

(1) IEC Fully Prepared...

of election materials began a month ago and we completed this process based on the schedule," head of the Election Commission's secretariat, Habib-Ur-Rahman Nang said.

According to IEC figures, 431 out of 5,373 centers will be closed on the election day due to security issues.

Deputy Interior Minister Gen. Khoshal Sadat said that security threats, lack of voter registration, and blocked roads are the main reasons behind the closure of these centers.

"The closure of the centers in these parts does not mean that people will not be able to vote. They can go to the nearest center and vote on election day," he said.

Meanwhile, IEC officials said they could not hire women employees for 450 polling stations out of the total of 11,000 stations. Therefore, the officials said, they have decided to hire elder men for these stations.

According to the Ministry of Interior, as many as 72,000 members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces will be deployed on election day to ensure the security of the process.

Moreover, almost 20,000 to 30,000 forces will be available as reinforcements.

Figures by the Election Commission reveal that almost 9.6 million people have registered to vote in the presidential election, in which 15 candidates are contending. (Tolo news)

(2) Citizens Have ...

their constitutional right to cast a ballot and elect political representatives in a peaceful manner," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

In a meeting in Doha on Tuesday, Yamamoto repeated the United Nations' call on the Taliban to desist from any activity that would interfere with the elections, particularly with regard to the safety of voters and all other civilians engaged in the election.

Yamamoto, who is also the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), stressed that the election is a civilian undertaking. He highlighted that attacks directed against polling centres and civilians participating in the electoral process are clear violations of international law and may amount to war crimes. He furthermore stressed that perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable and urged the Taliban to retract any instructions which could disrupt elections.

In the campaign period, there have been two high-profile election-related attacks that have caused heavy loss of civilian life. Last week, on 17 September, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in Parwan at the site of an election rally for incumbent President Ashraf Ghani. Thirty civilians were killed in the attack and 51 were injured. On 28 July, 21 civilians were killed and 50 injured in an attack on the Green Trend's main office in Kabul. No party claimed responsibility for that attack.

As polling day nears, there have been increased reports of intimidation of eligible voters by insurgents threatening retaliation for persons involving themselves in the election. On 24 September, three civilians were killed in Kandahar when an improvised explosive device detonated at an election office of President Ghani. A journalist working for the local Hewad TV station was killed, as were two children.

The United Nations condemns all deliberate attacks on civilians and indiscriminate attacks. Moreover, the United Nations calls on all parties to de-escalate the conflict around the electoral period and to take urgent measures to better protect civilians from being harmed in any military operations.

UNAMA commends the work performed by the security forces in supporting the elections, safeguarding the distribution of sensitive election materials and ensuring the security of the polling locations on and before election day so that all Afghans, in-

cluding women, can participate. (PR)

(3) Afghan Voters ...

MOHAMMAD ASHRAF, blacksmith: "I've been a blacksmith for 20 years and we want to have a good election. I call on all people to vote for a good and righteous person as the next president."

SAYED NOMAN, 25, shopkeeper: "We are concerned about how the election will be held because most of the areas are under the control of the Taliban, and the election will not be held in those areas. That's why we're worried fake votes will be used there."

ZAINAB, 40, baker: "I want a good person to win the upcoming election, a person who can create job opportunities and bring security to the country. We don't ask to receive any food, as God is the best provider."

MOHAMMAD RAFI SULTANI, 20, a member of the Kabul Skate rollerblading team:

"We must all go to the polls and vote to elect the next president. We want to have a good president in the future, so that he can serve all the people, especially the athletes."

WALI AHMADZAI, 40, head of a marble factory:

"We hope that a good person will be elected as the next president. All our compatriots are happy that the election will take place."

PASHTANA DURRANI, 21, university student, social and political activist: "I'm very hopeful for the upcoming elections, because this will be my first time to vote for the candidate as a democratic citizen in Afghanistan, and also exercise and practice my right." (Reuters)

(4) Will Make ...

The American leader promised his administration would continue to work with coalition and Afghan partners to stamp out terrorism.

Some weeks back, Trump called off peace talks with Taliban and stressed the need for the suppression of the insurgent group.

Similarly, the Afghan government has also suspended talks with the Taliban for the conduct of the presidential election on Sept. 28. (Pajhwok)

(5) Election Will ...

Sediq Sediqqi, a spokesman for the Presidential Palace, rejected Karzai's remarks on Wednesday, calling them "untenable and unwarranted," adding, "the election will show the resolve of the people."

Karzai has called for a quick return to the peace talks that were scuttled earlier this month. US President Trump declared the talks "dead" following a Taliban-claimed attack that killed at least 11 people in Kabul, including a US soldier. (Tolo news)

(6) Major Copper...

Meanwhile, Abdul Qayum Rahimi, Herat governor, assured protection of the mine against any security threats. "Our security forces have taken their measures because security of the area and workers is important," he said. "Extraction of the country's biggest copper mine would create job opportunities for many and would improve our economy, we are trying to become self-sufficient in economic area," he said.

