

**(1) Yamamoto Calls...**

Election Commission.

"Critically important that credible Afghanistan presidential elections take place on time this year. Everyone should play their role to ensure Afghans can exercise their constitutional right to vote without delays," Yamamoto said at IEC today in Kabul.

The UN's technical advice is that with only four months remaining to 28 September presidential election day there is a need for realism and urgent focus among all actors in Afghan election process, UNAMA said in a tweet.

"The IEC is the independent decision-making body running Afghan elections. The IEC decides on how many elections to hold. The UN provides technical guidance to it and respects its decisions," it added.

This comes as according to the VOA, the chairperson of the Independent Election Commission Hawa Alam Nuristani has rejected a request by the US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice Wells to postpone the provincial councils and Ghazni parliamentary elections. (Tolo news)

**(2) Taliban...**

criticisms were also raised when Husan Jalil was appointed as deputy interior minister.

In a statement posted in his Facebook, Murazawi has said the judgement of certain men in social media is similar to the judgement of the furious men who had lynched Farkhunda.

Murtazawi further added that women are serving in senior security and defense positions in other parts of the world and similarly Afghan women have a successful management in different institutions. (KP)

**(3) Yamamoto...**

groups designated as terrorist by Washington, the timetable of a U.S. military withdrawal, a cease-fire in Afghanistan, and an intra-Afghan dialogue that would include the Taliban and government representatives.

The Taliban has refused to negotiate with the Western-backed Kabul government, viewing it as illegitimate. (RFE/RL)

**(4) Committee...**

through legitimate ways, but he says the lawmakers "are not willing to address the issue through legal channels".

On Saturday, May 18, there were 247 MPs when the voting started and based on this quorum, 124 votes were needed for a winning candidate, but 244 MPs cast their votes at the end of voting. Based on the last quorum, 123 votes were needed for a winning candidate but the missing votes from the total 247 MPs turned the process controversial. (Tolo news)

**(5) Afghan Treasures...**

In 2017, China joined the global relay to protect and display these treasures in efforts to keep the crucial part of an ancient civilization alive.

In 2018, a 150-piece aboriginal art exhibition titled "Old Masters: Australia's Great Bark Artists" was held in China, and a Chinese calligraphy and painting exhibition opened at the National Museum of Australia last month.

In March 2017, Director of Afghan National Museum Mohammad Fahim Rahimi traveled to China together with 231 pieces of his country's national treasures and relics, which were later displayed in the Palace Museum in Beijing.

The three-month exhibition drew more than 8,000 visitors per day, who were amazed at the rich history and culture of Afghanistan and the concerted global efforts to keep the treasures in safe hands.

In 2001, the Taliban regime that ruled Afghanistan dynamited and destroyed two enormous 6th cen-

tury giant Buddhas of Bamiyan, besides wreaking havoc on other precious cultural relics. The 231 precious items on display overseas were among a number of rare collections secretly saved by Afghan museum staff from the flames of war.

They represent the cultural heritage from the Bronze Age, the Hellenistic period and the Kushan dynasty, as well as the period between the invasion of the Yuezhi people and the establishment of the Kushan dynasty, showcasing the integration and mingling of ancient civilizations.

"Afghanistan has served as the crossroad of civilizations in the course of history that connects South Asia to Central Asia and as well as the East to the West," said Rahimi as quoted by China's state news agency.

Displaying Afghanistan's cultural treasures in China, a peaceful and populous country, is vital for the introduction of Afghanistan's civilization to the Chinese audience, he said. (Tolo news)

**(6) Daikundi...**

and control the prices of food items but despite that we monitor the bazaar."

She also blamed the price-hike on the devaluation of afghani against dollar and said if shopkeepers bought items at low prices, they would certainly sell them at appropriate prices.

Remoteness of the province and ruined roads are contributing to the increase in food prices. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Rabbani Hails...**

"The historical background of Samarkand is important for every Muslim and we are ready to facilitate the Afghan peace talks even for two decades," he said. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Kabul-Based...**

not operate better and did not follow the Afghanistan banking policies".

The bank was primarily engaged in commercial banking services in Afghanistan. (KP)

**(9) Trump, Imran...**

"There are chances of further progress in talks [that] can lead to a new opening in Pakistan-US bilateral relations," Qureshi continued.

Qureshi said Pakistan desired peace in Afghanistan and the entire region, and that Islamabad would make all possible efforts to make the ongoing dialogue successful. Stability in Afghanistan would lead to peace in the entire region, he hoped. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Security Officials...**

not act on time and did not anticipate such an attack should be held responsible," said Mohammadagul Mujahid, a military analyst.

