

(1) NATO Vow...

supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

Heads of State and Government of the 29 member nations of the North Atlantic Alliance, have gathered in Brussels at a time when the security of our nations and the rules-based international order are being challenged, the communiqué reads.

NATO would continue to strive for peace, security, and stability in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area.

"We are united in our commitment to the Washington Treaty, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN), and the vital transatlantic bond. We are determined to protect and defend our indivisible security, our freedom, and our common values, including individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law."

Heads of states and coalition partners from 43 countries, including US President Donald Trump, United Kingdom Prime Minister Theresa May and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, participate in the annual summit.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters ahead of the summit inauguration that the alliance will discuss NATO defense budget, the alliance defense capabilities, train and advice mission in Iraq, terrorism, fight against Daesh in Iraq and other issues.

He said in the second day of the summit NATO members will discuss situation in Afghanistan with their Afghan partners.

A special session on Afghanistan will discuss continued financial and military support to Afghan security forces, peace process and decision on the continuation of NATO Resolute Support (RS) mission. (Pajhwok)

(2) 'Real Dialogue'...

personnel to Afghanistan in support of the mission.

NATO currently has nearly 16,000 troops in Afghanistan, 14,000 of which are Americans. Ghani is convinced that even as the Trump administration reviews the cost of drawing down US troops in other parts of the world, the US president will not abandon Afghanistan.

"[Trump] has a style and you need to be able to make your case succinctly," said Ghani. "And I'm proud to say that we have made our case succinctly."

Further, Ghani added, "this strategy on Afghanistan has been thoroughly prepared." The Afghan leader addressed skepticism about his positive take on the situation in Afghanistan. The Afghan president contended that as NATO troops had been drawn down, Afghan security forces had stepped into prevent a security vacuum from being left behind.

"Journalists look for events, I look for patterns. People who look for events have always gotten the situation wrong," said Ghani. "A sense of perspective is really important to see where we began and where we are going," he added.

Citing the progress Afghanistan has made on his watch, Ghani said his country today is deeply engaged with Central Asia, a region with which it is setting historic trade records.

He contended that Afghanistan is not alone in facing security challenges. "There is uncertainty about global security—Belgium, Germany, France, UK. It is no longer [just] Afghanistan," he said, adding that "the phenomena of transnational terrorism... is a network phenomenon."

Ghani continues to hold firm to the belief that a political solution with the Taliban is vital in order to bring peace to his country. The Taliban, however, have rebuffed his overtures demanding instead to sit down with the United States.

"Unless we find a political solution with the Taliban, the platform—the set of activities, networks, relationships—the Taliban provide enable these other groups to function. So it's extremely important that we find a political solution," Ghani said.

"The threat of Daesh is another order of threat than the one that al Qaeda was," said Ghani. "Our misfortune is that [Daesh] look at us as territory, ecology, a set of opportunities."

In its statement, NATO called on Pakistan, Iran, and Russia to "contribute to regional stability by fully supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process."

Atlantic Council President and Chief Executive Officer Frederick Kempe asked Ghani about Afghanistan's relationships with its neighbors as it tries to build peace.

"In the region a consensus is emerging," Ghani said, noting that India and China have agreed to cooperate on the question of Afghanistan, and Afghanistan has made some progress with Pakistan.

"On paper, we have had very significant movement with Pakistan," the Afghan leader said, while expressing the hope that this will translate into action. "Our relation with Pakistan has to become three dimensional, it has been two-dimensional. Everything has been shadowed by their relationship with the Taliban."

Despite these challenges, Ghani remains optimistic. "The finishing line is going to be full of hurdles, but the direction has been set," he said. Asked about the role of women in the peace process, Ghani noted that they were part of the High Peace Council. "Afghan society has a consensus on making peace, it does not have a consensus on the price to be paid for peace," he said.

He addressed concerns that women were being left out of the peace process and said "women are always on top of the agenda." (Pajhwok)

(3) Australia to Help...

its Black Hawk capability," said Payne in a

statement, adding that this will be managed within Australia's overall commitment of about 300 ADF personnel to the country.

"Australia is one of only a few nations in the international coalition currently flying Black Hawks and we will be able to provide qualified personnel to support the introduction of this important platform. (Pajhwok)

(4) Kabul's Underground...

Kabul's waters illegally.

Statistics show that dozens of companies are utilizing Kabul's underground water for their businesses. Officials say it is illegal.

"We are concerned about the drop in the level of Kabul's underground water reserves. The companies that are using the water illegally will be prosecuted," said Asif Ghafoori, head of the office of energy and water minister.

Afshar is a water supplying company in Kabul which says one out of 10 wells from the firm is working right now while others are completely dry.

