

(1) Alice Wells...

They also discussed the importance of holding the elections in September and the success and results of the Consultative Loya Jirga for Peace, added the statement. Wells also met with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah where they discussed the launch of US-Afghan Civilian Assistance Review, peace efforts and timely presidential elections in Afghanistan. Wells arrived in Kabul on Sunday to participate in the opening of the US-Afghan Civilian Assistance Review.

The US Embassy in Kabul said in a statement that the Review will strengthen Afghan institutions and promote Afghan self-reliance, and is an element of the investment the US makes in the social and economic development of Afghanistan.

During her visit, Wells will meet with stakeholders of the September 28 Afghan Presidential Elections to learn about ongoing preparations and underscore US commitment to a transparent and efficient presidential elections process, the statement said.

She will meet with men and women from civil society to hear their views on peace and reaffirm US support for a peaceful, stable Afghanistan, the statement added.

According to the statement, she will also celebrate Ramadan at an Iftar with Afghan civil society leaders. (Tolo news)

(2) UNAMA Concerned...

the impact of the war on civilians. UNAMA reiterates its call for the parties to halt the fighting during Ramadan and uphold their obligations to protect civilians from harm. UNAMA extends deep condolences to the families of victims and wishes a speedy recovery to all those affected by recent violence. (PR)

(3) Business...

there. That is why they bring their money here."

Hadi Ekhlas, an engraver from Afghanistan's Hazara ethnic group, left the war-torn nation eight years ago. In Turkey, he now engraves Islamic and Ottoman scripts on rings and semi-precious stones, a skill he learned from his grandfather.

"In the past, some Turkish traders would import stones with engravings from other countries, but now I am making them here and taking orders," said Ekhlas, who has a Turkish partner. "I plan to expand my business in the near future. I'd also like to teach my skills to other Turks here." (AFP)

(4) Indonesia Says...

It said the Indonesian envoy delivered a letter of his country's Foreign Ministry about the Afghan peace process and expressed the country's readiness for hosting the Afghan peace talks.

Rabbani termed Indonesia as a good friend of Afghanistan, appreciated the Republic of Indonesia's support towards the peace process, led and owned by the people and the government of Afghanistan.

Rabbani highly regarded Indonesia's efforts at facilitating direct talks between the Kabul administration and the Taliban.

The foreign minister stressed implementation of agreements lately signed between the two countries. Parcaya expressed his country's commitment to educating and building the capacity of Afghanistan's mining sector personnel. (Pajhwok)

(5) Kabul Police Foils...

The statement further added that the detained individual has been identified as Hasmatullah who was arrested from the 1st Police District of the city on Sunday.

The Ministry of Interior also added that Hashmatullah is in police custody and the ancient sculpture has been confiscated. (KP)

(6) Europe Should Pay for...

in Iran. However, it cannot happen that Westerners impose sanctions and economic pressure on us and forget their own responsibilities in this respect," he said.

Despite Araqchi's claims, the great majority of Afghans play an important role in Iran's economy, sometimes taking difficult jobs that Iranians shy away from. Iran has also conducted refugee expulsion back to Afghanistan.

Earlier on May 10, in an interview with official news agency IRNA, Araqchi had said that Western countries have caused many problems for the Afghan people and should fulfill their duties in helping Afghan refugees.

"European governments should pay their share for hosting refugees, be it through helping them financially or granting them asylum," he said.

In another interview with the local Channel 2 on May 8, he had explicitly announced that Iran may order Afghan refugees to leave the country.

Two days later, he was forced to downplay his remarks in another interview with IRNA.

"The issue of the expulsion or return of Afghan refugees is not at all on the agenda of the government of Iran, but considering new options is a separate matter," IRNA cited him as saying.

"More than 3 million Afghans are living in Iran, with 2 million having been employed," Araqchi told IRNA, maintaining, "Afghan refugees cost Iran 3 billion to 5 billion euros (approximately \$3.37 billion to \$5.61 billion) every year."

He also claimed, "About 468,000 Afghan students are being educated in Iran's government schools, and each student costs us 600 euros a year."

Referring to U.S. sanctions on Iran, Araqchi said that the issue of Afghan refugees living in Iran and the related costs has existed for many years, but under the present circumstances with "cruel and illegal" sanctions imposed on Iran and the U.S. government trying to curtail the financial resources of Iran, the demands on the Iranian nation are gaining "new dimensions."

Furthermore, he said that since Europeans are responsible for many of the Afghans' problems, they should either bear their share of costs for Afghan refugees living in Iran or accept them in their countries.

