

(1) Pentagon Chief...

Mr. Khalilzad said that based on the draft agreement, the US will withdraw 5,000 troops from five bases in Afghanistan within 135 days if conditions in the agreement are addressed by the Taliban.

On May 9, the sixth round of US-Taliban talks ended in the Qatari capital, Doha. The talks so far have been focused on four key issues: US forces withdrawal, counterterrorism assurances, a ceasefire, and intra-Afghan negotiations.

Last week, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington is not seeking a permanent military presence in Afghanistan after the Taliban said they are close to finalizing a peace agreement with the United States.

The Afghan conflict has cost almost 2,400 American lives and hundreds of billions in taxpayer dollars. As the war approaches its 18th year, 14,000 US troops are still in Afghanistan and senior intelligence officials have repeatedly warned that the country remains fragile and could once again become a terrorist haven. (Tolo news)

(2) Centcom Chief ...

Efforts for peace and reconciliation Afghanistan and mounting tensions between Pakistan and India will be discussed by the two sides.

During his first visit to Pakistan in April, McKenzie Jr had held meetings with Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa.

On Friday, Gen. Bajwa said Pakistan had been striving for peace and stability in Afghanistan and would continue to work for achieving the goal.

He told a ceremony in the garrison town of Rawalpindi that Pakistan had always supported an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

Due to intense diplomatic efforts over the last few months, he claimed peace appeared in Afghanistan looked achievable. (Pajhwok)

(3) Afghan, Pak...

The first meeting was held in Beijing in 2017 and the second in Kabul in December 2018. The dialogue provides an opportunity for political cooperation on facilitating the Afghan peace and reconciliation process.

"Pakistan attaches importance to the dialogue as a part of political trust-building, development and cooperation and connectivity leading to greater understanding on issues of common concern," the Foreign Office added. (Pajhwok)

(4) Situation Returns ...

Fawzia Yaftali, the Provincial Council chief, said the situation in Kunduz City has improved now compared to the past but she complained about the slow-paced operation. "Fighting is underway on the outskirts of Kunduz City and people are terrified," she said.

Humayon, a resident of Kunduz City, said: "Taliban emerge during night and the government comes out during day time. We ask the government to eliminate the Taliban so that people could move freely." Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected government's claims and termed security forces operations in Kunduz as 'a failure'. (Pajhwok)

(5) As U.S.-Taliban ...

in Kabul on Monday and another Thursday that killed dozens, including a U.S. service member. Later Thursday, another suicide attack in neighboring Logar province killed four civilians, a spokesperson for the province said.

The attacks came as Amnesty International reported Thursday that Abdul Samad Amiri, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission's acting director in Ghor province, was kidnapped and killed by the group.

In return for U.S. troops withdrawing, the proposed deal to end America's longest war would see the Taliban would agree to enter into peace talks with the Afghan government and pledge not to allow areas under their control to be used as a launching pad for terrorists.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Saturday that Washington would not accept just any deal.

"We will make sure we have a good deal, a good enough deal that guarantees at least the security of countries going forward and a brighter path ahead for the Afghan people," Esper said during a press conference in Paris.

But this week, nine former senior U.S. diplomats warned that Afghanistan could slide into an all-out civil war if the Trump administration withdrew all U.S. forces without a peace agreement.

Some Afghans said they thought regular citizens would resist any attempt by the Taliban to seize control.

"People will stand against the Taliban if they won't change, no one will accept them as they were in the past," said gynecologist Mahboba Yusufi, 47.

The Taliban regime was known for its strict interpretation of Islamic law and restrictive policies toward women, includ-

ing barring girls from attending school and women for working outside the home.

"I can guarantee you 100 percent that people won't have the freedom they have now, girls won't be able to go to school, they won't be able to work if the Taliban comes back," said Ahmadi.

Others said they could cope with some restrictions as long as the Taliban allowed women to work and have an education.

"I don't care about how we have to dress, I don't mind wearing hijabs when the Taliban is back," said 22-year-old Tamanna Zamani.

"Peace is more important and a lot of people are dying everyday in Afghanistan." (AA)

(6) Critics Blame ...

month which have left dozens of civilians killed and wounded.

"Resignation is a hasty task and this issue should be investigated and officials should be interrogated about this," military analyst Nizamuddin Katawazi, a military affairs analyst.

"People will judge that who has done good job and who has not. I will leave this judgment to the people," said Sikandar Asghari, a former military officer.