"There are 213,000 wells in Kabul and it is a crisis. An average of 1,000 liters of water is extracted from each of these wells every day," said Ghulam Mohammad Malikyar, professional deputy head of the National Environment Protection Authority (NEPA).

Shahabuddin, 18, a farmer in Kabul's Sarai Khwaja district, said lack of water has affected his business.

"Our well is dry. There are almost 100 wells in our village but only 10 of them have water," Shahab said. (Tolo news)

(5) Kandahar Farmers...

dig deep wells.

In the past, people said underground water was 50 metres deep, but now it was found 150 metres deep in the ground.

This year, crops and orchards received little water because the shortage of water in Dahla Dam, which irrigates crops in the province.

Mohibullah asked the government to construct small dams for preserving water and releasing it in the time of need.

He also demanded the government overhaul the old irrigation system in Afghanistan because the old system caused more water wastage.

Farmers in Maiwand district said the shortage of water had badly affected their orchards and crops already affected by drought.

Akhar Mohammad, a farmer in Maiwand district, said in the past they fetched water from natural streams to irrigate their agriculture fields but the streams had dried up due to the dry spell.

Most of the farmers say they have dug wells to irrigate their farms but this year the underground water also declined.

Sayed Hafizullah Sayedi, Kandahar agriculture director, told Pajhwok that the drought had affected the entire country but Kandahar in particular.

He said only 75 millimeters rain fell in Kandahar this year — much below the required at least 400 to 500 millimeters a year.

"The shortage of rainfall lowered water level in Kandahar while 35,000 hectares of farmland in northern areas of the province stayed out of cultivation", he added.

The drought has hit hard Registan district where people have left their homes and livestock reduced by 60 percent, he said.

Eng. Wahidullah Kamran, in charge for Arghandab basin in Kandahar, said that the level of water in Dahla Dam reduced by 50 percent this year due to shortage of rainfall.

He said the dam's water was also released late for irrigation this year for being insufficient.

Kandahar governor Zalmai Wesa also said the drought was a serious issue in the province and the government could help alleviate its impact.

He said people could plunge into a humanitarian-like situation and many would be forced to displace in few years if water was not saved.

However, he asked journalists and civil society activists to join hands and launch campaigns for proper use of water.

The underground water went down due to arbitrary deep wells used for irrigation, a process that should be stopped, Wesa said.

He said he still remembered water was only five meters deep in Kandahar but now it had gone 50 and in some areas 150 meters deep.

A number of Afghan Facebook users have also launched campaigns for saving and proper use of water.

Many users wrote on their social media page that arbitrary wells drained the underground water.

UNICEF has recently said drought affected lives of around a million people including half of them children in Afghanistan.

It had warned that the number of people affected by drought would increase to two million in 22 provinces of the country. (Pajhwok)

(6) Afghan Businesses...

enduring partnership between the United States and Afghanistan, it is becoming increasingly clear that an outward-looking development strategy with exports at its heart is the path to a more resilient Afghanistan," said Ambassador Bass. "This year's Passage to Prosperity: India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show in Mumbai promises to build on last year's successes by reaching beyond just India," he added.

In his South Asia Strategy, President Trump affirmed his commitment to engaging India as a partner in contributing to Afghanistan's economic stability. This commitment is bearing fruit through Passage to Prosperity, which has grown to encompass ever greater trade relationships with markets beyond India. This will

help Afghanistan realize its goal of increasing exports to \$2 billion by 2020.

During the September trade and investment show in Mumbai, Afghanistan's finest textiles, carpets, gems, and jewelry will be on display for international buyers. India offers an ideal location for investors to experience the treasures that Afghanistan has to offer. In addition to product sales, this year's show will facilitate partnerships between Afghans and international actors in specialized healthcare, higher education, services, and trade promotion. These partnerships will play an essential role in building economic ties among Afghanistan, India, and other countries.

The USAID-sponsored Passage to Prosperity is an annual event that aims to advance regional integration by strengthening economic and trade ties between Afghanistan and international markets through business-to-business matching and consumer sales. In 2017, USAID supported the first Passage to Prosperity: India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show in New Delhi. More than \$27 million in contracts were signed between Indian buyers and Afghan vendors for both raw and processed agricultural products. In addition, a number of Indian buyers and Afghan vendors signed MOUs valued at nearly \$214 million during the four-day event, and more than \$10 million worth of carpets, gemstones, jewelry, marble, and food-related products were sold. This year's event in Mumbai promises to build on the first show's successes and expand its impact by reaching beyond India. (PR)

(7) Germany Ramps...

embracing hundreds of thousands of refugees in 2015, Germany is now firmly closing the door on asylum seekers. The southern state of Bavaria is taking the lead with the strong backing of Federal Interior Minister and former state premier Horst Seehofer, who recently triggered a crisis in government over his plans to reject some asylum seekers directly at the southern border.

