

(1) Khalilzad Holds...

Along with Pakistan, Iran and Russia, China is gaining influence in Afghanistan even as the United States spends billions of dollars to support the Afghan National Security Forces.

China has hosted previous rounds of talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government and has substantial interests in the country's mineral wealth, as well as in reducing the chances of the nation's violence and chronic instability flowing across the two countries' narrow border in the remote Wakhan corridor region.

China has also joined in meetings with the US and Russia over the Afghan peace process and a joint statement issued by the three following talks in Moscow in April said they encouraged the Taliban to "participate in peace talks with a broad, representative Afghan delegation that includes the government as soon as possible."

The statement also said the sides took note of the Taliban's commitment to cut ties with "international terrorist groups," including those fighting to overthrow Beijing's rule in the far northwestern Chinese territory of Xinjiang. (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghan Silk...

in the district annually.

"Hundreds of families in the Zindajan district are now involved in the breeding of silkworms, as the industry has been thriving of late, more so than over the past decade," Abdul Karim Ahmadi, a veteran of the industry, told Xinhua recently.

Due to the high volume of silk expected to be produced this year, the government will have to help the producers export their products overseas.

"The Chinese market is very suitable for the selling of silks produced in Herat province, and silk producers are expected to send their products to the Chinese market this year," Ahmadi said.

The production of silkworm cocoons is still a traditional industry in the province, with women mostly engaged, alongside men, in keeping the silkworms at home, while they are fed with mulberry leaves.

Everyday for four hours, silkworm breeders would go to the garden and collect mulberry tree leaves and take them home to feed their silkworms.

The process takes at least one month until they have young, active silkworms for producing cocoons.

Silk producers said delicate fabrics, beautiful clothes, and high-quality colorful headscarves would be manufactured by the Herat craftsmen from raw silk, and be exported to foreign countries, particularly to China.

The price of one kg of raw silk at a local market in Herat, according to locals, is 240 U.S. dollars, and if exported to China the price could significantly increase.

The government's cocoon and sericulture program envisages that cocoon producers will receive technical training along with being given standard silkworm packages, said Nasir Ahmad, Zindajan district's agriculture manager. The Afghan government is strongly supporting the industry to grow and find its way to overseas markets, especially to the Chinese market, he added. (Xinhua)

(3) Pulling Troops ...

President Donald Trump has pressed for pulling U.S. troops out of Syria and Afghanistan. But so far there have been few reductions, reflecting military commanders' urgings to maintain the status quo for now.

Milley says he won't be intimidated "by no one, ever."

He has been nominated to replace outgoing chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford. (PBS NEWS)

(4) Future Intra-Afghan ...

they issued a resolution in which the Taliban committed to reduce violence and halt attacks on certain areas such as "religious centers, schools, hospitals, educational centers, bazaars, water dams, and workplaces".

An intra-Afghan dialogue conference is expected to be convened in one of the regional countries, said MoFA spokesman Sibghat Ahmadi.

"This time we were in the confidence-building process and of course German special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan said that the process of the confidence-building measure was successful and the next phase will be more important, comprehensive and result-oriented," said Ahmadi.

Acting Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani thanked German Special Envoy Markus Potzel for his efforts towards prompting intra-Afghan talks.

He said in a tweet that he met with Ambassador Potzel and thanked him for his efforts in facilitating the intra-Afghan dialogue in Doha. Rabbani said that the dialogue marked a

basis to strengthen common understanding, which is key to achieving a lasting peace.

"We look forward to an early start of formal talks," Rabbani tweeted.

Meanwhile, the High Peace Council (HPC) in a statement has said that the peace facilitating body expects that the intra-Afghan dialogue opens the way for direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

"We welcome efforts by all countries for peace in Afghanistan, the efforts which are carried out in harmony with the Afghan government help us in bringing peace in the country," said HPC spokesman Ghafoor Ahmad Jawed.

Sources closed to the Taliban said that in the future meetings, serious discussions will be conducted on the issue of direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

"The confidence-building measure process has completed, but now the discussions will take more serious nature and important issues will be discussed in the peace process," said Abdul Shakoor Mutmaen, a former Taliban commander.

The Afghan government has been absent from the recent diplomatic efforts on the peace process in the country has expressed hope that direct talks between the government and the Taliban will take place in the near future.