Hamayon Qayumi, the acting finance minister, also said that the development and exploration of mines would reduce the country's dependence on foreign aid.

Samiuddin Seddiqi, executive director of the company which received the contract, thanked the local and central governments for their cooperation and said the mine extraction would create jobs for many people. He said thousands of people in Herat would be hired in the process.

Herat copper mine known as Shaida Copper Mine is located between Adraskan and Guzargah districts of Herat province and is one of the country's biggest copper mines. (Pajhwok)

(7) Af-Pak Trade ...

Transit trade through the Pakistan Railways came up for discussion.

The proposed transit trade operation through Pakistan Railways from Karachi to Peshawar and onward dispatch

to Torkham for cross-border shifting was discussed in detail.

Railway officers promised modalities of the proposed transit trade operation would be finalised by October 15 after holding a meeting with SCCI representatives and other stakeholders on October 7.

Earlier, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Faiz Muhammad Faizi and Chairman of SCCI standing committee on railways Ziaul Haq Sarhadi stressed the need for enhancing transit and bilateral trade.

They called for the government to take measures for providing a cheap and secure goods transportation facility. Faizi demanded a review of the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) and to make it business-friendly.

Sarhadi suggested the re-launch of the cargo train from Karachi to Peshawar and Goods in Transit to Afghanistan to revive the transit route. (Pajhwok)

(8) Helmand Residents ...

A number of other residents held similar views and urged the government to award stern punishment to the perpetrators of the incident. (Pajhwok)

(9) Germany's Angela...

advanced centrifuges to develop nuclear weapons in an attempt to put pressure on the remaining signatories to the JCPOA — Great Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia — to provide more economic incentives to Tehran.

French President Emmanuel Macron joined Merkel in urging the U.S. and Iran to resume negotiations Tuesday saying "Now more than ever is the time for negotiations among Iran, the United States, the signatories of the JCPOA and regional powers, centered on the region's security and stability." Trump condemned Iran in his speech at the U.N. Tuesday, saying that no nation should support Tehran's "blood lust" and "fanatical quest for nuclear weapons."

Rouhani, who is scheduled to address the global body Wednesday, has held firm that he is open to renegotiating the nuclear deal only if the U.S. first lifts sanctions.

Rouhani told Fox News' Chris Wallace in an exclusive interview Tuesday that "America is the supporter of terrorism" and Iran is "not seeking nuclear weapons." (Fox News)

(10) Maduro Announces...

Tokayev.

Maduro's visit to Russia was announced by the Kremlin last week. His trip to Moscow to sign new bilateral agreements was also announced by the Venezuelan media.

In January this year, the political crisis in Venezuela grew more severe when opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself interim president, rejecting Maduro's inauguration as illegitimate. He promised to do everything in his power to arrange snap elections and to put an end to Maduro's usurpation. The US and many other countries have recognized Guaido as the legitimate acting president, whereas Maduro's presidency is supported by Russia, Cuba, China, Turkey and Bolivia.

Maduro's last visit to Russia took place in December last year. After meeting with Putin, he announced that Moscow had agreed to invest \$6 billion in Venezuela. The Venezuelan president also visited Russia in 2013 and 2015. (UAWire)

(11) China Says Has...

the world was watching how Beijing handles mass demonstrations in Hong Kong that have heightened fears of a potential Chinese crackdown.

Trump has sought to pressure China to agree to reduce trade barriers through a policy of increasing tariffs on Chinese products. He accused China of the theft of trade secrets "on a grand scale" and said it was taking advantage of World Trade Organization rules that give Beijing beneficial treatment as a "developing economy". Wang told an event co-hosted by the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the U.S.-China Business Council that the trade war was inflicting unnecessary damage on both countries, raising costs for American firms, pushing up consumer prices

and dampening U.S. growth potential. He warned that the United States should not try to force China to change its development model nor de-couple the two economies, saying such efforts were unworkable.

"Negotiation cannot take place under threat or at the expense of China's legitimate right to development," Wang added.

Wang rejected the views of those who believe Beijing is aiming to surpass the United States as a strategic power, saying "seeking hegemony is not in our DNA" and said China was a developing country still far behind the United States. "China has no intention to play the Game of Thrones on the world stage. For now and for the foreseeable future, the United States is and will still be the strongest country in the world."

At the same time, Wang said the two countries need to stick to the principles of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, respect each other's territorial sovereignty, and not attempt to impose their will on each other.

He said that to maintain Hong Kong's prosperity, it was necessary to reject violence and respect the rule of law.

"We hope the U.S. will be consistent in its words and actions, respect China's sovereignty and respect the efforts of the Hong Kong ... government to stop violence and restore order," he said. (Reuters)

(12) South Korea...

from Pyongyang's foreign ministry issued in September have been interpreted in Washington and Seoul to mean dialogue on denuclearization; North Korea has not indicated it intends to give up its weapons of mass destruction, however.

