and were conducted over nine sessions during which both sides finalized an agreement "in principle." But the negotiations were called off last month by President Trump after a deadly attack by the Taliban in Kabul that killed 12 people, including an American soldier. (Tolo News)

(5) Teachers to ...

higher education this ongoing year. He said the ranks of 97,000 teachers promoted this year.

Balkhi added salaries of teachers would be also increased under the new government and the ministry was currently working on such a plan. Students' health checkup section would be created this year and the service would keep in contact students with their parents about their health and treatment for diseases.

Abdul Wasay Fayeze, secretary of Kabul Teachers Council, asked the MoE to shorten teaching hours and increase teachers' salaries.

Aziza, a teacher at Ghazi High School of Kabul, said that the number of students in a class should be reduced so teachers could properly teach. (Pajhwok)

(6) All Electoral ...

be filtered from clear biometric votes in the central office."

Moreover, Habib Rahman Nang, secretariat head of Independent Election Commission said that at least 20,000 result sheets have been registered in to the IEC database in the national tally center and they are trying to accelerate the process.

Mohammad Hassan Rasouli, an election observer said, "the process at the national tally center is transparent and we can zoom in and watch any data center we wish through CCTVs." However, journalist are not allowed to cover the data entry process at the national tally center and some observing institutions say that they are not informed of the process. (ATN)

(7) Australian Vloggers ...

«very complex» as she had been sentenced to 10 years in jail.

«We are continuing our discussions with the Iranian government, we don't accept the charges upon which she has been convicted and we will seek to have her returned to Australia,» she said. (TVNZ)

(8) One Hundred Dead ...

Mahdi, who has led the country for the past two years, lifted the curfew this morning in Baghdad, but not the Internet blackout. Riot police remain on high alert.

Yesterday, Ahmad as-Safi, a representative of Grand Ayatollah al Sistani, the country's most important Shia cleric, spoke at a mosque in Kerbala.

He urged the government to «improve public services, find jobs for the unemployed, avoid clientelism, and end corruption».

As-Safi went on to warn that even if protests calm down, «they can resume with greater force and with more people» if protesters' demands are not met.

(9) British Gov't ...

summer.

It has left political observers pondering on what Johnson has planned to reconcile his message about a deal or no-deal departure.

The BBC on Friday quoted a spokesperson from Downing Street as saying that the government will comply with the Benn Act, and the law only "imposes a very specific narrow duty when it comes to requesting an extension."

"People will have to wait to see how this is reconciled," the source told the BBC.

The Daily Telegraph reported that Maugham said Johnson was saying two contradictory things at the same time.

"We are concerned that he (Johnson) cannot be trusted to do what he has said to the court," said Maugham. "The court was being asked to order him to do it (seek the extension), and if he does not act as parliament has mandated, there will be consequences for him personally."

Andrew Webster, the barrister representing the British government, said there is no need for a court order to be made forcing a letter requesting an extension because the court has it on record it will be sent.

"What we have is a clear statement on behalf of the prime minister and government as to what it will do in respect to the requirements of the 2019 act (the Benn Act). They have been put on record so there can be no doubt," he said.

Although Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said Friday that the Brexit plan falls short in a number of aspects, Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister Simon Coveney sent a rather encouraging message.

Coveney said he does not believe a Brexit deal is a mission impossible, and he believes an agreement might be struck later this month despite concerns over Johnson's new Brexit plan.

"I believe the prime minister wants to get a deal this month. We will certainly work to this time frame," Coveney told journalists outside Hillsborough Castle.

"If it's not possible, Ireland has always said we would prefer an extension to no deal, but that's the Irish position. This is not mission impossible. There is a deal to be done here," he added.

The crunch date is expected Oct. 17 when the EU Council is scheduled to hold its meeting in Brussels. (Xinhua)

(10) Erdogan: Turkey ...

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday.

«We have made our preparations; we have finalized our operation plans, given the necessary instructions,» Erdogan told members of his ruling party at its annual camp.

It is Erdogan's most concrete suggestion of a military intervention in the region since Ankara and Washington decided to establish a «safe zone» on the Syrian border that Turkey says should be cleared of the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia.

Ankara sees the YPG as linked with a Kurdish insurgency within Turkey and wants Washington to stop its support for them. Washington, in its turn, sees the Kurdish forces as vital in the fight against the extremist «Islamic State» group.

Missed deadline

He had given a deadline of the end of September for the -30kilometer-deep (-19mile-deep) zone to be established, warning that if it were not kept, Turkey would be «forced» to take military action for its own security. Turkey has accused the US of being too slow in setting up the zone, amid differences between the two NATO partners about how far it should reach into Syria and who should control it. Ankara has said it wants to use the region to settle up to 2 million Syrian refugees of the 3.6 million it currently hosts according to government figures.

The Kurdish YPG militia that currently controls the region was instrumental in defeating fighters from the extremist «Islamic State» group in Syria alongside American troops.

According to the Reuters news agency, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said on Saturday they would «not hesitate to turn any unprovoked (Turkish) attack into an all-out war.» (DW)

(11) China's High-Tech ...

the growth by expanding 152.9 percent in August, followed by smart bands and solar industrial ultra-clear glass. (Xinhua)

(12) Illegal Migrants ...

centers in Libya despite international calls for closing those centers. (Xinhua)

(13) Highlights of ...

soybean per mu (about 0.07 hectares), reaching a new high of China's soybean output.

