

(1) Peace Huddles...

the Lahore Conference, said, "We hope our politicians would not prefer national interests over personal interests, you were and are still part of this government, so you should not forget it, any efforts for peace would end up unproductive unless the government appoints a committee for talks with the Taliban."

He said it was responsibility of the government to stop unproductive meetings hosted abroad about Afghanistan.

However, first deputy Senate chairman, Mohammad Alam Ezdyar, talking about the Lahore Conference, said, "We always criticize Pakistan for its interference in Afghanistan and supporting terrorists, but we hope participants of this meeting would be able to encourage this country to be honest about the Afghan peace process. (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghan Security ...

The parties discussed a number of issues related to the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, as well as the system of power transmission and fiber optic communication along the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) route.

Turkmenistan, having a long border with Afghanistan, has repeatedly offered to hold talks in Ashgabat under the auspices of the UN to restore peace in the neighboring state.

Ashgabat is in favor of providing more ambitious and targeted international economic assistance to Afghanistan, primarily through the involvement of Afghanistan in the implementation of large infrastructure projects in the energy and transport sectors. Examples include the projects of laying power transmission lines and fiber-optic communications along the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) route, and the construction of railway from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan.

A large-scale project to lay gas pipeline to India and Pakistan for the supply of Turkmen gas is also connected to the territory of Afghanistan, where unstable situation has remained for a long time.

Observers believe that the implementation of this project may contribute to the restoration of Afghanistan, as it will allow creating jobs and provide the country with guaranteed income from transit. (Trend)

(3) Biometric System ...

Around 35,000 polling sites have been set up countrywide for the Sept 28 presidential election.

Without revealing their cost, Sadat said the biometric devices would be purchased by IEC using government budget.

In the Wolesi Jirga elections, most of the biometric verification devices had issues and could not be used properly.

About the presidential poll, Sadat said "We have enough time to test all these devices and make sure they work properly."

He informed trained IEC staff would use the devices which he said recorded fingerprints, eye-catchers, ID card and voter signature. Internet facility would also be provided to all polling centers to register voter lists.

Earlier, the IEC has launched a 20-day voter registration process for the September 28 presidential election. Voters are being registered at 705 registration centers - 247 in southern Ghazni and the rest in other provinces. (Pajhwok)

(4) Islamabad Vowed ...

have always cast doubts on Pakistan's honest cooperation towards promoting peace in Afghanistan.

"Pakistan has wholeheartedly facilitated the Afghan peace process in good faith and as a shared responsibility and will continue playing its due Our support has been crucial in overcoming the political stalemate that looked impossible to break just a year ago," he said.

He said that Pakistan will continue to deepen its engagement with all sections of the Afghan society and their representatives in further cementing these achievements, as per expectations of the people of Afghanistan.

On June 23, a number of senators described the Afghan politicians meeting in Pakistan in contrast to the national interests of Afghanistan, calling on the Afghan government to prevent the political elites from organizing "such meetings".

Almost 57 Afghan politicians, including Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, former Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor, second deputy chief executive Mohammad Mohaqeq, and presidential candidate Abdul Latif Pedram, attended the Afghan peace conference in Pakistan. (Tolo news)

(5) Wolesi Jirga ...

Nasir and Mir Rahmani continued until today, with several panels being set up to solve this problem. But the house eventually agreed to vote on the controversial election.

The 17th legislative round of the National Assembly was inaugurated in May this year, but so far the house is yet to elect its administrative board. (Pajhwok)

(6) AGO Begins ...

Statistics by Kabul-based Money Exchangers Union indicate that the foreign exchange, or forex, trading has inflicted "hundreds of millions of dollars" of loss to Afghans who have invested in the business since it was initially brought to Afghanistan in 2005.

The statistics show that "billions of dollars" have been taken out of Afghanistan under the pretext of forex trading during this period.

Statistics indicate that over 7,000 people have been associated with the business in Kandahar over the past 14 years and most of them suffered heavy financial losses.

Forex traders, who have staged many protests over the past three weeks, called for a proper investigation into the case by the Attorney General's Office.

"Kandahar residents had 7,000 accounts at [Bashir] Gulzada's company. The Central Bank is responsible for those who have suffered financial loss in this business," said Ezatullah, a forex trader from Kandahar.

"Bashir told us that the Central Bank does not have the capacity to manage such activities in Afghanistan and they said that they have an international experience in forex business and are linked with international markets," said Nabi Hassanzoi, a forex trader from Kabul.