"Our expectation from the US is to pave the way for direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban so that we can witness a reduction in the level of violence and war," said Omid Maisam, deputy spokesman to Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

Although the Afghan government is apparently satisfied with the recent intra-Afghan dialogue in Doha, officials in Kabul leveled some criticisms on the resolution which was issued after the two-day conference by saying that the resolution has undermined freedom of speech, the safety of media, the democratic system and elections.

Germany's Special Envoy Markus Potzel said at the conclusion of the meeting that the Doha conference was a success and that one of the most important points of the joint statement is the promise of reduction of violence in Afghanistan.

The recent talks in Doha also raised a warm welcome at the international level. German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday welcomed the Intra-Afghan Conference on Peace in Doha and said that conditions of trust and cooperation for sustainable peace in Afghanistan are available.

"Ultimately, there is an extended desire for cooperation and trust in the establishment of sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan have been created. We appreciate the Afghan and American governments for their work on a political settlement which is moving slowly. I am fully confident that the meeting which was co-hosted by Germany and Qatar on Saturday give more strength to the peace process in Afghanistan," said Merkel. (Tolo news)

(5) Biden Promises ...

that killed Osama bin Laden and served as "salesman" for the "disastrous" Iran nuclear deal.

This comes as a US Army Gen. Mark Milley told the United States lawmakers at a confirmation hearing Thursday that it would be a "strategic mistake" to prematurely pull American troops out of Afghanistan and that the international order is facing its greatest challenges since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Gen. Milley said the US is "living in a period of great-power competition with a very complex and dynamic security environment. [International order is] currently under the most stress since the Cold War." (Tolo news)

(6) UNICEF Project to ...

children of this country." Asadullah Khuram, a provincial council member of Sar-i-Pul, said that children of the province were deprived of education due to the continued war and drought in the region. He said the UNICEF educational project would help children return to education.

Local officials say the same project was once launched in the province 10 years ago and proved efficient for children's education. (Pajhwok)

(7) NATO, Afghan ...

These forces, with the Afghan National Army Territorial Forces are able to provide security and deny the Taliban the opportunity to harm our people." Deputy Defence Minister Yasin Zia said:

"Faryab has turned in to a role model the great work here by the Provincial Governor and ANDSF has earned the support of the people. You are retaking control, district by district."

RS Commander Gen. Miller hailed the achievements of Afghan security forces in Faryab and said: "You should be proud of your ANDSF."

General Miller told Governor Faiq: "What I commit to you, to Faryab, and to the people of Afghanistan is our continued support." (Pajhwok)

(8) No Problem in ...

the remaining 138.4 million afghanis had been set aside for female employees to search voters and 881 million afghanis for the IECC.

The ministry said the election commissions could request for budget and the ministry would take action accordingly. It said in addition to that amount, foreign donors had also promised donating 59 million US dollars through UNDP.

The ministry said the presidential election would face no problems while requesting budget for the process. The ministry also approved the IEC request for purchasing 17,865 biometric devices, the statement concluded. (Pajhwok)

(9) Swedish Group...

the statement lamented.

The clinic in the Tangi Saidan area of Wardak is financed by the Afghan Public Ministry of Health, it said. The area is under the control of Taliban insurgents. There was no immediate reaction from Afghan authorities to the allegations made by the Swedish group.

The relief organization demanded an independent investigation, preferably in cooperation with impartial humanitarian international organizations.

Khalid Fahim, the SCA program director, urged warring parties to immediately stop targeting civilians and health facilities in the war-shattered country.

This is not the first time Afghan forces allegedly targeted the Swedish-run clinic. In 2016, security forces had raided the facility and dragged two hospital patients along with their 15-year-old caretaker and later displayed their bodies.

The United Nations said in a statement on Wednesday that there were three attacks in Afghanistan between July 6 and 9, resulting in the death of five health workers employed by non-government organizations. It did not provide further details.

The statement said "so far this year, 77 aid workers have been killed, injured or abducted, compared with 76 in all of 2018." (VoA)

(10) 18,000 Big, ...

The three-month research interviewed 28 people, including common persons, community heads, prayer leaders and other stake holders, had been interviewed.

Hadi Ayub, a ACSS researcher, said their findings showed that policy making institutions empowered land grabber in the country.