CHINA'S YUANWANG3-

China's spacecraft tracking ship Yuanwang3- is sailing to the Pacific Ocean to carry out maritime monitoring missions for the BeiDou3- and other satellites.

The ship departed Sunday from a port in east China's Jiangsu Province. It is the third voyage of the ship this year.

CHINA'S RESEARCH VESSEL

China's oceanographic research vessel, Xiangyanghong 01, has returned to Qingdao, a coastal city in the eastern province of Shandong, after completing the country's 10th Arctic research expedition, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Carrying a team of scientists, the vessel spent 49 days at sea and sailed more than 10,300 nautical miles, reaching 76.02 degrees north latitude.

CLEAN COAL

Gao Xiang and his colleagues never picture coal as black cloud billowing from smokestacks or a sooty remnant of the Industrial Revolution.

"There are only unclean technologies; no unclean energy," said Gao, a winner of China's National Awards for Scientific and Technical Progress and professor at the State Environmental Protection Engineering Center for Coal-Fired Air Pollution Control at Zhejiang University.

For years, researchers have been seeking to reduce coal's harsh environmental effects with multiple technologies, seeking a "burn cleanly" spell for China's major energy source.

HOMEMADE TUNNELING MACHINES

A super large tunnel boring machine (TBM) measuring 15.03 meters in diameter has begun an underwater tunneling project in Shantou City, south China's Guangdong Province.

At 130 meters long and weighing 4,800 tonnes, the slurry TBM, with maximum thrust of 25,000 tonnes, can cope with multiple complex terrains such as soft silt and hard granite bedrock, according to manufacturer China Railway Engineering Equipment Group Co. Ltd. (CREG), one of the leading TBM suppliers worldwide. (Xinhua)

(14) Pompeo Says No ...

to deescalate and find the outcomes that are mutually agreeable," he said. Pompeo also, during meetings with Greek government officials, raised concerns about Chinese investments in infrastructure, he added. (Reuters)

(15) First Plane Built ...

the first aircraft designed and constructed by the Chinese, Feng Ru 1's flight marks a leap forward in China's aviation history, and its restoration is of historical significance, according to Yin Hao, curator of the China Science

and Technology Museum. (Xinhua)

(16) Khalilzad Meets ...

they discussed and exactly when a meeting was taking place.

"They were due to meet Zalmay Khalilzad. I think that might have happened. I'm hoping that they have met," he said on Friday.

He added that the Taliban considered themselves as abiding by a tentative agreement signed with Khalilzad in Qatar before Trump called a halt to talks.

"They're ready to own their commitment," he said.

Two Taliban sources confirmed they viewed themselves as committed to the agreements reached in Doha and were disappointed when Trump pulled out of talks.

The US embassy in Islamabad and the State Department in Washington declined to comment on whether there had been a meeting between the Taliban and Khalilzad.

A State Department representative said Khalilzad had spent several days in Islamabad this week for consultations with authorities in Pakistan, but his meetings in Islamabad did not represent a restart of the Afghan peace process.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, would not confirm or deny that Taliban had met Khalilzad, adding that the Taliban delegation was still in Islamabad for meetings on Friday.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Taliban leader in Afghanistan said the delegation's visit to Pakistan was intended to revive negotiations to end the -18year war.

AFGHAN INCLUSION

A Pakistan government source said that Pakistan would do "whatever possible" to get stakeholders, including Russia and China, to meet and work on guarantees of any successful peace arrangement.

"The Taliban want all stakeholders like America, Russia, China... to sit together and give some guarantees that any deal done and signed wouldn't be backed out before they resume the negotiations," he said, adding that Pakistan's government was also trying to ensure the Afghan government was included.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has complained bitterly about the Taliban shutting his administration out of the previous talks.

The U.S. government told Kabul that Khalilzad planned to meet the Taliban in Islamabad, a senior Afghan government source said.

However, Afghan officials were told the meeting was to discuss the 2016 kidnapping of two university professors, American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks, in Kabul by the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani group.

The source said the Afghan government does not want the peace process to resume unless it is led by Afghans.

The Taliban delegation led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, one of the group's founders, met Pakistan's foreign minister on Thursday and both sides called for a resumption of the talks as soon as possible.

The United States has long considered Pakistan's cooperation crucial to ending the war in Afghanistan.

Before the talks broke off, the United States and Taliban said last month they were close to reaching a deal, despite concerns among some U.S. security officials and in the Afghan government that a U.S. withdrawal could bring more conflict and a resurgence of Islamist militant factions. (Pakistan today)

(17) Deputy Prime ...

(Turkmen Sea and River Transportation) and Turkmenhowayollary (Turkmen Airlines). (Trend)

(18) Chinese Tourists ...

shopping remained flat compared to 2018.

This reflects improvements in the domestic shopping environment, said the report.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the number of global travelers will exceed 1.8 billion by 2030. China is considered the world's fastest-growing tourism market and will play a key role in the sector's development. (Xinhua)