TOLOnews could not get Bashir Gulzada's comment despite repeated attempts. (Tolo news)

(7) Australia's National...

report on purported war crimes by Australian special forces in Afghanistan.

ABC's Managing Director David Anderson said the suit also challenged the constitutionality of the search warrant used by police to conduct the raid "on the basis that it hinders our implied freedom of political communication".

"The ABC is asking the Court for a declaration that the warrant was invalid on several technical grounds that underline the fundamental importance of investigative journalism and protection of confidential sources," ABC's Managing Director David Anderson said in a statement on Monday.

"It is important that Australians be advised of this action and of the determination of the ABC to defend our journalists and the crucial work they do informing the public," the statement read.

The Australian Federal Police raided the ABC's Sydney headquarters on June 5 as part of investigations into the leak of the so-called "Afghan files" by a government whistle-blower.

The warrant used allowed the police to "add, copy, delete or alter" material found on the ABC's computers related to the Afghan story.

The operation came a day after the Federal Police raided the Canberra home of News Corp Australia journalist Annika Smethurst, seizing files and computer equipment over a year-old article on secret government plans to allow Australia's main foreign intelligence agency to spy on Australians domestically.

News Corp, the Rupert Murdoch-owned media giant, said on Monday that it was also preparing a legal challenge to the Federal Police search of Smethurst's home, according to The Australian.

'National security' The twin raids sparked widespread condemnation by media inside Australia and abroad, who accused Australia's conservative government of undermining freedom of the press.

Critics were particularly concerned by the Federal Police's refusal to rule out handing down criminal charges against journalists who publish reports based on leaked classified information.

The Federal Police have defended the raids, saying that the warrants were related to "national security information" that had the potential to pose a "grave danger to the national interest".

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, whose government has implemented a series of controversial law and order measures in recent months, insisted there was no political involvement in the police investigations of the ABC and News Corp.

He has, however, insisted on the need to crack down on the leak of classified information.

Monday's legal challenge coincided with the launch of a joint campaign by the ABC, News Corp and Australia's other main commercial news company - Nine Entertainment - to demand the government pass laws to protect journalists and press freedom.

Unlike most Western democracies, Australia does not have a bill of rights or constitutionally enshrined protection for freedom of speech.

It also has some of the world's strictest defamation laws, with courts routinely issuing gag orders to prevent the reporting of details of many legal proceedings.

"Australia has a creeping culture of secrecy," Michael Miller, head of News Corp Australia said in an editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald on Monday.

While acknowledging that journalists are

not "above the law" and that threats to Australia's national security do exist, Miller said: "We do not believe that the laws aimed at terrorists should sweep journalists up in their net". (Ajazeera)

(8) Violence Against ...

and insulted, three attacks happened on media and one magnetic bomb attack and three journalists were beaten.

During the same period last year, Khilwatgar said, 71 cases of violence against journalists were registered. He said the killing cases of journalists also declined by 61 percent this year as five such cases happened in 2019 compared to 13 in 2018.

However, threatening and insulting journalists increased as 17 such cases were registered during the first six months compared to 16 cases last year, he said.

The main reason behind the declined violence against journalists this year was few suicide and bomb attacks as well as cautiousness of media workers in line of duty, Khilwatgar said.

The Nai chief said problems regarding access to information and insecurity continued to persist and remained two major problems for media.

Nai interviewed 200 journalists in a survey that shows 61.1 percent of the respondents were concerned about insecurity and 52 percent complained about lack of access to information.

Citing from the survey, Khilwatgar said 61 percent of journalists faced security problems while 32 percent lacked access to information on the Election Day.

He said their organization launched another survey about the impact of peace talks on journalists. He said 43 percent of the respondents said peace talks had a positive impact on reporting.

Forty percent of the respondents in the survey said that peace talks had no impact on their work while nine percent said peace negotiations had a negative impact on their performance, he said.

Pointing to a Taliban's recent warning of targeting media, he said that the insurgent group had set a deadline for media outlets to stop airing government-paid advertisements, which the rebels deem as propaganda against them.

In response to the Taliban's warning, he said no group could act militarily against media outlets according to national and international laws. "This threat is somehow a crime against humanity," he said.

Khilwatgar asked the government to protect journalists and media from threats otherwise the government would be responsible for whatever happened in future. (Pajhwok)

(9) Turkey Sees...

Erdogan has previously signaled an unwillingness to work with an opposition mayor, saying his party controlled 25 of Istanbul's 39 districts and a majority in the municipal assembly. Imamoglu would have to work with those officeholders to govern Istanbul, and he promised to do so Sunday.

