

### (1) Take Action...

including the Afghan government, believed a political settlement was still possible.

The US and regional powers, including China and Russia, had agreed to support the Afghan-led peace process, he added. "There is broad-based consensus on the Afghan-led peace process. It's not in the interest of any of us to be competing with one another in Afghanistan."

The first-ever direct peace talks between representatives of the insurgent group and the Ashraf Ghani administration was held in Murree in June, raising hopes for agreement on a lasting settlement.

However, the announcement of Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar led to the suspension of the second round of the dialogue in late July. Omar's successor is yet to make up his mind on engagement with Kabul. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Promoting ...

was at minus 94 percent. The only solution to reducing this was through the development of SMEs, he said.

"Our trade balance is minus 94 percent and one way to grow exports is through small and medium enterprises. In Afghanistan more than 90 percent of exports takes place through small and medium enterprises," said Haqjo.

Economic analysts meanwhile said that challenges facing the sector in the country need to be removed.

"If the enterprises are faced with restrictions and shortages, entrepreneurs with labor and other production problems, will be in a state of stagnation," said Hamidullah Farooqi an economic analyst.

AISA said however that so far there are 5,000 trade licenses in Afghanistan within the sector - of which most are craft artisans and shopkeepers.

According to AISA officials, the role of women and their support is also crucial in the development and growth of small and medium enterprises and there should be effective and clear programs to increase capacity in this respect.

The conference aims to promote entrepreneurship, to stimulate services for SMEs, to support diversification, create employment opportunities and productivity.

This is the first such focused event in Afghanistan for SMEs and is partnered and sponsored by companies including the Afghanistan Commercial Bank (ACB), Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce (ACCI), Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) and Kabul Group among others.

Small enterprises plays a critical role in developing the economies of countries around the world and are key to creating employment opportunities. (Tolonews)

### (3) Planned UN ...

be the main focus of Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah's speech at the session.

"It is a good opportunity for the Afghan delegation to talk about interference and the undeclared war of Pakistan in Afghanistan," said Nasrullah Stanikzai, lecturer at Kabul University.

Daud Kalakani, an MP, said the Afghan delegation should raise the issue of Pakistan's interference at every opportunity. "The Afghan delegation should talk about Pakistan's interference and the issue that Pakistan is a supporter of terrorism, in each and every international and regional session," he said.

The CEO's deputy spokesman Jawed Faisal said security, economic improvement and the presence of Daesh in Afghanistan will be the main points of the Afghan delegation's agenda at the session.

"The Chief Executive and his team will leave Kabul for New York on September 24 and will discuss security, economic improvement and Daesh," Faisal added.

Meanwhile, a number of Kabul residents, particularly the youth, have called on Abdullah to try to attract more attention of the international community for Afghanistan.

"The Afghan delegation should present a complaint letter about Pakistan to the UN General Assembly and it should ask the US to equip the Afghan army," said Mohammad Nazir, a university student.

President Ashraf Ghani announced a few days ago that Abdullah would lead the Afghan delegation in UN General Assembly. (Tolonews)

### (4) Iran to Help...

research will be effective to pro-

mote their knowledge.

Beheshti called for signing a Memorandum of Understanding between Iran and Afghanistan to develop cultural ties.

Head of Afghanistan Archeology Research Center Abdul Qadir Teymouri said that several decades of war ruined most of cultural and historical heritage of Afghanistan, calling for contribution of the world community to Afghan cultural heritage.

He said that cooperation with Iran can pave way for future activities of the center and promotion of scientific level of its experts.

Professor Suleiman Samadi from Social Sciences faculty in Kabul University said that the faculty has four departments of public history, archeology, contemporary history and philosophy and that Afghanistan is ready to cooperate with Iran in all the fields.

Professor Mojtaba A'refi from Archeology Department of Kabul University said his faculty is hopeful to use Iranian experience in the fields of training and repairing historical monuments, protection of cultural heritage, activities in the field of Islamic arts.

The Afghan delegation is currently on a visit to Iran upon invitation of ICHTRC.

During 2-day stay, they will visit different research centers of CHTRC as well as National Museum and will consider ways to expand bilateral ties. (IRNA)

### (5) Efforts Underway...

termed them baseless.

Responding to a question regarding the resumption of the stalled peace process, Aziz said it now depends on the Afghan government, and they can resume the process if they are willing to.

Earlier in July, the leadership of the Afghan Taliban had disassociated itself from a process Pakistan had been facilitating to encourage the group's dialogue with the government of Afghanistan for peace and reconciliation.

Pakistan's role in facilitating the reconciliation process has always been considered as crucial but Pakistani officials have all along been cautioning about the limits of their influence on the Taliban, reported Dawn News.