"There is no coordination between different departments of the Interior Affairs Ministry. The ministry does not have accurate communication with its outposts and police districts and cannot address their challenges," said Fatima Nazari, an MP.

Kabul Police, meanwhile, said the incident is under "thorough" investigation.

"These soldiers were operating under the Public Protection Unit and they asked for help when the attack was ended. It means they did not ask for help in the first minutes," said Firdaws Faramarz, a spokesman for Kabul Police.

The Acting Minister of Interior Affairs has ordered an investigation into the incident and has said that those who were found negligent in sending reinforcements to the area "should be punished", the Interior Ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

This comes as General Salem Almas was removed from his post as head of the Crime Investigation Department in Kabul to pay more attention to Kabul security. Lieutenant Colonel Moenuddin was appointed as acting head of the Crime Investigation Department.

"Recently, pressure has increased on criminal networks in Kabul," said Nusrat Rahimi, a spokesman for Ministry of Interior Affairs. "At least 120 suspects have been arrested on charges of murder and robbery in Kabul over the past two weeks."

Kabul residents said they are deeply concerned about an increase in crime in the city.

"Murder, kidnapping and any types of crime are happening in Kabul," said Mohammad Sharif, a Kabul resident.

"We cannot walk freely in the city. The government should do something," said Hashmatullah, a Kabul resident. (Tolo news)

**(11) New CID Chief...**

several criminal related incidents have taken place in key parts of Kabul city recently including an armed attack on a local trader in Karte Parwan area of the city last week.

The took place in broad daylight involving a group of armed robbers who snatched \$50,000 in cash from the trader after shooting him death. (KP)

**(12) 9 Killed as...**

commander and his two bodyguards were killed and seven others wounded.

Security forces had reached the site and arrested two individuals in connection with the incident, the police spokesman concluded.

But Shakoorullah, a resident of the district bazaar, told Pajhwok more than 10 people had been killed. "Security forces have been unable to reach the area in time." (Pajhwok)

**(13) Former CIA Chief...**

for conflict. But questions remain about what prompted the actions and many lawmakers have demanded more information.

Trump and Brennan have clashed openly, particularly over the issues surrounding the special counsel's probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election. Brennan stepped down from the CIA in 2017.

The president last year said he was revoking the former spy chief's security credentials after Brennan was critical of Trump's interactions with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit in Helsinki. Top national security officials often retain their clearance after they have left an agency as a way to provide counsel to their successors. It's unclear if Brennan actually lost his clearance.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had been asking the administration for a briefing for all lawmakers on the situation in Iran, but she said the request was initially rebuffed. The administration provided a classified briefing for top leaders of both parties last week. (AP)

**(14) 'No Other Options...**

reluctant to accept. At the same time, Washington threatened to block the delivery of 100 F-35 jets purchased by Turkey, and terminate its participation in the F-35 program. Ankara, having invested \$1.25 billion in the trillion-dollar program, is a vital partner, producing parts of fuselage, landing gear, and cockpit displays for the jets.

Ankara has repeatedly slammed Washington's coercive diplomacy, saying that Turkey is not a "slave" dancing to the US' tune when it comes to protecting the nation's sovereignty. Nevertheless, Erdogan said he has no doubts that the stealth jets will be delivered.

"They [the US] are passing the ball around in the midfield now, showing some reluctance," the president said. "But sooner or later, we will receive the F-35s. Not delivering them is not an option." (RT)

**(15) 'All Decent People...**

Salvini stressed that much would depend on the outcome of the upcoming elections, including whether it would be possible to repeal the anti-Russia restrictions.

Polls show that Salvini's right-

wing alliance, Europe of Nations and Freedom, is expected to become one of the largest blocs in the next EU parliament.

The political group "will perform a historic feat to pass from the 8th place in Europe to third or maybe second," National Rally leader Marine Le Pen predicted while speaking at the Milan rally.

The United States and the European Union imposed restrictions on Russia produce and other goods following Crimea's reunification with Russia in 2014. Moscow reciprocated the sanctions in a tit-for-tat move. Since then, the sanctions regime has expanded to include banking and other sectors.

As a result, many European businesses have been pushed out of the Russian market. The issue has sparked considerable anger in Germany, where politicians from both the left and the right have spoken out against the policy as counterproductive and harmful to German interests. (RT)

**(16) Pope Pays Tribute...**

She mentioned Lyra Mckee, who was shot dead while covering a riot in Northern Ireland, Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, who died in a car bomb in 2017, and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, killed in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last year.