Addressing Erdogan in a speech, Imamoglu said, "I'm ready to work with you" to solve Istanbul's problems. Ozgur Unluhisarikli, Ankara office director of the German Marshall Fund, argued that the loss of Istanbul likely would fuel speculation of divisions within the ruling party and among its supporters.

"It's now clear that a sizable portion of the AKP voters is seriously dissatisfied by policies of the AKP," he said. "The (opposition) was a house that was united. The AKP house looked like one that was already divided."

He argued Erdogan already was facing an "a perfect storm" this summer. Erdogan has been at odds with Western allies over Turkey's plans to buy the Russian-made S-400 missile defense system and its challenge of EU-member Cyprus over natural gas drilling rights.

Imamoglu narrowly won an earlier mayoral election on March 31, but Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, AKP, challenged the vote over alleged irregularities. He spent 18 days in office before Turkey's electoral board annulled the results after weeks of partial recounts.

The voided vote raised concerns domestically and abroad about the state of Turkish democracy and whether Erdogan's party would accept any electoral loss. AKP has governed Turkey since 2002.

"You have protected the reputation of democracy in Turkey with the whole world watching," Imamoglu, his voice hoarse after weeks of campaigning, told supporters. Jubilant supporters chanted "Mayor again! Mayor again!" Others hung out of cars, blaring horns and waving red-and-white Turkish flags. (Fox News)

(10) Billionaire Arkady...

Rotenberg spent years waging a so-far-futile international legal battle against the travel and business restrictions - which he describes as groundless and "unjust" but now views them as a blessing in disguise, saying that Russia "moving away from a raw-exports role" in the world economy.

"Russians are smart enough, I think. We've never been lacking in mathematicians, soft-

ware engineers, physicists or anyone else for that matter, so we have what it takes to develop," he said, but added that the population's "mentality" has prevented the country from achieving its potential. He called for something to inspire and unify people.

As an example of what can be collectively achieved, Rotenberg cites the project he is overseeing, the 18km Kerch Strait Bridge between mainland Russia and Crimea, the construction of which he likens to "birthing a baby" that has given him years of sleepless nights.

Rotenberg also admitted that he has given thought to what awaits both Russia and himself after Putin's term in office runs out in five years, though he is sure that at least one thing will not change - the relationship between the two men.

"We've been friends, and we will remain friends no matter what. Our friendship has stood the test of time - over 50 years." (RT)

(11) 2 Eurofighter...

a local radio broadcaster shows plumes of black smoke billowing over a forest at the purported crash site. Some parts of the planes also hit a residential area, a local newspaper, SVZ, reports.

Both aircraft were part of the Air Force Squadron 73 'Steinhoff,' stationed at the Laage base near the city of Rostok. They were performing a training flight when the incident occurred. The pilots reportedly managed to eject and are believed to have survived the ordeal. There has been no information about any casualties on the ground so far.

One of the pilots was found alive on the ground, the defense ministry confirmed. The search for the other one continues.

A spokesman for the German Armed Forces, the Bundeswehr, also confirmed that the incident took place but did not provide any further information.

Mecklenburg Lake District, where the crash happened, is a popular German holiday destination known for its nature reserves. (RT)

(12) Europe Cool...

levels with the U.S. and noting that various representatives of the three European countries have recently been in Tehran.

European trio Germany, France and Britain, as well as Russia and China, remain part of the nuclear deal that U.S. President Donald Trump's administration abandoned last year. The 2015 agreement aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

Germany argues that the agreement, beyond ensuring that Iran doesn't produce nuclear weapons, also helps keep open lines of communication with Tehran to address other concerns about its behavior in the Middle East.

Germany's foreign minister, Heiko Maas, on Sunday doubled down on criticism of the Trump administration's strategy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran, which is weighing heavily on Iran's economy. "It is having an economic effect, but it is also having an effect in other ways, and we see that in what is going on in the Middle East: the danger of war is rising," he told ZDF television. "So the strategy of maximum pressure can't be the right one, because one of the consequences is that we are all talking about how serious the situation is, and that there is a danger of war." He added that "this is the time for diplomacy" - a point echoed Monday by the spokeswoman for European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, one of the guarantors of the 2015 agreement.

Asked about the U.S. call for a coalition against Iran, Maja Kocijancic said that "exclusively diplomatic routes are needed to resolve differences. The EU is ready to work with partners to take this forward." She added that "the latest developments underline the urgent need for restraint, for open channels of dialogue and for immediate de-escalation."