Presenting his controversial "migration master plan" in Berlin on July 10, Seehofer joked about the July 3 repatriation, smiling as he said, "On my 69th birthday of all days, 69 people -- it wasn't ordered by me -- were sent back to Afghanistan."

In Bavaria, police forces are being bolstered, more asylum claims rejected and deportations ramped up, particularly for Afghans. On June 6, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that any remaining restrictions on deportations to Afghanistan would be lifted and all failed asylum seekers would now be eligible. Bavaria's Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann believes that change is the correct one.

"Fundamentally it's clear. Anyone who has lost their asylum status has to leave. We say that unambiguously to all of those affected," Herrmann told CNN.

"Previously, we only repatriated Afghan refugees that had been rejected at a federal level i.e. those who had committed a crime, had links to terror or refused to prove their identity. Now, we have received approval from Berlin that others can also be deported."

"So in the days ahead we will see larger scale deportations to Afghanistan taking place," Herrmann said. "Other federal states that do not deport to Afghanistan -- we consider that to be wrong."

He says his family was targeted by the Taliban because his brother worked as a car mechanic with German NATO forces in Kunduz.

When his brother and father were captured by Taliban forces, his mother bundled him out of the house through the window and urged him to flee to Iran, Sami says.

"I really did not want to flee my country," Sami told CNN. "I wanted to stay but I had no choice. I wanted to stay alive."

He says he spent a month in Iran before his aunt helped organize his escape to Germany via Turkey and Greece.

Sami believed that Germany would accept his application, especially because his brother had worked with German forces. Like Mursalin, Sami speaks fluent German and was so popular at his college that 12,000 students signed a petition imploring Germany to accept his asylum application.

"They know the danger he will be exposed to when Germany sends him back to Afghanistan," said his classmate Melissa Barna who helped organize the petition. "We are worried. He is one of us."

Pruy believes that the expanded deportation of Afghan asylum seekers is only the beginning and that other countries deemed "safe" will soon see repatriation flights.

"We are now seeing the first signs, with asylum seekers from Iraq getting rejected the same way as Afghans," Pruy said. "Afghanistan is a test run." (CNN)

(8) Govt Team...

presence in north of the country was vital for security reasons.

So far no agreement has reached, but tonight another meeting is scheduled between Dostum, Danish and Zaki, in which a fresh offer from the president would be presented to Dostum.

The source did not speak about Dostum's return to the country, but added if an agreement reached tonight, in the next step the comeback of Dostum would be considered. (Pajhwok)

(9) As NATO...

month's Eid al-Fitr holiday.

Sunnatullah Temori, a spokesman for the gov-

ernor in neighboring Takhar province, said the soldiers were killed when the Taliban stormed a base in Pul-e-Momin, an area between the provinces of Kunduz and Takhar late on Wednesday.

He said the insurgents had seized a large quantity of weapons and ammunition and said fighting was threatening the center of nearby Khwaja-e-Ghar district, which he warned could fall if reinforcements were not sent quickly.

The latest fighting comes despite speculation about possible peace talks between the government and the Taliban, with calls from a special religious council meeting in Saudi Arabia this week for negotiations to end the 17-year conflict.

The United States last year stepped up air strikes as part of a strategy to force the Taliban to the negotiating table and commanders say that together with the fledgling Afghan air force, the campaign has inflicted heavy casualties on the insurgents.

However, despite the temporary Eid ceasefire, the Taliban have rejected peace talks while Islamic State militants, opposed to both the West-backed government and the Taliban, have claimed a series of deadly suicide attacks in the past two weeks.

On Thursday, officials said dozens of militant fighters were killed in ground and air operations in Zurmat and Ahmadaba districts of the eastern province of Paktia while in Ghazni, to the south, at least 27 Taliban were killed by an air strike on Wednesday.

Heavy fighting was also reported in the western province of Farah, where the Taliban came close to overrunning the provincial capital in May.

In Logar province, immediately to the south of Kabul, the Taliban burned down a school, the second they have destroyed in a month, Kabir Haqmal, a spokesman for the ministry of education said. (Reuters)

(10) Protesters Close...

TOLOnews reporter Aref Musavi said government forces surrounded the IEC office following its closure by protesters.

This comes as six local forces belonged to Qaisari were freed on Friday.

Reports indicate that the first vice president is set to return home from Turkey in the near future.

The protesters said they have voted to Ghani and that they ask him to be accountable towards their votes. They also called on the president to resign.

"We want you (President Ashraf Ghani) to be accountable to every single votes of us," Nusrat, a protester, said.

"Why our soldiers were killed, why bullets were shot in their mouths?" asked Behroz, a protester.