Afghanistan in August had sought the help of Maulana Samiul Haq, a religious scholar and politician, to urge the Taliban to resume the Pakistan-brokered peace talks, which had been halted after the announced death of Taliban chief Mullah Omar. Pakistan had hosted a meeting between the Afghan government and Afghan Taliban representatives in Pakistan in July 7 which was also attended by representatives from China and the United States.

The second round of the talks, which was scheduled to be held in Pakistan on July 31, was postponed after reports regarding the death of Mullah Omar and the ensuing leadership crisis among the Taliban. (Tolonews)

### (6) Changes to ...

people," deputy IEC chief Abdul Rahman Hotaki said.

He in turn called on government to "let the next elections be held under the same law".

Speaking at a press conference in Kabul, Hotaki stated the current leadership of the election commission will continue their work - referring to the recommendations by the Electoral Reform Commission (ERC) to replace the commissioners. "Based on the president's decree, we will continue our work to set the election timetable and we will soon announce the date," Hotaki continued.

However, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah's office insists parliamentary and provincial council elections will not be held unless the election system is reformed. "These organizations can carry on what they are doing now but all necessary work will be done after the reforms and no election can be held prior to reforms," said Javed Faisal, Abdullah's deputy spokesperson.

Recently, the ERC submitted a package of 11 recommendations to President Ashraf Ghani, seven of which were approved and the rest, according to him, needed further revision. (Tolonews)

### (7) MUDA Minister ...

and Pakistan Zamir Nabiyevech Kabulov, Minister of Urban Development and President of the Chamber of Commerce and talked to them about the economic cooperation.

He told Russian officials in a meeting that he is trying to strengthen the economy and living conditions in Afghanistan.

He urged Russians to invest in the housing projects in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Putin's special envoy Kabulov said that security remains a biggest challenge in front of Russian investment in Afghanistan.

This visit is followed by an earlier meeting between Minister Mansour Naderi and Yury Sentyurin the Russian Deputy Minister for energy.

Sentyurin had promised that his country will expand its investment in the economic sector in Afghanistan to include housing construction projects.

Sentyurin had also promised that Russia will export its latest technologies and equipment to build affordable houses in Afghanistan.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been inked between Afghanistan's House Construction Sector and Russian Industry for forming a construction company based on 49 and 51 percent share.

Once an agreement is reached, Russian equipment worth of \$25 million will reach Afghanistan which will enable the construction company to build up to 1,000 apartments annually. (KP)

### (8) Mullah Omar's...

was present on the occasion and the deal was brokered by a group of religious scholars and elders following efforts lasting weeks.

Earlier, there were reports that hundreds of pro-Taliban clerics had gathered in Pakistan's Balochistan province to broker a deal over the succession row between Masnour and the family of Omar, the founder and long time supremo of the insurgency.

Omar's death was announced in July, about two years after he died of illness, according to the Taliban, who argued his death was kept secret to preserve unity in the insurgency at a time when foreign troops were leaving Afghanistan.

Manan and Yaqoob challenged Mansour's ascension because they both were contenders for the position.

Last month, Mullah Abdul Manan said in a video clip, a copy of which is available with Pajhwok Afghan News, that said his family had pledged allegiance to no one and was not ready to do so until differences existed in the insurgency.

"Mullah Omar had always hoped for unity and he had been successful to some extent. To fulfill his wish, our stance is that the views of those individuals who had played a key role in the establishment of the Islamic Emirate should be respected in the election of the new leader."

"To fulfill this wish (of Omar), our family is ready to work towards that end. We have not pledged allegiance to anyone and we are not ready to do so in the presence of differences," Manan had said, urging religious scholars to work for resolving differences in the group instead of taking sides.

But in their meeting with Mansour, Manan and Yaqoob pledged to remain united under the new leadership and also urged all their supporters to announce support for Mullah Mansour, according to the Taliban statement.

An audio message from Mullah Yaqoob released over the weekend, which said he had withdrawn his allegations against Mansour and that his father had died of natural causes, set the stage for the development. He insisted that he was ready to do anything for the purpose of forging unity in the group.

The Taliban statement clarified that Yaqoob and Mannan had delayed their allegiance pledges not because of differences with Mansour but in "good faith" over the process.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Adviser on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz told the Senate said that completion of transition in the militant group was being awaited for the resumption of the Afghan reconciliation process.

He said that Mullah Mansour had now been appointed as the group's leader and efforts were under way to restart the peace process.

He also said Mullah Yaqoob's statement that his father died of tuberculosis and hepatitis C in Afghanistan had vindicated Pakistan's stance that Mullah Omar was not in Pakistan at the time of his death. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Govt. Has...

first time presented its suggestions

about reforms in the electoral system to the government.