Araqchi's comments triggered a barrage of criticism on social media and from local news outlets.

Veteran legislator and member of the Commission for National Security and Foreign Policy of the Iranian Parliament Alaaddin Boroujerdi endorsed Araqchi's remarks as "true" but criticized the way they had been "presented and circulated."

Boroujerdi said that, in a telephone conversation with members of the commission, Araqchi had expanded on his controversial comments. "Instead of bearing the costs [of Afghan refugees living in Iran], Europe is supporting the sanctions," Boroujerdi quoted Araqchi as saying. "The Europeans' position on Iran hosting refugees and combating the flow of narcotics to Europe is absolutely unacceptable."

Moreover, Boroujerdi complained that while Europe pays 6 billion euros (roughly \$6.8 billion) a year to Turkey for hosting Syrian refugees, it has not paid "a penny" for Afghan refugees living in Iran.

Araqchi's comments sparked considerable reactions in Afghanistan. The spokesman of the Afghan Foreign Ministry, Sebgat Ahmadi, told RFE/RL's Afghan Service that "the questions of Afghan refugees and Washington's sanctions are two separate issues, and based on international conventions, the issue of refugees should not be mixed with political motivations."

Afghan political analyst Ahmad Saeedi told Tolo News website, "Iran wants to tell the European Union that if you do not want to take practical steps against the U.S. sanctions on Iran, we are compelled to open a flood of refugees and drugs to Europe." (RFE/RL)

(7) Interior Ministry...

paying heed to the issue. The level of crime has risen significantly compared to the past," said Farzam, a Kabul resident.

"We do not feel safe even inside our homes," said Ali, a Kabul resident. (Tolo news)

(8) Marines Warmly...

Major Luke Pernotto, who supported the company from Pictinny, said seven months in Afghanistan were spent on patrol, manning guard towers and providing security for advisers. (Pajhwok)

(9) Former Health...

According to the prosecutor of the case, the convicts have embezzled 17 million Afghans from the procurement of 140,000 swine influenza capsules and vaccines for the Afghan army.

However, the attorney of the convicts rejected the allegations and said it was not a fair judgment. (ATN)

(10) US Diversion...

commitment to Afghan security forces in their fight against terrorism.

The United States is also holding direct talks with Taliban insurgents to try to promote a political settlement to the Afghan conflict. The latest round of discussions concluded last Thursday, but neither side has reported any breakthrough.

President Donald Trump announced in January progress in the talks with the Taliban could lead to withdrawal of half of some 14,000 American troops from Afghanistan.

Recent reports the Trump administration has decided to accelerate plans to reduce the staff by half at the embassy in Kabul coupled with diverting funds designated for Afghan forces raise questions about a "strong future U.S. commitment to Afghanistan," tweeted Washington-based analyst, Michael Kugelman.

Meanwhile, visiting senior State Department diplomat for the region, Alice Wells, held talks with President Ashraf Ghani and discussed matters related to U.S. civilian assistance aimed at strengthening Afghan institutions and promoting Afghan self-reliance.

A presidential spokesman said Ghani and Wells also reviewed efforts the government is making to advance the Afghan peace process, and preparations underway for the presidential elections scheduled for September 28. (VoA)

(11) A year on...

to collect taxes and intimidate people," he said.

He pledged to conduct a clearing operation to reopen the highway once the number of security personnel needed here was completed.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the Ghazni-Paktika highway had been closed only against government personnel.

"Common people can travel on the highway, there is no problem for them," said Mujahid. (Pajhwok)

(12) Maruf District...

"Taliban have blocked the main road to the district by planting bombs on it, they do not allow anyone to use the road and Afghan forces on the other hand stop people using subways and force them to use the main road," he said.

He said residents of the district had to travel to Kandahar through Zabul province, a journey that took a whole day.

"People have to start their trip from early morning and pass

through Atghar, Naw Bahar, Shenkai and Sewri districts and capital of Zabul province for reaching Kandahar, they will arrive at night there," he said.

Rahmatullah said the road through Zabul province was unpaved and patients with serious health problems often lost their lives on the way due to the long distance to reach a hospital.

"People who grow fruits and vegetables are also highly affected because their products decay on the road to Kandahar and due to high transport costs", he said.

He said government officials had several times promised to construct the 74 kilometers road between Arghistan and Maruf districts, but no action could be taken so far taken on the regard.

"Currently people travel a distance of three hours in a full day", he said, adding that besides transportation problems, local people were in trouble in the absence of telecom services.