North Korea has also increased tests of weapons systems in recent months, launching multiple short-range missiles that are capable of targeting the South.

Pyongyang's military actions were not addressed in South Korean President Moon Jae-in's speech before the 74th United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump had dismissed the tests. "We didn't have an agreement on short-range missile tests and a lot of people in a lot of countries test short-range missiles," Trump said on Monday during his summit with Moon. "There's nothing spectacular about that." (UPI)

(13) Climate Activist ...

governments attending the summit take emergency action.

Thunberg shares the award with Brazilian indigenous leader Davi Kopenawa of the Yanomami people, Chinese women's rights lawyer Guo Jianmei and Western Sahara human rights defender Aminatou Haidar.

"With the 2019 Right Livelihood Award, we honour four practical visionaries whose leadership has empowered millions of people to defend their inalienable rights and to strive for a liveable future for all on planet Earth," the foundation said in the statement.

The four laureates will receive a cash award of 1 million Swedish crowns (\$103,000) each. (Reuters)

(14) Boris Johnson ...

day receiving criticism back home for refusing to resign after the United Kingdom's highest court ruled that he had broken the law by advising the Queen of England to suspend Parliament amid Brexit debate.

The embattled prime minister delivered the second-to-last speech at the UN Tuesday, taking the stage to discuss the challenges and potential of new technology. Johnson said he welcomes the benefits technology has brought to society in the past but warned it is "like nuclear power - it is capable of good and bad."

He said future tech could also be used "to keep every citizen under round the clock surveillance." "A future Alexa will pretend to take orders, but this Alexa will be watching you" and "your mattress will monitor your nightmares," Johnson continued. He spoke of all information being stored in a "giant dark thunder cloud" of data waiting to burst and "we have no control

over when precipitation will happen." "At stake is whether we bequeath an Orwellian world, designed for censorship, oppression and control," Johnson said. "Or one of emancipation and learning."

"The mission of the United Kingdom and all who share our values must be to ensure that emerging technologies are designed from the outset for freedom, openness and pluralism, with the right safeguards in place to protect to our peoples."

During his speech, Johnson also invited delegates to a summit on responsible technology in London next summer. He boasted that London has the largest tech sector in all of Europe and is "a wonderful city" where "it is not raining, 94 percent of the time." (Fox News)

(15) Uptick in Turkish...

Party refuses to use the term "crisis" for the current state of the economy, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) has decreased 1.1% over 12 months. In terms of dollars, GDP has plunged to \$722 billion, a far cry from the \$950 billion in 2013.

Nevertheless, the contraction in the past 12 months has been less severe than in Turkey's two previous big crises in 2001 and 2009. Two factors have contributed to avoiding a steeper downturn — a rise in government spending, driven by local elections earlier this year, and an increase in exports and tourism revenues.

A closer look at the exports and tourism data, however, shows that the easing impact on contraction has come at the expense of offering cheaper prices to foreign customers.

In the first quarter of the year, exports rose 2.6% from the same period in 2018 to reach \$42.2 billion. In the second quarter, exports were worth \$41.5 billion, increasing 1.1% year-on-year.

In a January report, the head of the Turkish Exporters Assembly, Ismail Gulle, had put the export target for 2019 at \$182 billion, well above the \$168.1 billion last year, which he described as "the highest export figure in our republican history." He listed a number of new projects aimed at boosting exports, stressing that sustainability and innovation would be the main guiding tenets.

Whether the target is attainable remains an open question amid the recession winds blowing in the global economy. International trade is facing additional risks due to the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, coupled with other critical factors such as China's economic slowdown and the prospect of Britain leaving the European Union without a deal to replace current trade arrangements. The US sanctions on Iran, the situation with North Korea and the conflicts in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Ukraine pose additional geopolitical risks that might have adverse impacts on global trade.

Nevertheless, Turkish exports totaled \$83.5 billion in the first half of the year, leveraging the economy in the face of domestic contraction and preventing a more serious overall shrinkage. Beyond quantity, however, the qualitative aspect of exports should be analyzed as well. What kind of prices made it possible for exporters to achieve this figure?

The dramatic depreciation of the Turkish lira in the second half of 2018 led to a sharp decline in the country's imports. Imported materials and equipment became more expensive in terms of lira, fueling cost-push inflation. For exporters, however, the slump of the lira provided a tailwind.

Exporters often cut prices in such circumstances to secure their markets and achieve their turnover targets since they are mainly concerned with what their revenues are worth in terms of lira. Not surprisingly, a decrease in unit prices is seen behind the current level of export revenues. According to monthly data by the Turkish Statistical Institute, unit prices of exported goods have decreased 7% in the 18 months since January 2018. In other words, an export product that was sold for \$100 in January 2018 had its price fall to as low as \$93 by July. (AL-MONITOR)