

**(1) President Ghani...**

The number of civilians killed in Afghanistan reached a record high in the first half of the year according to a UN report in July. The report said the covering period, 1 January to 30 June 2018, findings include the killing of more civilians in the first six months of this year - 1,692 deaths - than at any comparable time over the last ten years since records have been kept.

Deaths rose 1 percent to 1,692, although injuries dropped 5 percent to 3,430, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said in its latest civilian casualty report. Overall civilian casualties were down 3 percent. Many areas in the country are either under Taliban's control or have remain contested between government forces and militants, according to security officials. Over 200 people have been killed since mid-August in deadly incidents in Kabul and Nangarhar.

Despite all these challenges, talking to the VICE News, President Ghani insisted that there is reason to believe that this time will be different. He pointed to the Eid al-Fitr ceasefire between government forces and Taliban as a proof that the country is moving forward towards peace. "The ceasefire showed that this country is ready for reconciliation," Ghani said in the interview. "We are offering to overcome the past grievances and move forward and this I think is genuine because if they insist on a military victory that's something the Afghans will not accept."

This comes after President Ghani at a gathering in Kabul on Thursday talked in favor of the US's South Asia Strategy for Afghanistan and said "Afghans waited for the US's South Asia Strategy for the past 40 years".

"The US strategy for Afghanistan and the South Asia strategy is a thing for which the people of Afghanistan were waiting for forty years," said Ghani. (Tolo news)

**(2) US: Former...**

a heavy blow to incumbent Patten, winning 327 to 143 in Tuesday's primary.

"Thank you to all my supporters who helped me win tonight's Dem. primary. I will work hard for all the residents of Ward8," Wazir said on Twitter.

The newly-elected Democratic nominee is running on a campaign platform of advocating for school safety, access to health care and equal housing and economic opportunities. (AA)

**(3) Dostum Wants...**

negotiations with the Afghans. Dostum in his message said the current opportunity for peace should not be missed as the public's hope for stability in Afghanistan had increased.

"The international community, our good neighbours and all Afghans support peace and permanent ceasefire," he said.

He also asked the Taliban to be responsible in ending the four decades of war and join the peace process for the protection of national interests. "Only Afghans have been suffering from the ongoing war in Afghanistan."

The vice-president urged people to show their strong support to the peace process. People's unity and movement for stability was the only way to get rid of the current problems, Dostum said. Meanwhile, Atta Mohammad Noor, executive chief of Jamiat-Islami Afghanistan and former

Balkh governor, also asked the masses to participate in efforts aimed at bringing peace to the country. He said foreigners never wanted to put the ongoing war in Afghanistan to an end. (Pajhwok)

**(4) US Project for Afghan...**

project for female empowerment, aimed to help 75,000 Afghan women get jobs, promotions and internships.

However, Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction John L. Sopko said in a report: "We can't find any good data that they're helping any women."

The promotion of 55 women to better jobs was cited one of the few concrete results in the report, which said that it was unclear whether the project could even be credited for the promotions.

"We can't find any good data that they're helping any women," said Sopko, head of the agency that was set up by Congress to oversee America's spending in Afghanistan.

Afghan women's groups, including First Lady Rula Ghani, have faulted the programme that was poorly designed and oversold, the SIGAR was quoted as saying by The New York Times.

In a 2016 interview with the agency, she charged that most of the project funds would go to administrative costs and American contractors instead of Afghan women.

According to NYT, the fresh report voiced concern that security for three contractors and overhead costs amounted to 18 percent of the \$89 million disbursed so far.

Sopko characterised the project as a classic example of hubris and mendacity. "Raj Shah and his people at USAID oversold it, lied to the taxpayer and the American and Afghan people about what we could accomplish."

Rajiv Shah was USAID administrator when Promote was launched. "Working in conflict settings to help girls go to school and bring health care to vulnerable women is absolutely essential," Shah said in response to Sopko's remarks.