He said telecom towers were destroyed during the Taliban attack on the district center. He asked the government to resolve the mentioned problems.

Kandahar local administration acknowledged problems of Maruf people and said a plan was in progress to resolve these issues.

Kandahar governor's spokesman, Aziz Ahmad Azizi, told Pajhwok that Taliban had blocked Maruf district's road to Kandahar city.

He said the local administration together with security organs was working on a plan to reopen the road and ensure its security.

The budget for construction of Maruf district road had been approved and the project would be implemented once security improved in the area, he said.

Azizi said the district's clinic building was destroyed by the Taliban but the local administration was trying to reconstruct it and resume health services to public.

About education, he said the provincial education department was working to deliver teachers' salaries in the district through banking system for transparency in the payment process.

Three months back, the Taliban claimed capturing the center of Maruf district after a two-year siege, but government officials rejected the claim and said they had just moved the district headquarters from its original place to another area.

Col. Rahmatullah Atrafi, Kandahar deputy police chief, said the decision to move the headquarters of Maruf district was made due to low population of people in the old area.

He said the district headquarters of Maruf district had been moved eight kilometers away from its original site.

The old headquarters operated in a mud-made fort which sustained heavy damage when the Taliban attacked it with an explosives-laden Humvee vehicle. The deadly attack caused casualties to security forces including the district police chief. (Pajhwok)

(13) Hotkhels Stop...

Gul Nazir, a resident of the Hotkhel area, said: "We are tired of the protesting candidates closing highways, Today we did not allow them to close IECC office in order or create problems for people in Ramadan. (Pajhwok)

(14) Pakistani Taliban...

the Pakistani identity card from the pocket of the Taliban commander.

"We did not transfer other dead bodies, we only transferred the dead body of this Pakistani officer and you can take footage of him that the Pakistani officers also take part in these operations," said Mohammad Naser Alizai, Deputy Commander of Afghan Commando Forces.

Violence has dramatically in-

creased in Ghazni province over the past two months with the foreign militants fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Taliban in the key province.

According to local officials, up to 40 security force members and 30 civilians so far have been killed during the violence.

"Overall, 500 operations, including clearance operations and aerial operations by the coalition and Afghan forces were carried out since the month of Hamal (March)," said Arif Noori, spokesman to Ghazni governor.

Despite these reports, roads in many areas of the province remained close to traffic, including a short closure of Kabul-Kandahar Highway in recent days, where the Taliban installed checkpoints and searched passengers.

Back in August 2018, the Taliban insurgents backed by the foreign militants launched a coordinated attack on Ghazni city from four directions and seized some parts of the city for several days. (Tolo news)

(15) China Says Will...

but vowing to defend the country's interests and dignity.

"At no time will China forfeit the country's respect, and no one should expect China to swallow bitter fruit that harms its core interests," China's top newspaper, the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily, said in a commentary.

State television said in a separate commentary that the effect on the Chinese economy from the U.S. tariffs was "totally controllable".

"It's no big deal. China is bound to turn crisis to opportunity and use this to test its abilities, to make the country even stronger." (Reuters)

(16) Satellite Images...

Vietnam, Ukraine as well as US' NATO allies Bulgaria and Slovakia.

The fact that the complexes are believed to still be deployed by some NATO members might hold a key to the mystery as to how they landed on American soil.

According to some reports, the US has retained at least one S-300 installation since the early 1990s, which it allegedly acquired from Belarus amidst the turmoil following the Soviet Union's collapse.

The New York Times reported back in 1994 that the Pentagon's chief military intelligence bought "components" of the S-300 in a secretive deal in order to study the system. The complexes reportedly came without electronics and radar equipment.

The Pentagon's interest in the Soviet-era technology has apparently not faded since. It was reported in October last year that US and Israeli military specialists made a secretive trip to Ukraine to study and test the installations there. Kiev reportedly provided Tel Aviv and Washington with technical details and some S-300s for further field tests.

While it is unclear if the "S-300" allegedly spotted in the US is a mockup or a real one, some Russian media have speculated that the US military might be conducting tests in preparation for a military operation in Venezuela, which uses the complexes for air defense. (RT)

(17) Pompeo Cancels...

he canceled a visit to Germany and instead went to Iraq, where he hinted that Baghdad should stay away from doing business with Tehran - for the sake of its own independence.

On Friday, the Pentagon said it was sending additional Patriot anti-air missiles to the Middle East in addition to the carrier strike group and bombers it had dispatched to near the Iranian coast as a "warning" a week earlier. Pompeo, meanwhile, has been insisting the US does not want war with Iran. (RT)