Britain recently sent a Foreign Office minister to Tehran. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt - who is also campaigning to lead the Conservative Party and become the new prime minister - told the Daily Mail newspaper at the weekend that "we will stand by the United States as our strongest ally but of course we have to consider any requests for military support on a case-by-case basis." He said that "we want to de-escalate the situation but we are of course extremely worried."

The Europeans' diplomatic balancing act faces severe pressure from the Iranian side as well. On Friday, officials from Iran and the remaining parties to the nuclear deal are due to hold a regular meeting in Vienna, with Tehran saying that it expects to exceed the uranium stockpile limit set by the agreement this week.

Iran also has set a July 7 deadline for Europe to come up with better terms for it to stay in the accord. If that deadline passes without any action, President Hassan Rouhani has said the Islamic Republic likely will resume higher uranium enrichment. The Europeans are laboring to implement a complicated barter-type system known as INSTEX to keep up trade with Iran. (AP)

(13) Iraq Appoints...

to be able to assemble a government despite fractures in the ruling elites.

He also has the backing of both Washington and Tehran, two key Iraqi allies who are themselves bitter enemies.

But he has faced a complex task building a government which faces the enormous challenges of rebuilding a country ravaged by three years of fighting IS.

Abdel Mahdi won parliament's backing for Yassin al-Yasseri as interior minister and General Najah al-Shemmari to head up the defence ministry.

A woman had been put forward as education minister but was not approved - parliamentary sources say another vote is expected in the coming days.

Shemmari, who like all Iraq's defence ministers since 2003 comes from Mosul, was previously one of the commanders of the country's elite counter-terrorism unit.

The appointments come amid days of pressure by parliamentarians and protesters calling on Abdel Mahdi to finish building his government.

Iraq's roasting hot summers are often marked by social unrest as power cuts - which shut down vital air-conditioning units - spark anger over perceived official incompetence and corruption.

Powerful Shiite cleric and political figure Moqtada Sadr has threatened to withdraw his confidence in the government, sparking speculation the current administration could lose its majority in parliament. (AFP)

(14) Russia Threatens...

Moscow for stirring up the trouble, while Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that "Russophobic hysteria" was being artificially whipped up in Georgia.

The Russian state consumer watchdog, Rospotrebnadzor, said in a statement it was introducing the tougher checks on wine imports because of concerns about the quality of Georgian consignments. Kremlin spokesman Peskov denied any link to the political row.

But Moscow has in the past used bans on wine imports as a weapon in political disputes with Georgia. Russia has already suspended flights to Georgia by Russian airlines, hitting tourism, another major source of revenue for the Georgian economy.

When the protests first erupted on Thursday, police used tear gas and rubber bullets to prevent crowds of protesters from storming Georgia's parliament. Hundreds of people were injured, some seriously.

The protests have quickly developed into a double crisis: pitting Moscow against Tbilisi and pitting the protesters in Georgia against their own government, which has for years tried to smooth over differences with Moscow.

In a move that the anti-government protesters hailed as a victory, the ruling Georgian Dream party said that for the 2020 parliamentary election, the country would switch from a mixed electoral system to a proportional system, with no threshold for parties to get into parliament.

The switch was scheduled to happen anyway in 2024, but the protesters had been demanding that the change be brought forward. A proportional system is likely to make it harder for Georgian Dream to maintain its dominance in parliament without building a coalition.

"This is your first success, first victory," Elene Khoshtaria, a leader of the European Georgia opposition party, said at a briefing, addressing her remarks to the protesters.

She said that the other demand of protesters, the interior minister's resignation, should be also fulfilled. Protests outside parliament are expected to continue on Monday. Protests continued on Monday. Hundreds of cars and motorbikes drove in the city center, waving national flags and sounding their horns. (Reuters)

(15) Pompeo Meets...

hawkish US stance has drawn limited support among its allies in Europe, which still support a denuclearisation deal negotiated under former president Barack Obama from which Trump pulled out last year, triggering tensions.

Iran says that the US drone encroached its airspace - and accuses Washington of waging economic warfare by unilaterally imposing sanctions, including trying to stop all its oil exports.

The US pointman on Iran, Brian Hook, on Monday held his own talks in Oman, which has often served as a go-between for Washington and Tehran.

Pompeo's trip comes despite growing controversy inside the United States over the Trump administration's cosy relationship with Mohammed bin Salman after US-based dissident writer Jamal Khashoggi was killed and dismembered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last year.

Pompeo used rare emergency powers, citing Iran as a threat, to authorise \$8.1 billion in weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, despite concerns in the US Congress that the arms will go to kill civilians in the devastating war in Yemen. (AFP)