USAID hoped to persuade other countries to contribute and bring total funding to \$416 million over five years, in addition to the American funding that eventually totaled \$280 million, the ex-administrator said.

Not a single other country has donated to the initiative despite the passage of five years later, according to the SIGAR report. "I feel sorry for the poor Afghan women, who are saying, 'Where's my private sector job? Where's my government job?'" Sopko remarked. (Pajhwok)

**(5) HPC Delegation...**

they shared their experiences with the Afghans.

Last year, the Nepalese president met the Afghan counterpart in New York and offered to support the Afghan peace process. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Noor Predicts...**

ability to hold transparent elections. He said they would not let anyone steal and disrespect people's mandate again.

He said the national unity government's executive and judicial pillars were illegitimate and the government was now trying to take control of the legislature through rigging in the upcoming elections.

Noor also warned to stop the election process if transparency

was not ensured. He added a large number of fake voter cards had been distributed across the country.

"When the IEC was exposed after fake documents were produced by our colleagues, the commission responded by asking where did you find these documents? They were unaware about their own documents," he said.

Noor said changes in the country could come with people's movement. "We were given different names, some called us evildoers, some called us corrupt and others called us warlords, but our friends are in the government and they know how to govern, we will take this government via democracy with God's help 10 months later," he added.

About aerial firing by armed men in convoys in Kabul city on the death anniversary of Ahmad Shah Massoud, Noor said the men were unhappy with the government and they showed their frustration through savage acts.

He said government officials were non-capable to respond to the public. "Those who are in power and claim this country's ownership, why they cannot ensure security?, why they cannot convince the youth not to disrupt order in Kabul city?," he asked.

Balkh governor, Mohammad Ishaq Guzar, urged people to fully participate in the Oct 20 parliamentary elections. He said people should achieve their goals through elections.

Guzar asked people to stand with Afghan security forces in winning the war in Afghanistan. He appreciated the Mujahid's struggle against international terrorism and said they were able to defeat terrorists who were backed by some countries.

The international community was unable to deal with terrorism during the past 18 years, the governor said.

Balkh provincial council head, Mohammad Afzal Hadid, accused the government of doing nothing to improve security in the north of the country.

"The government should respond to people, why areas fall to militants every day, why our stable cities are becoming unstable, the government should respond," he said.

He said if the situation continued, the public would revolve against the government and the situation might go beyond control. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Afghan Air...**

of Defense (DoD) order for 150 MD 530F/MD 530G platforms. The rotorcraft arrived at Kandahar Airfield aboard a US Air Force (USAF) Boeing C-17 Globemaster III strategic transport aircraft, IHS Jane's Defence Weekly reported.

"The MD 530Fs will be reassembled and tested over the next 10 days before being handed over to the Afghan Air Force (AAF) for operations," it added.

The AAF received 25 helicopters from 2011 to 2016. The remaining 25 helicopters from the latest order would be delivered in a year from now. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Offensives Stepped...**

and defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. ANDSF will never stop their efforts in this way even if it costs their lives." (Pajhwok)

**(9) IEC Yet to...**

of the law.

Ayubzada said there were serious differences between the members of the election commis-

sion and the secretariat of the election commission amid the lack of a clear-cut mechanism of transparency.

He cited the lack of publication of voter lists on the basis of election calendar, the influence of local governors at the provincial level and no polling centers in many provinces among several problems and challenges plaguing the electoral process.

He said the shortage of female employees and claims of political parties surrounding large-scale fraud in the process of registering voters were among issues that had changed the electoral situation.

In order to improve the situation, Ayubzada suggested that the elections should be held on schedule and warned against any delay.

The watchdog issued a resolution stating that the monitoring of national and international observers and some other institutions of the elections was important.

However, IEC deputy spokesman Abdul Aziz Ibrahim said that the elections would be held on the given date and the commission was ready for the elections. He added the voter list will be released shortly. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Activists Meet...**

movement in Baghlan province, said there is no family in Afghanistan who has not suffered from the war.