Switching from the current Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) exercise to a system which could pave the way for political parties to take part in election to parliament and to have affective role in legislation and nation-building was among ERC's suggestions.

Mujtaba Paikan, head of the Green Alternative Organisation (GAO), said lawlessness, target killings and other illegal activities were on the rise, widening the gap between the government and the masses.

He said nothing significant could be done over the past 14 years to ensure the freedom of press, strengthen democracy, protect human rights, alleviate poverty and resolve other socio-economic problems.

Established two months ago and active in 22 provinces, PPCSON is comprised of 10 political parties and 67 civil society organizations. (Pajhwok)

### (10) Kabul Holds ...

Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Asadullah Zamir said that "to promote domestic agricultural products we need [a platform] for more marketing."

Annually Afghanistan imports \$4 billion USD in agricultural products alone, said officials.

Afghanistan Industrial Association (AIA) head Ahmad Sakhi Payman said that "this is important for the industry - the creation of this exhibition displays Afghanistan's products."

A number of the traders welcomed the move and said that "it would have a beneficial impact for the marketing of local products."

"The holding of this exhibition is very effective for our people to know about their local products," a trader said.

This comes on the heels of calls from traders for government to assist in providing such platforms for them to promote their products. (Tolonews)

### (11) Queues Grow...

into Iran.

"Hundreds of passengers manage to cross the border on a daily basis; but about 300 people are deported and we transfer them back to Kabul. They [the deported ones] say they are treated inhumanly on the other side of the border," said Sayed Alem, the head of a transport company.

Saeed a resident of Nimroz said: "Our house is near the border and close to a hospital. At least five bodies are transferred to the hospital from the other side of the border from Iran every day. The youth are killed and I don't think that their families get the bodies of their loved ones."

Saeed urged government to call on the people to stop leaving the country.

Meanwhile, one Afghan who had traveled through Iran and Turkey to reach Europe has spoken out about the hardships faced during the arduous journey. "I wanted to go to Turkey and then reach Germany. We were 26 families in total. We were stopped by robbers. They asked for \$2,000 USD from each person. We escaped but some of the families are still in the custody of the robbers," Mohammad Hassan, one hopeful migrant who turned back told TOLONews.

According to unconfirmed reports, more than 7,000 Afghans have left the country over the past three months. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has however no figures and were not able to confirm this. (Tolonews)

### (12) Afghanistan Water ...

flow into the neighboring countries without being able to use it for their own local fields. The scarcity of water has led to tensions between tribes and villages.

The ministry if water declared that the continuation of insecurity caused Afghanistan fails to effectively use its water from the construction of dams and other projects. Officials in the ministry noted that the residents of the country must cooperate with the government in providing the security of water and electricity projects.

"The construction of dams takes long time and in some cases the works have not been done properly and on time. In addition, the main problem is insecurity that cause the projects face a deadlock," Ali Ahmad Osmani, minister of Water and Energy said.

One of Afghanistan's missed opportunities in the last decade was its

failure to legislate a comprehensive water law. Existing law does not define water rights.

Land owners are also owners of water and landless farmers have no rights to water. The water management institutions are highly ineffective.

The lack of a database of natural resources and the limited ability of the government to collect data is another challenge and a major obstacle to planning and development.

Afghanistan has a population of 29 million, with 79% of the population living in rural areas. Only 27% of its population has access to improved water sources, and it goes down to 20% in rural areas, the lowest percentage in the world.

The numbers get even worse when you look at the percentage of people with access to improved sanitation facilities. With the numbers at 5% nationwide, and only 1% in rural areas, Afghanistan again ranks the worst in the world.

In Kabul, the capital, with a population of 6 million, 80% of the people lack access to safe drinking water, and 95% lack access to improved sanitation facilities.

Analysts say that reaching the safe drinking water is another challenges of Afghanistan residents which the people are suffering from.

Water is a collective issue for Afghanistan and its neighbors. Any solution should therefore be multinational. Nations involved in Afghanistan, in particular US-led forces, should avoid politicizing this problem as it is so vital to the future of Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

Investment decisions should be based not on efforts to deprive neighboring countries of water but on avoiding waste and improving utilization of resources.

Without regional cooperation, Afghanistan will be faced with deeper and unresolvable challenges that will be even more difficult to solve after most international forces leave in 2014. (ATN)

### (13) Lawmakers Seek...

of senior police officials in the province. "Over the past 15 days, police were informed four times. Eighteen inmates were transferred to Kabul, but no measures for thwarting the incident were initiated."

