

(1) Trump Says...

to counter the upsurge. McKenzie said during a visit to Afghanistan that the Taliban "overplayed their hand" in peace negotiations by carrying out a spate of high profile attacks, including one that killed a U.S. soldier last week. "We're certainly not going to sit still and let them carry out some self-described race to victory. That's not going to happen," McKenzie told a group of reporters travelling with him during a stop at Bagram Airfield in northeastern Afghanistan.

Ghani, who was sidelined from months of negotiations between U.S. officials and Taliban representatives, had been deeply suspicious of the talks.

On Monday, Ghani made a renewed call here for peace but insisted the Taliban must observe a ceasefire, which they have so far refused to do, as he sought to regain a hold on the peace process.

"Peace without a ceasefire is impossible," Ghani said.

The growing tension on the ground in Afghanistan adds to the uncertainty about the future course for American forces, many of whom must now simultaneously brace for an increase in fighting while also awaiting potential orders to withdraw.

Asked whether increasing operations against the Taliban could include air strikes and raids by U.S. and Afghan commandos, McKenzie responded: "I think we're talking a total spectrum."

"We're going to make some decisions, I think, back in our nation's capital over the next few days and that will give us increased guidance going ahead," he added, without elaborating. (Reuters)

(2) Afghans ...

"People were 'threatened' not to attend Ashura. This was your love for Imam Husain to attend this ceremony," said Abdullah Rafiee, a religious scholar.

"Those who are trying to create division among the people are not counted as Muslims... Those who are 'shedding your blood' have no relation with Islam," said Zabihullah Hajjo, the deputy head of Balkh Ulema Council.

Herat

Ashura was also observed in the western province of Herat where more than 3,000 members of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces took part in ensuring the security of ceremonies marking the day, according to Ministry of Interior.

"We have been deployed here for the past five days. There were security threats but we are here to protect them," said Khalil Ahmad Sarwari, member of public uprising forces.

"We did not witness even a single incident because of concrete measures for the safety of Ashura ceremonies," said Hadid Mahdi, member of Herat Provincial Council.

Meanwhile, dozens of Afghans in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Kunduz and other provinces attended blood donation campaigns to observe Ashura day.

Those who attended the campaign said they donated blood to the wounded of Afghan forces to show support to their sacrifices.

Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and is considered the second holiest month after Ramadhan. Ashura is observed on the 10th of Muharram every year.

On the tenth day of the month, Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the third Imam of the Shia community, was martyred in the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD. (Tolo news)

(3) Government is ...

he added. "We created the environment for peace, but the Taliban took it wrong," Ghani, whose government was not included in the now stalled negotiations, has invited Taliban chief Maulvi Hibatullah Akhunzada to a video conference and urged him to "at least talk with people" instead of hiding. The Associated Press reported. The insurgents dismiss Ghani's government as a U.S. puppet. Even as Afghans prepared for the violence to drag on, many said the breakdown of the talks was inevitable, calling the insurgents untrustworthy liars who only wanted to return to power.

The Taliban have been lying throughout the peace talks, hoping to secure a deal that would see coalition troops pull out of the country, said Najibullah Fakhri from northeastern Badakhshan province. Badakhshan never fell under Taliban control when the militants ruled the country in the 1990s, but several districts in the province have been overrun by the insurgents in recent years.

"The Taliban do not speak honestly," said Fakhri, who fled his home in the district of Jurm, southeast of the Badakhshan's provincial capital, Fayzabad, five years ago when the militant group began fighting there. "They are just trying to come into power again."

Afghanistan was "in chaos," said Malik Abdul Hadi, a tribal elder in Afghani-

stan's eastern Laghman province, after Trump announced Saturday that he had called off peace negotiations and canceled secretly planned talks that would have been held separately with the Taliban and the Afghan government over the weekend in Camp David, Md.

"After nine months of talks, there is no result," Hadi lamented.

"The Taliban cannot be trusted," he added, echoing what Trump said on Twitter — that he'd called off the talks because "the Taliban's persistent, grisly violence made them untrustworthy partners."

What the Taliban said during the talks with the U.S. in Doha "is very different from what they are doing here," said Fakhri, who represents some 3,000 families who fled to the Badakhshan city of Baharak after militants took control of their towns. (AA)

(4) Wang Yi Meets ...

safeguarding peace and stability in the region. Speaking highly of the Chinese side's efforts to push forward the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, the Afghan side is willing to constantly increase mutual political trust among the three sides under this mechanism and deepen practical cooperation and counter-terrorism cooperation. (Monitoring Desk)

(5) IEC and Govt ...

otherwise, there will be another crisis in the country.