"When we visited the field we realized that policy making institutions have created a power vacuum in which one group becomes powerful and another weak and this practice has caused disorder in society," he said. (Pajhwok)

(11) 9 People Killed...

District Chief Hazrat Khan Khaksar confirmed the suicide blast in the wedding ceremony and said the injured had been shifted to the Jalalabad for medical treatment.

Public Health Spokesman Dr. Zahir Adel said two bodies and 10 injured had been transferred to the hospital from the site of the blast. Two injured were in critical condition, he added. (Pajhwok)

(12) 'Red Unit' ...

Farhad said the joint air and ground operations had been ongoing in the district for the past four days.

The Taliban have not yet commented in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(13) Russian S-400...

because Washington refused to supply the American-made Patriot systems to Turkey.

U.S. officials have since encouraged Turkey to buy the Patriot missile defense system instead of the S-400s. But Turkey says the offer does not meet its requirements, including possible future joint production.

The U.S. has already stopped training Turkish pilots on the F-35, and given Ankara until the end of July to get its personnel out of the U.S.

Turkey maintains that it has fulfilled all of its financial obligations concerning the F-35 program and cannot be excluded from the project. (Fox News)

(14) Britain Sending...

The British navy said Thursday it had stopped three Iranian paramilitary vessels from disrupting the passage of a British oil tanker through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical shipping lane at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Iran's Revolutionary Guard denied any incident had occurred in the strait.

That brief but tense standoff is believed to have stemmed from the British seizure of the Iranian tanker off Gibraltar

on July 4.

On Friday, the British Ministry of Defense said it was moving up its timetable for relieve the HMS Montrose, a frigate operating in the Persian Gulf, with the larger HMS Duncan destroyer in the wake of the recent developments.

"This will ensure that the UK alongside international partners can continue to support freedom of navigation for vessels transiting through this vital shipping lane," the ministry said.

At the same time, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt called for "cool heads" to prevail to ensure there is no "unintended escalation."

"We are being clear to Iran that we are not seeking to escalate this situation," he said, adding that the British response had been "measured and careful." (AP)

(15) 'Don't Play...

heavily criticized this decision, saying it undermines the 'one-China principle', and demanded to "immediately cancel" the potential sale.

The row over Taiwan adds to the tensions between the US and China, sparked by the ongoing trade war. (RT)

(16) Germany Inches...

has cut emissions from power production, pollution from automobiles, trucks and aircraft remain stubbornly high.

"This moment offers the historic opportunity to transform the fragmented, expensive and inefficient German climate policy so that the price of CO2 is at the center," said Christoph Schmidt, chairman of Merkel's Council of Economic Experts.

Merkel, who as environment minister in the 1990s sketched some of the first international climate deals organized by the United Nations, in 2007 pledged to slash emissions 40% by 2020 from 1990 levels. The country is set to miss the target, senior ministers have said.

The chancellor faces a political tightrope walk to get the policy right. Polls and "Fridays for Future" demonstrations underline voters' impatience with slow progress in hitting climate pledges. At the same time, any move to put new fiscal burdens on fossil transport and heating fuels may come with a political price for Merkel.

Her party of Christian Democrats faces three state elections from September in eastern German states where the populist Alternative for Deutschland party has made inroads and many thousands of people are employed at coal plants and mines. The AfD oppose Merkel's timetable to pull out of coal achieved by consensus earlier this year. And hiking fuel and heating costs just as the economy begins to wobble may draw a backlash from the wider electorate too. (Bloomberg)

(17) World Bank ...

teaching practices in primary and secondary education, and strengthen the management capacity and accountability along the education service delivery chain in the Program Areas."

"Only 50 percent of Moroccan children aged 4-5 attended preschool in 2017," said the World Bank, adding that "as a condition for learning preparedness, access to quality early childhood education is a major focus of the current program." (Xinhua)

(18) Association of British...

of the University of Surrey, highlighted the need for international collaboration to find solutions to the global challenges. He believes that China and the United Kingdom (UK) can collaborate and develop new ideas to make a difference for the global community and to really change the world.

Representatives of the Chinese Embassy in Britain -- Minister Counsellor of Education Wang Yongli and Minister Counsellor of Science and Technology Jiang Sunan -- attended the opening ceremony and congratulated the organizers.

Founded in 2018, the ABCP has already attracted more than 200 members, who represent the highest ranks of Chinese academics working in the UK in various fields.