"Afghans should follow the route to peace and should select a specific place for peace and come together there," said Quraishi.

The peace activists were warmly welcomed by Balkh residents who stressed the need for unity among Afghans.

"By such moves, we can play an effective role in bringing peace to the country," Balkh resident Rafiullah said.

"We should increase pressure on government and insurgents to bring peace to Afghanistan," said Afzal Hadid, head of Balkh Provincial Council.

The peace activists said they will tackle any threats in their efforts for peace and that pressure from any group cannot stop them from their will.

The Journey Began In Helmand The peace activists initially launched their protest in Lashkargah City after a suicide bombing outside a stadium in March. About a month later, a group of eight protestors left Helmand on foot for Kabul.

The activists walked through towns and villages, crossed provinces and met with local residents along the way. For 38 days, they walked and as they progressed, so their numbers grew.

About 700kms later, the group of eight had grown to an estimated 100. They arrived in Kabul on June 18 and handed over demands for a ceasefire and peace to both the Afghan government and the Taliban.

The group gave the Taliban three days in which to answer and said if they failed to do so, they would embark on sit in protests outside diplomatic offices and missions in the capital.

The Taliban's deadline passed without any response. The activists then held a three-day sit-in protest outside UNAMA's office in Kabul. They sent a letter to the UN Secretary General António Guterres in which they asked him not to remain indifferent towards ending the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

From there, they moved on to the US embassy - where they stayed

for nine days. The activists sent a letter to the American people, asking them to put pressure on the US government to end the war in Afghanistan.

The activists, whose ages range from 17 to 65, come from all walks of life and include students, athletes and farmers among others. The activists also established sit-in protest camp in front of Iranian, Pakistan, Russian and British embassies as well as the office of the European Union in Kabul.

The movement called on Afghan allies to put pressure on Pakistan to stop its interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

**EU Fund Invests \$20m in Israeli High-Tech**

ISRAELI - The European Investment Fund (EIF) today announced a \$20 million investment in Israel, the fund's first in Israel. This investment, the European Union's (EU) first in Israeli high tech, is part of the InnoFin program in the framework of the European Horizon 2020 R&D program, Globes reports.

EIF is joining a group of investors recruited by the ICV fund; EIF will be an anchor investor. ICV is raising its third fund, ICV III, which is likely to reach \$75 million. ICV focuses on investments in startups at the early stages, and has already begun considering new investments.

ICV III will invest in seed stage and early stage companies in software, hardware, infrastructure, and innovation. The fund is focusing on increasing its efficient use of resources and on the transition to industrial innovation.

The ICV fund began its activity in 2006, among other things with the support of Horizon 2020. ICV has invested over \$150 million in 25 companies to date through the first two funds that it manages. The ICV funds are backed by leading investment institutions, multinationals, and firms in Europe, the US, and Israel. Its current investment will bring ICV's total investment to over \$200 million.

Israel is a partner in the framework European program through a €1.1 billion investment by the Israel Innovation Authority by means of the Israel-Europe Directorate for Research & Innovation (ISERD).

One of the important advantages of Israel's participation in this program is the entry and involvement of European financial institutions in Israel. This involvement includes investments in venture capital funds and the use of financial tools for realizing the innovation vision, such as guarantees for local banks giving Israeli companies the opportunity to develop and grow. EIF is part of the European Investment Bank (EIB) group. It supports small and medium-sized businesses in Europe through assistance in financing. EIF develops venture capital and growth funds, guarantees, and other tools focused on these market segments.

At the event announcing this cooperation, Israel Ambassador to the EU Emanuele Giaufret said, "The new areas of investment are in addition to the successful activity carried out to date by EU institutions in infrastructure development in Israel, technology, and innovation. For more than 20 years, Israel has been a partner in the EU research and innovation program, which is creating a suitable environment for this important investment and other investments. These investments, especially in the existing areas, not only encourage the local economy, but also prepare Israel for handling its future environmental challenges." (Trend)