Over the past four years, the northeastern city of Kunduz has fallen to the Taliban two times, parts of Ghazni city in the central Afghanistan witnessed heavy clashes for three days and Taliban attacked the Kunduz city for the third time last week.

Moreover, the city of Pul-e-Khumri in Baghlan Province is witnessing heavy clashes between government forces and the Taliban for the past six days, and Farah Province in the west of Afghanistan was attacked by the Taliban on Thursday night.

"Mr. Stanekzai was the head of the National Directorate of Security but he was busy in other task. As an assistant to Mr. President [Ashraf Ghani], he was busy in peace affairs, foreign trips and other tasks which distanced him from his main assignment which was paying attention to the national security," former deputy interior minister Basir Salangi said. (Tolo news)

(7) Residents Demand ...

He said in the past they would cover the distance between the two provinces within two hours but now the same journey consumed six hours due to the road's bad condition.

He said women, elderly and children had to bear the brunt of the situation on the highway.

He said mostly drivers faced technical problems that led to death of patients.

Construction work on the highway was started many times but had to be stopped for unknown reason.

Mohammad urged the government to take measures for the highway security and condition.

Abdul Wadood, a resident of Shah Wali Kot district, said Taliban militants had started kidnapping passengers on the highway from the last few months. He urged the government to address the issue as soon as possible.

However, Kandahar Governor Hayatullah Hayat said construction work of the highway had resumed.

He visited Shah Wali Kot district along with a military delegation and assessed the security situation of the district two days back.

Hayat told a gathering there they conducted clearing operations in Khakrez district and assured fully security of the district.

On the other hand, Eng. Mohammad Sabir Ahmadzai said a few days back blamed the delay in the highway works on the procurement commission. He said 30 million afghanis had been allocated for the highway. (Pajhwok)

(8) DPAD Movement ...

This senior member of Democracy Process and Afghanistan Development Movement addressing Afghan nation concerns about one-sided peace negotiations of America with Taliban, said Afghan people want to be consulted with regarding the future of Afghanistan.

"Afghan people and government in general and since the beginning of the new democracy period in 2001 in particular have hardly tried to achieve a powerful political system as well as peace, development and prosperity through democratic and people-base trends." Mr. Haidary stressed He added: "we thank regional and international communities help given to Afghanistan over the past one and half decades, but these funds should lead to a lasting peace where the past 18-year achievements are preserved."

Peace process mainly focused on talks with Taliban and upcoming presidential elections have put Afghanistan at a critical and remarkable situation; success in all these two national process needs all Afghans' participations and maintaining past 18-year achievements.

Mr. Haidari at the gathering held Today by Democracy Process and Afghanistan Development Movement in Kabul once again placed a great importance on Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace nego-

tiations.

He called for regional and international community support for Afghan presidential election to be held on announced time, since it is the only way to preserve prosperity and peace in Afghanistan.

"Any other alternatives to election will bring Afghanistan to the dark past days." said Mr. Haidary

He added: "There is no way but election to enter lasting peace and development phase in Afghanistan."

"Weakening the current Islamic Republic Government of Afghanistan is not to anyone interests." Mr. Haidari said

It is to be said that the Democracy Process and Afghanistan Development Movement is established by a group of independent political, social and cultural figures here in Kabul. This movement presents a large portion of Afghan society and Afghan new generation.

The Democracy Process and Afghanistan Development Movement in their first press conference held Today in Kabul by issuing a final declaration called for some items as below;

Tired of the bloodshed and war, Afghan people want a cessation of war and establishment of a permanent peace and stability in Afghanistan. The main demand of Afghans is a lasting and justice peace. A temporary peace failing to permanently end the war and violence in the country is rejected and will not be accepted by the Afghan people.

Maintaining the achievements of the Afghan people in the peace process over the last two decades is one of the main demands of all Afghans and any peace aimed at undermining the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Constitution, freedom of expression, women's rights, democracy and national institutions will not be accepted by Afghans since it will not end the war and violence.

Afghan women and youth are the most vulnerable in the war and have suffered most in the war, they have been the biggest victims of the war. We urge all sides involved in the peace process to actively take into accounts these two groups' roles in the peace process and ease their tensions about the outcome of the peace talks. Holding a timely and transparent presidential election is the only way to achieve political development and stability in Afghanistan, and any other alternatives will surely lead to the dark years full of violence and ignorance. There is no way to peace and prosperity in Afghanistan but election.