Wang Jihong, professor at Warwick University and vice president of the ABCP, told Xinhua that increasing numbers of Chinese scholars achieve higher academic degrees, and that the ABCP is dedicated to promoting academic excellence and stimulating collaboration. (Xinhua)

(19) 'Unexpected' ...

their lack of gravitationally-captured material to 'feed' on, and the surrounding in-falling material typically spreads out into a donut-shaped haze.

However, the ferocious disk encircling this hungry black hole moves at more than 10 percent the speed of light and resembles those found in extremely active galaxies with "engorged, monster black holes," NASA said.

"It's the same type of disk we see in objects that are 1,000 or even 100,000 times more luminous," the study's first author, Stefano Bianchi, explained. "The predictions of current models for gas dynamics in very faint active galaxies clearly failed."

The international team of researchers are drawing on their unexpected find to test Einstein's theories, and are still using Hubble to search for more galaxies that might play host to similar head-scratching disks. (RT)

(20) AU Envoy...

overthrow of autocratic President Omar al-Bashir in April.

Ethiopian mediator Mahmoud Dirir told reporters that the political declaration will be "debated on, discussed and signed at the same time."

Lt. Gen. Gamal Omar, a member of Sudan's military council, said the coup attempt took place late Thursday, just days after the military and the pro-democracy coalition had agreed to the joint sovereign council.

In a statement, Omar said at least 16 active and retired military officers were arrested. Security forces were pursuing the group's leader and additional officers who took part in plotting the coup attempt, he said.

"The attempted coup came in a critical time, ahead of the deal with the Forces for Declaration of Freedom and Change," Omar said, referring to the group that speaks for the pro-democracy demonstrators. The council did not reveal the name of the attempted leader, his rank or other details. The statement also said five of the arrested officers were retired.

The political transition deal is meant to end the impasse between the military council and the protest movement since security forces razed a massive pro-democracy sit-in in Khartoum early last month, killing more than 100 people, according to protest organizers.

In the ensuing weeks, protesters stayed in the streets, demanding that the generals hand power to civilian leadership. (AP)

(21) Ex-Israeli...

Netanyahu has accused the media of remaining "silent" about the matter.

In a radio interview Thursday, Barak said he met Epstein several times, but said he "didn't support me or pay me."

He said he has met many people over the years, some of whom turned out to be involved in "problematic things," including Harvey Weinstein.

"I also met Netanyahu," he quipped. Israel's attorney general has recommended criminal charges against Netanyahu in a series of corruption cases.

The Wexner Foundation did not immediately respond to queries seeking comment. (AP)

(22) Hundreds of...

gangs run street gangs from prison cells." Mukaddam claims the gang warfare helps facilitate their trade in illegal drugs. He adds the gangsters are operating in a very similar manner to those involved in the drug trade in Mexico.

Indeed, Cape Town has joined several Mexican cities in the list of the top 20 most dangerous cities in the world. Citizen Council for Public Safety and Criminal Justice in its latest statistics lists Latin American cities, as well as St. Louis, making up the top 14 most dangerous cities in the world -- and then it's Cape Town at No.15. Smith, while admitting the growth in murders here is "stratospheric", dismissed local media speculation that if the killings continue at the present rate, the city could become known as the most dangerous place in the world by year-end.

Smith believes the City is doing all it can to bring the number of murders down, adding that reliable data is not published about several other countries, including some in Africa. Actual war zones such as Syria also do not contribute to the statistics. Professor Lorna Martin, head of forensic pathology for the Western Cape, said there are so many bodies coming in, that at one mortuary, corpses are being stored in refrigerated shipping containers.

A new three-story mortuary due to be complete at the end of the year that's more than double the size of the facility it's replacing is already not big enough.

On a media tour of the still incomplete building, Professor Martin told reporters: "With the increase that we've now had lately, I don't think we'll cope."

Mukaddam claims many police are terrified to enter the gangsters' lairs, adding that a local police sergeant who stood up to them was taken out just two weeks ago. He's joined Provincial officials in calling for the South African army to be deployed, to escort ambulances and fire engines into the troubled areas. After initially refusing to send in troops, national police minister Bheki Cele Thursday finally yielded to the demands and made a sudden U-turn, announcing he is sending troops into affected areas. But the details of where and when were not immediately clear. (Fox News)