"Freedom of the press and of expression is an important indicator of the state of a country's health," the pope said. "Let's not forget that one of the first things dictatorships do is remove freedom of the press or mask it, not leaving it free."

Francis did not mention any countries in his address to about 400 members of the foreign media and their families.

"We need journalists who are on the side of victims, on the side of those who are persecuted, on the side of who is excluded, cast aside, discriminated against," he said. (Reuters)

**(17) Canada Aims to...**

now intends to move forward with the ratification," of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, Freeland said, describing the process as progressing "full steam ahead."

However, she did not specify when the deal would be presented to Parliament, which remains in session only until June.

Freeland acknowledged that despite the lifting of the aluminum and steel tariffs, it would be "naive" to think US protectionism is no longer a threat.

"Eternal vigilance is required," she said.

Meanwhile, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Saturday the US move to withdraw tariffs was a "triumph" for Mexico. (AFP)

**(18) France's Macron...**

Macron wanted the May 23-26 European Parliament elections to be the key moment that he could push his ambitions for a stronger Europe – but instead, nationalists and populists who criticized the 28-nation bloc could achieve unprecedented success.

They argue that EU leaders have failed to manage migration into the continent and remain out of touch with ordinary workers' concerns.

"We have a crisis of the European Union. This is a matter of fact. Everywhere in Europe, when you look at the past five to six years, in our country but in a lot of countries, all the extremes, extreme-rights, are increasing," Macron said Thursday, making an unexpected appeal for European unity on the sidelines of a technology trade show.

"On currency, on digital, on climate action, we need more Europe," he said. "I want the EU to be more protective of our borders regarding migration, terrorism and so on, but I think if you fragment Europe, there is no chance you have a stronger Europe."

In person, the 41-year-old Macron comes across as strikingly, sincerely

European. A political centrist, he's at ease quoting Greek playwrights, German thinkers or British economists. France's youngest president grew up with the EU and has been using the shared European euro currency his whole adult life, and sees it as Europe's only chance to stay in the global economic game. Macron has already visited 20 of the EU's 28 countries in his two years in office, and while he acknowledges the EU's problems, he wants to fix the bloc – not disassemble it.

Macron won the 2017 presidential election over France's far-right, anti-immigration party leader Marine Le Pen on a pledge to make Europe stronger to face global competition against the United States and China. Since then, he's had to make compromises with other EU leaders – and clashed with some nations where populist parties govern, from Poland to neighboring Italy.

Four months after his election, Macron outlined his vision for Europe in a sweeping speech at Paris' Sorbonne university, calling for a joint EU budget, shared military forces and harmonized taxes. (Fox News)

**(19) 'Enemies of Freedom...**

"We are dealing with movements, populist movements that despise those values in many aspects and seek to destroy the Europe of our values, so we have to oppose them."

A video showing Strache and his close aide discussing potentially illegal quid pro quo arrangements with a 'Russian business woman' is being presented as conclusive 'proof' that the right-wingers are not to be trusted, by German political elites who have been struggling with a surge of right-wing sentiment among the population. In light of the upcoming European Parliament elections, they apparently decided that an Austrian crisis centered on a right-wing party that made it into the ruling coalition two years earlier was a good excuse to remind their voters – and the rest of Europe – what true European values really are and who their enemies are.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was blunt in his assessment, calling the right-wing "enemies of freedom." His colleagues from the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which is suffering from historically low levels of support according to recent polls, promptly followed suit with unsolicited advice to Austria's chancellor.

"Sebastian Kurz has no other option but to put an end to this government immediately and apologize for entrusting responsibility to the splitters and provocateurs like Strache," SPD Secretary General Lars Klingbeil tweeted. The Social Democrats' deputy head, Ralf Stegner, said the scandalous video "showed the stupidity and depravity of the right-wing radicals for everyone to see: corrupt, undemocratic, dangerous." (RT)

**(20) Australia's Leader...**

Morrison to prime minister.

Sydney University political scientist Stewart Jackson said the polls that had put Labor ahead of the government for the past two years were too consistent for too long to be credible.

"That indicates 'herding,' where the pollsters themselves are getting results that they don't think are right and are adjusting them," Jackson said. "Because statistically, polls should never come up like that."

Martin O'Shannessy, who headed the respected Newpoll market research company in Sydney for a decade until 2015, said he was "shocked" by the government's victory, given the polling.

"It's not possible to tell exactly how the current polls are being conducted because they don't have the same method statement that polls in the past have had," O'Shannessy said. (AP)