She feared the incident would have a negative impact on Ghazni and neighboring provinces' security. She claimed the assailants had also secured cooperation from inside the prison. Evidence of it was also available, she claimed.

Without going into details, the MP demanded a Wolesi Jirga delegation be sent to Ghazni investigate the incident.

Other members of the house also demanded thorough investigations into the attack and asked the interior minister to sack police officials in the province.

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimidi directed the house internal security, defence and legislative commissions to probe the incident. "Any official found involved in dereliction of duty be sacked and punished." (Pajhwok)

### (14) Hajj Transfer ...

which were the rate, facilities and implementation of the operation plan for pilgrims who went directly to Medina," Deputy Hajj Minister Dailuhaq Abid said.

Reduction in Hajj costs also included the decrease in airfare charges, from \$1,320 USD to \$1,045 USD per ticket.

Meanwhile during the last week of transporting pilgrims, Ariana Airlines of Afghanistan chartered Nigerian and Egyptian planes to move Afghan pilgrims. (Tolonews)

### (15) Thousands of ...

salaries why they were hired in the first place. Every now and then, he visits the school to check if his salaries had come.

Mohammad Hassan Asadi, Bamyān provincial council member, said these teachers had complained to them many times on the issue. "The education ministry should take up the issue without further delay."

He added they had held discussions with local officials but the problem lies with education and finance ministries that had shown negligence. The provincial council has suggested regularising the services of contract-based teachers.

Mohammad Reza Ada, education director, confirmed some teachers had left their jobs due to non-payment of salaries. However, he did not put a specific figure on their number. (Pajhwok)

### (16) Journalists...

responsibility towards their country. "We are in contact with national and international organisations to resolve problems of our media outlets and personnel and provide them with better working facilities," concluded the statement. (Pajhwok)

### (17) Small, Medium ...

Qurban Haqjo, Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) head, said the lack of a proper strategy, bureaucracy and administrative graft were reasons that did not allow small and medium investments to flourish during the past 14 years. (Pajhwok)

### (18) At Least 9...

casualties, he said, but did not provide exact figures. A resident of Zurmat district, Mohammad Ghani, said: "Two days ago, the Taliban came here and warned people through our mosque's loudspeaker not to come out of homes."

He alleged the militants had planted bombs on roads and people could not travel them. Ghani added that a number of civilians had suffered casualties in the clashes.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the militants had been attacking security posts in the district for the past three days. He claimed a large number of security forces had been killed and wounded. (Pajhwok)

### (19) Crown ...

most socially acceptable fashion." Fitzgerald, 36, who was awarded the Medal of Military Valour for aiding wounded comrades in a burning vehicle under enemy fire in 2006, has had several run-ins with the law and suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Between my self-medication, abundant prescribed medications and my inability to cope with everything that was going on, the Crown basically wrote me off as a nut job," he said.

Prosecutors have had the cellphone evidence since last November, Fitzgerald said. As a result of that charge, a judge ordered him to leave the Cornwall area and live with a family west of Brockville, Ont., until the case was resolved. (Agencies)

### (20) About 30...

This battle has been ongoing for three days, Provincial Police Chief Matiullah Khan said.

Matiullah Khan said that the clash started three days ago after Taliban insurgents attacked police outposts. More troops have however been sent in to the area.

"We also have the air force support in the clashes," he said. (FNA)

### (21) Syria's Assad...

Nusra Front, and aerial bombing by a U.S.-led coalition had failed to stop Islamic State.

Turkey denies the accusation. The Syrian president dismissed Western suggestions that his government's actions in the war had fueled the spread of such groups. (Reuters)

### (22) Migrants Seek...

zone, most bound for Germany. Migrants scattered through Balkan countries said they were searching for other routes, possibly through Croatia or Romania, both of which are in the EU though not in Schengen. (Reuters)

### (23) Obama to ...

claims. Ahead of the visit, Obama has warned that the scale of cyber attacks from China was "not acceptable," and officials have floated the idea of sanctions. (AFP)

### (24) France to...

Bashar al-Assad," the French leader stressed.

Valls ruled out "ground intervention", but "if a regional coalition were created to free Syria from the tyranny of Daech, then these countries would have the support of France," he said. (Xinhua)

### (25) UN Calls ...

the other changes include the inadequacy of Sri Lanka's domestic legal framework and the degree to which Sri Lanka's security sector and justice system have been distorted and corrupted by decades of emergency, conflict and impunity. (Xinhua)

### (26) Yemeni Govt...

coalition air strikes have pushed northwards and driven back the Iranian-allied Houthis.

Gulf Arab ground forces and loyalists have now launched an offensive in Marib province east of Sanaa seeking to drive the Houthis out of the capital, which the movement seized in September 2014. (Reuters)