"We want transparent elections. We want fair elections. Security should be guaranteed. The international community should give assurances," presidential candidate Mohammad Ibrahim Alokzai said.

"I can assure you that the elections will be postponed. Neither the government is ready for it nor the Election Commission," presidential candidate Mohammad Hakim Torsan said.

It is expected that the Presidential Candidates' Council, which 14 candidates as its members, will announce their final stance on the presidential election in the coming week.

"The situation shows that if it continues as it is. There are different options and one of them is that they [members of the Presidential Candidates Council] postpone the election by using their legal right and hold the election after the situation turns normal," presidential candidate Shahab Hakimi said.

Figures by the IEC indicate that almost nine million people have registered to vote in the presidential election. (Tolo news)

(6) Pakistan...

deal with the Taliban, provided they gave up violence.

Trump's announcement followed a Taliban statement, admitting to a Thursday car bombing at a security post near Nato headquarters in Kabul that killed 12 people. Two Nato soldiers — one American and a Romanian — were also killed in the attack.

"What kind of people would kill so many in order to seemingly strengthen their bargaining position?" Trump said in the tweet.

The Taliban also used Twitter to respond to Trump's announcement, saying they found his statement disappointing.

Taliban spokesman Shaheen referred to this in another tweet, saying that the two sides had agreed to hold "numerous intra-Afghan talks in different countries" but nothing had been finalised yet.

"There were to be multiple international meetings in different countries" before a final agreement on direct talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government," he wrote.

A US media report claimed that Trump decided to hold direct talks with the Taliban because he believed "he would be better positioned to do the negotiating himself".

US media reports said the decision to invite Taliban leaders and President Ashraf Ghani to Camp David was made a week ago in a meeting between President Trump and his national security officials. Arrangements were made over the past week to bring the Taliban leadership to the US, and President Ghani had already planned a trip to Washington.

CNN reported that after Thursday's bombing, the national security team convened again and briefed Trump on the situation. The decision was made then to cancel the talks and Ghani cancelled his trip. The Taliban leaders never arrived in the US.

"Pakistan has always condemned violence and called on all sides for restraint and commitment to pursue the process," the FO statement said.

The statement added that Pakistan had been facilitating the peace and reconciliation process in good faith and as a shared responsibility, and had encouraged all sides to remain engaged with sincerity and patience.

Pakistan will continue to monitor the de-

velopments. Pakistan reiterates its principled policy stance that there is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(7) US and NATO ...

"They reaffirmed their commitment to the Afghan people that they will stand with them," he said. "Peace is a need for Afghans. NATO supports a just, inclusive and sustainable peace. And they are committed to a transparent and fair election." (Tolo news)

(8) No Girls...

According to Hameedi, there are 32 primary, 19 middle and 44 high schools for girls in the province and 22 high schools, 32 intermediate and 29 primary schools have separate shifts for boys and girls.

Abdullah Hameed said there was no school for girls or female teacher in the Padpakh district. However, he said they were planning to arrange four girls' classes in the district this education year with support of local elders.

Besides Badpakh, girls face some barriers in their way to pursue education in Dawlat Shah district. But girls face no problems in the provincial capital and other districts.

He said 75 percent of students who graduated last year were appointed as teachers in the same schools where they studied.

Razia Niyazi, a member of the Provincial Council, expressed concern over non-availability of female teachers in Badpakh district and warned the areas would be deprived of development if the education issue was not addressed.

She demanded the Provincial Council and education department address the issue and stressed all districts should be treated equally and services be provided on equal basis.

Malak Niamatullah, a local elder from Garoch village in Badpakh, said they had pledged support to the government in starting four classes for girls and would send their daughters to school this education year.

He, however, demanded the appointment of female teachers in the district in order to encourage more girls towards education. (Pajhwok)

(9) Airstrike Kills ...

and Gul Nazar known as Abubakar. According to the police official, a Taliban vehicle was also destroyed during the operation.

Taliban has not made a comment about the report yet. (ATN)

(10) EU Wants...

that we have seen from him in relation to his relationship with China and describing the European Union as a security risk."