While welcoming the actions of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan government and the electoral commissions, we emphasize on taking some steps to restore public confidence in the electoral process and resolve past problems. We want the people of Afghanistan to participate in the coming presidential election on a large scale. People coming to electoral box on election day means supporting the democracy trends and continuity of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

We call on the international community, especially the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, the countries of the region and Afghanistan's neighbors, to assist the Afghan government and people in achieving lasting peace and the continuation of a democracy and democratic system because a peaceful Afghanistan is to the whole world interests.

"The Democracy Process and Afghanistan Development Movement" in their first press conference pointing to Muharram and Ashura virtual event and the "Week of Martyr" in Afghanistan extended condolences to the souls of all the proud martyrs of Afghanistan especially the martyrs of recent terrorist incidents in various parts of the country as well as martyrs of the heroic defense and security forces of Afghanistan.

The movement appreciated all the efforts of the security forces of the country to ensure the security of the "Ashura Day" and asked all people to cooperate with the security forces and take an active role in the security of the Muharram Days. (PR)

(9) Taliban Torch ...

left the area in advance due to security problems.

Residents of Faizabad district say telecom services have long been available only for a limited time during day in Jawzjan. Hasibullah, a resident of Aliabad district, told Pajhwok that Salaam Telecom was the only company that provided 24 hours services to people in the area.

"We can no longer use the services of Salaam Telecom after its tower was torched," he said.

He said Afghan forces should take measures for preventing destructive activities of militants.

Maj. Abdul Wahid Wijdan, Jawzjan police chief, said a plan had been prepared for launching operations against militants in jawzjan in near future.

An operation is currently underway in Zari district and Hamrakh district of Balkh province and an operation would be also

launched on the Shiberghan-Mazar-i-Sharif highway later, he said.

The Taliban earlier had said they would treat Salam Telecom personnel and facilities as military target. (Pajhwok)

(10) Six Media ...

and 911 print media in Kabul, as well as 107 TV channels, 284 radio stations and 416 print media in other provinces.

The statistics indicate that there are 1,879 active media outlets in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(11) EBRD Board...

- Massimo Carnelos, Alternate Director for Italy

- Pablo Gasos, Alternate Director for Spain and Mexico

- Jane Macpherson, Alternate Director for the EIB

- Masaya Otsuka, Alternate Director for Japan

- Artem Shevalev, Alternate Director for Switzerland, Ukraine, Liechtenstein, Turkmenistan, Serbia, Montenegro and Uzbekistan.

During the visit to Kazakhstan, the Board Directors will meet Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and EBRD Governor Alikhan Smailov, Governor of the National Bank Erbolat Dossaev, Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev and Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar.

The EBRD delegation will visit the country's two major cities, Nur-Sultan and Almaty, and also hold meetings with the senior management of the Kazakh state holding JSC Samruk-Kazyna and Astana International Finance Centre. The Board Directors will visit projects financed by the EBRD and meet the diplomatic and international business community as well as civil society organizations.

The Bank is a major investor in Kazakhstan and has a wide presence in the country, with two Resident Offices in Nur-Sultan and Almaty as well as five local offices for outreach in the remote areas of the country. It has, to date, invested over €8.1 billion (\$ 9.1 billion) through 261 projects in the national economy.

The EBRD's mission in the country is to further improve the investment climate, which will help stimulate foreign investors' and partners' confidence in Kazakhstan and create a strong basis for continued international cooperation.

Through its investments and policy dialogue activity the Bank is actively working with the authorities on the modernization and diversification of the national economy. It is also helping the private sector to play a more significant role in the Kazakh economy and will provide ongoing support to the country's drive to secure its position as a regional renewable energy leader.

During the visit to the Kyrgyz Republic, the Board Directors will meet Prime Minister of Kyrgyz Republic Muhamedkaly Ablygazyev, Minister of Economy and EBRD Governor Sanjar Mukanbetov, Minister of Finance Baktygul Jeebaeva and Chairman of the National Bank Tokunbek Abdygulov. The EBRD delegation will visit projects financed by the EBRD and meet the diplomatic and business community and civil society organisations.

The EBRD has invested over €744 million in the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, with the majority of investments supporting private entrepreneurship. The Bank is actively working with the authorities on the mitigation of climate change related risks, including the provision of an uninterrupted water supply to households. The EBRD is paying special attention to the rehabilitation of public infrastructure and further increasing support to SMEs in the country.

The EBRD is the largest institutional investor in Central Asia, with close to €13.4 billion (\$ 14.7 billion equivalent) committed to 807 projects in a variety of sectors, from infrastructure to agriculture, with a focus on private-sector development. (Trend)

(12) Pope Denounces...

and of the earth, our common home," Francis warned Rajoelina and other government authorities as he began the second leg of his weeklong trip to southern Africa.