Qaisari was arrested on July 2 by a Special Force Unit in Faryab province over claims that he insulted security officials at a meeting in Faryab last month.

The decision was followed by widespread protests in northern provinces. (Tolo news)

(11) Russia Assures...

clean Afghanistan. We also want the people of Afghanistan to be happy and be confident about their future in the light of economic prosperity and political stability in their country," read the letter.

After spending six days in front of the Russian embassy, protestors on Thursday moved on and are setting up camp in front of the Pakistani embassy.

"We received a written document from them (Russian embassy) in which they pledged to not support any party to the conflict," said the movement's leader Iqbal Khyber

In the letter to the peace activists, the Russian embassy stated that their contacts with the Taliban was limited only to the security of Russian citizens in Afghanistan and to encourage the militant group to endorse purposeful peace talks with the Afghan government.

Peace activists also called on the Russian people and government to use their influence and press Afghanistan's neighboring nations to contribute towards restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Peace activists said on Thursday they will establish their sit-in camp in front of the Pakistani embassy for an indefinite period.

The Movement Started In Helmand

The peace activists, known initially as the Helmand Peace Convoy, launched their protest in Lashkargah City after a suicide bombing outside a stadium in March.

About a month later, a group of eight protesters 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.

From there they moved to the Russian embassy, where they spent five day.

On Thursday they headed off for the next phase, outside the Pakistani embassy.

The activists, whose ages range from 17 to 65, come from all walks of life and include students, athletes and farmers among others. (Tolo news)

(12) Pre-Hajj...

head Nasiruddin Dareez told Pajhwok Afghan News 30,000 people from Afghanistan would perform this year's hajj pilgrimage and the operation to airlift them to Saudi Arabia would last more than a month. (Pajhwok)

(13) Up to 600,000...

facilities and some other problems. Unfortunately, up to 600,000 students are deprived of education," Safari said.

Senior officials from Helmand, who gathered at a ceremony in Lashkargah City on Thursday, said they are working on a 'special mechanism' to provide the ground for reopening schools and helping more children to go to schools.

They vowed to collect money to fund education of children and youngsters in Helmand.

"It not only is the duty of the Helmand education directorate, the governor and government forces, but it is the responsibility of all Helmand residents to pay attention to education and keep the doors of schools open for their children," said Attaullah Afghan, head of Helmand Provincial Council.

"We have turned our back to education and we have gone towards drugs. This society, this country and this province cannot improve in absence of education," said Mohammad Khan Kharoti, a tribal elder in Helmand.

At the same event, Helmed governor Mohammad Yasin said the people particularly religious scholars play an important role to help in reopening schools in the province.

"We all including leaders have not fulfilled our responsibility for education as required. The improvement of the sons of this soil is dependent on education.

Our brothers and elders should take this issue seriously," the governor said.

The Helmand students are on their summer recess right now. Officials said they will reopen some schools in the near future.

This comes after President Ashraf Ghani said in March that 50 percent of schools in Afghanistan are without buildings, 3.5 million children are deprived of education and at least 1,000 schools have remained closed across the country.

He said 6,000 school buildings will be built within the next two years. He added that \$200 million has been allocated for this plan. (Tolo news)

(14) 14 Killed...

Governor Mohammad Amis Sidiq said the casualties and financial losses from the incidents were being ascertained and advised nearby people to be careful about flash flood and landslides.

Financial losses

Azmuddin Mirzaee said initial reports suggested 400 houses had been demolished, some highways clogged and many farm lands badly damaged.

But the deputy police chief said about 200 homes, 150 shops, 10 mosques, several acres of farmland and 60 vehicles had been damaged in the flood.

MoNDM spokesman Omar Mohammadi said 300 houses had been swept away.

Assistance with the victims

Mohammadi said search and rescue teams had been dispatched the site with relief items from Parakh city and Parwan province.

A delegation led by deputy director of provincial natural disaster management had reached the site by a helicopter.

The deputy governor urged all government organs to rescue Panjsher people from the disaster. (Pajhwok)

(15) 20 Civilians...

Taliban casualties.

Angry over the civilian deaths, the residents said the security forces also arrested a number of civilians.

Zurmat district chief Hakim Waziri also civilian casualties in the operations, but said exact figures were not yet known.

Provincial officials said 32 Taliban gunmen were killed in the operations in Zurmat district while civilian casualties were being investigated.

The official said the civilians suffered casualties because the Taliban used their homes as bastions.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense in a statement claimed 107 Taliban militants were killed and 25 others wounded in the operations in Zurmat district.

But Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected if the rebels used people's homes as bastions for attacks on security forces.

He said the government forces killed and wounded 35 civilians in Zurmat operations.

He said a number of security forces sustained casualties in clashes with the Taliban in the district. He said two fighters were killed and three others wounded. (Pajhwok)