The EU knows that China has to make certain changes, Hogan added, but said that Trump's actions were clearly not improving the economic situation in either the United States or China.

Hogan, who has not held back in public and pointed criticism of Britain's approach throughout the Brexit talks, said that even if a withdrawal agreement is struck this year, it would take another six to eight months before EU member states agree a mandate to allow him start future trade talks.

He said, however, that a no-deal Brexit would create an even further delay, repeating the EU's position that the main issues in the divorce proceedings of citizens rights, financial settlement and the Irish border would still need to be agreed. "There are a lot of people in the United Kingdom who have not come to terms that if there is a crash out of the European Union, we still have to deal with the same issues," he said.

"There is a wishful thinking that these are going to go away, they're not. They are going to be centrally involved in phase two of the negotiations if phase one doesn't complete and there is no getting away from that." (Reuters)

(11) New EU Executive...

team will shape the European Way: we will take bold action against climate change, build our partnership with the United States, define our relations with a more self-assertive China and be a reliable neighbour, for example to Africa," she said in a statement.

"This team will have to stand up for our values and world-class standards ... My Commission will be a geopolitical Commission committed to sustainable policies. And I want the European Union to be the guardian of multilateralism. Because we know that we are stronger by doing together what we cannot do alone." Holding the influential competition portfolio for the past five years, Vestager has fought monopolies and imposed hefty fines on tech giants Apple and Alphabet unit Google.

Competition is seen as a top job, with Germany and France pressing for the bloc to soften its anti-monopoly rules to help European industrial champions compete with rivals from China and the United

States.

Hogan, currently in charge of agriculture in the outgoing Commission, will face a battle to resolve trade tensions with U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and will be in charge of establishing future economic relations with Britain after Brexit.

The economic portfolio goes to former Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni at a time when the continent is struggling with weak growth, a possible recession in Germany, and battles with Italy over budgetary restraint.

The outgoing commission has long tussled with Italy over fiscal rules in past years. The appointment of an Italian leftist to monitor Rome's compliance with EU budget rules could be seen as a lenient move.

However, Gentiloni will have to agree budget decisions with former Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, who has a reputation as a tough enforcer of fiscal discipline and will be in charge overall of the Commission's economic affairs. (Reuters)

(12) Cyber Firm NSO...

Shalev Hulio, co-founder and chief executive of NSO, said: "NSO's products provide governments with the tools to help stop the world's worst terror attacks and most dangerous criminals. But (we) also understand that misuse could represent human rights violations."

NSO said it would from now on systematically apply U.N. procedures set in 2011 to identify risks that its technology could harm human rights, and then prevent or mitigate them.

It also plans to evaluate its sales process and contractually oblige customers to limit the use of its products to the prevention and investigation of serious crimes, and to ensure that they will not be used to violate human rights.

NSO needs to turn words into action, Danna Ingleton, deputy director of Amnesty Tech, the technology and human rights division of Amnesty, told Reuters.

"NSO is a company that has a history of saying one thing and doing another," she said. "The reason why they are doing this is to whitewash violations."

She said that NSO and the industry as a whole needs more accountability and to do more due diligence when selling to oppressive regimes so human rights defenders are not targeted.

A Saudi dissident close to murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi filed a lawsuit last year alleging that NSO had helped the royal court to take over his smartphone and spy on his communications with Khashoggi. Hulio has denied that NSO technology was used in Khashoggi's murder.

In May, the electronic encrypted messaging service WhatsApp said a security breach on its app showed signs of coming from a government using surveillance technology developed by a private company, and may have targeted human rights groups.

WhatsApp told rights groups it had some reasons to believe the spyware had been developed by NSO. The firm at the time did not comment on the incidents but said it would investigate any "credible allegations of misuse" of its systems.

NSO, which Francisco Partners sold seven months ago to NSO managers and the European private equity firm Novalpina Capital, said the rules also provide mechanisms to enable reporting and investigation of suspected misuse of its products. "This new policy publicly affirms our unequivocal respect for human rights and our commitment to mitigate the risk of misuse," Hulio said. (Reuters)

(13) Kremlin Says ...

they claimed was the individual's name. Russian daily newspaper Kommersant said on Tuesday the official may have been a man called Oleg Smolenkov, who is reported to have disappeared with his wife and three children while on holiday in Montenegro in 2017 and is now reported to be living in the United States. Kommersant published a picture of a house in Virginia which it said had been bought by a man called Smolenkov in 2018.