Madagascar is home to 5% of the world's plant and animal species, with around 95% of its reptiles and 89% of its plant life existing nowhere else on Earth, according to the World Wildlife Fund. Yet it is also one of the world's poorest countries, with 75% of its 25.5 million people living on less than \$2 a day.

Environmental groups and Transparency International have long highlighted the illegal logging of Madagascar's rosewood forests and other endangered tree species as evidence of the rampant corruption that has made multimillionaires out of a few "rosewood barons" who have plundered the island's northeastern forests.

"Your lovely island of Madagascar is rich in plant and animal biodiversity, yet this treasure is especially threatened by ex-

cessive deforestation, from which some profit," Francis said. He cited forest fires, poaching and the "unrestricted cutting down of valuable woodlands" as particular threats.

More so than any pope before him, Francis has made environmental concerns a pillar of his papacy, linking global warming to the persistent exploitation of the world's poor by the wealthy. He has issued an entire encyclical on the need to care for God's creation and next month will preside over a meeting of bishops from the Amazon, where an outbreak of rainforest fires have once again focused international attention on the need to preserve what he calls the "lungs of the planet."

Francis has also frequently called attention to the devastation wrought on the poor by corruption, often calling public officials to account on his foreign trips.

Transparency International, which ranks Madagascar among the most corrupt countries, has accused local public officials of complicity or negligence in the illegal logging, mining of gold and sapphires and the poaching of tortoises, turtles and exportation of lemurs.

In his speech Saturday, Francis urged Rajoelina, who came to power on a campaign to fight corruption, to make good on his pledges.

"I would encourage you to fight with strength and determination against all endemic forms of corruption and speculation that increase social disparity, and to confront the situations of great instability and exclusion that always create conditions of inhumane poverty," he said.

Francis, the world's first pope from the global south, acknowledged that some of the island's poor have no choice but to cut down forests to find soil or extract minerals in illegal ways that damage the environment.

"So it is important to create jobs and activities that generate income, while protecting the environment and helping people to emerge from poverty," he said.

Rajoelina promised to look out for the interests of all, especially the poor.

"In this place on this day, I confirm my will and my engagement to repair and rebuild Madagascar," he said. "I will pay attention to the weakest and the lowest. I will pay attention to justice and to equality, love and hope."

Among the groups trying to protect Madagascar's environment is Catholic Relief Services, the humanitarian arm of the U.S. bishops conference. The group has had a presence on Madagascar for five decades, and has focused much of its work on helping the rural poor find alternatives to cutting down trees for firewood or using slash and burn techniques to clear new land for agriculture. (AP)

(13) 'Historical Humanitarian ...

media released the list of people who were handed over to Russia. Among them is journalist Kirill Vyshinsky who was earlier seen arriving in Moscow. He was charged with treason and backing the fighters from the self-proclaimed republics in eastern Ukraine, a claim that he strongly denies.

The journalist was released on bail in late August after more than a year of detention. Even after being swapped, he pledged to attend a court hearing in Ukraine "to prove my innocence."

Another person said to have been swapped is Vladimir Tsemakh, who led the air defense of the breakaway Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). Kiev charged him with terrorism - a standard accusation Ukraine slaps on all pro-independence fighters from the DPR. Tsemakh's name made its way into the foreign press recently after the Dutch-led investigative team said it believes he is a valuable witness in the MH17 probe. Ukraine confirmed that Russia has returned filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, who, along with other former detainees, was greeted by Zelensky and a crowd on the tarmac in Kiev. Sentsov was convicted of plotting terrorist attacks in Crimea and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He denies all the charges and Ukraine has long demanded his release. Reaction to the exchange of detainees

The jubilant scenes of detainees returning home in both countries sparked hope that the severely-strained bilateral relations will start returning to normal. Zelensky said the successful swap will help "to unblock the dialogue" with Moscow.

Weighing in, Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Kremlin is "pleased that Russian citizens have returned home." According to the country's Foreign Ministry, the event shows that relations between Moscow and Kiev may be improved beyond their "dead-end" state today.

The news also received praise from Germany, which is part of the Normandy Contact Group, tasked with resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The prisoner swap delivers a "hopeful sign," Chancellor Angela Merkel said, adding that all sides must continue to work towards peace.

The Council of Europe also welcomed the swap. "This is an encouraging step towards the reconciliation" of Russia and Ukraine, Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland stated. (RT)