Asked about the matter, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Smolenkov had really worked in the Russian presidential administration but had been fired in 2016/17.

"It is true that Smolenkov worked in the presidential administration, but he was fired several years ago. His job was not at a senior official level," he said.

Smolenkov did not have direct access to President Vladimir Putin, Peskov added, declining with a laugh to confirm whether he had been a U.S. agent or not.

"I can't confirm that ... I don't know whether he was an agent. I can only confirm that there was such a person in the presidential administration, who was later sacked."

"All this U.S. media speculation about who urgently extracted who and saved

who from who and so on - this is more the genre of pulp fiction, crime reading, so let's leave it up to them," said Peskov. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said separately on Tuesday he had never heard of Smolenkov.

"I have never seen this man, have never met him, and have never monitored his career or movements," Lavrov said. (Reuters)

(14) Mugabe Polarizes...

topple him and want him buried in his home village.

Mnangagwa has taken the threat to snub a burial at National Heroes Acre sufficiently seriously that he has dispatched a delegation to Singapore, where Mugabe died in a hospital on Friday, to negotiate with the family, government sources said.

The body is expected to arrive in Zimbabwe on Wednesday, adding time pressure to Mnangagwa, who is under fire over an economic crisis and clampdown on dissent that has drawn parallels with the worst excesses of the Mugabe era.

Both men have blamed Western sanctions and accused the United States and Britain of driving opposition protests.

"Mugabe has always been a controversial figure, in life as it is now in death," said Eldred Masunungure, a politics professor at the University of Zimbabwe. "If the founding father of Zimbabwe wasn't buried at National Heroes Acre, it would set a very bad precedent and tarnish the image of the head of state."

In public, senior ZANU-PF officials express confidence that Mugabe will be buried at the monument on Sunday, after a state funeral in a sports stadium a day earlier. In private they say the feud with Mugabe's family could have been handled better.

One factor that could help Mnangagwa's delegation, which is led by Vice President Kembo Mohadi, is that Mugabe's family is divided over where the former president should be laid to rest.

Leo Mugabe, Mugabe's nephew, is leading a group of relatives who want the former president to be buried in his home village of Kutama, some 85 km (52 miles) from Harare, two relatives who have attended planning meetings for Mugabe's burial said. That group is also backed by some members of the faction within ZANU-PF that is closely aligned with Mugabe's wife Grace and wants to get back at Mnangagwa. Other family members, including Mike Binha, who is from Grace's side of the family, think it would be best to mend ties with Mnangagwa by burying Mugabe at National Heroes Acre, the relatives said. (Reuters)

(15) Crack Team...

compounds, but it unexpectedly turned out that such compounds can also have high and selective activity against feline immunodeficiency virus, which is the closest analogue of the human immunodeficiency virus," Rakitin said.

A press release from South Ural State University (SUSU) claims the discovery could pave the way for a whole new class of antiviral drugs which could be used for numerous diseases.

"The importance of the results is that the same drugs can be used for different types of diseases (cancer, HIV, etc.)," said Oleg Rakitin, doctor of chemistry and professor at SUSU. The mechanism that neutralizes HIV essentially snips the zinc atom from the HIV virus molecules, thus deactivating them and rendering the virus inert.

Throughout the research, the team discovered drugs that were potent antivirals but that did not "poison" the ordinary, healthy cells, reducing the 'scorched earth' collateral damage experienced by so many patients on powerful antiviral medications.

HIV is a degenerative autoimmune condition which leaves patients vulnerable to numerous opportunistic infections and cancers, drastically reducing life expectancy.

There were 37.9 million people living with AIDS worldwide in 2018, according to the latest data. Some 23.3 million of these were being treated with antiretroviral therapy. New HIV infections are down by 40 percent since the peak in 1997. (RT)

(16) North Korea...

tests in recent months, alarming American, Japanese and South Korean officials. Many of the tests have been in protest of joint military drills held by American and South Korean armed forces that the North sees as a rehearsal for an invasion.

Most of the North Korean weapons tested in July and August were short-range, which would not violate its self-imposed moratorium on long-range tests that would almost certainly derail future negotiations.

Nuclear talks between American and North Korean officials have stalled since discussions of fell apart in February. President Trump rejected North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's demand for sanctions relief in return for partial disarmament during their second summit in Vietnam. (RT)