

### (1) Pompeo Refuses...

of Afghanistan, but Pompeo declined to do so, Afghan officials say. "There is no agreement to sign yet. If and when there is an agreement that is approved by all parties, including President Trump and if the Secretary is the appropriate signatory, he will sign it," State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortogus told TIME. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Reducing Violence ...

what I would view as a successful negotiation right now, it would be a negotiation that does two things. It reduces the level of violence associated with the insurgency and it sets up the Afghans to have intra-Afghan dialogue," Marine General Joseph Dunford said at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. Reducing the violence would allow Afghan and allied U.S. forces to be more "focused on the terrorist threat than on the insurgency," Dunford added. Trump promised during the 2016 campaign to bring home American troops from overseas conflicts, and conclude what he called endless wars. The U.S. has been fighting in Afghanistan since 2001, soon after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The Americans has been negotiating directly with Taliban forces in an effort to deliver on the troop withdrawal pledge. Afghan authorities have been largely sidelined in the process, even as the Taliban have escalated attacks. The Taliban have so far refused to hold talks with the Kabul government, although the U.S. says the group must do so before any accord is final.

The U.S. is proposing to tie troop withdrawals to a pledge by the Taliban to prohibit terrorist groups like Islamic State and al-Qaeda from using Afghanistan to stage assaults. The fear that a rapid U.S. withdrawal may lead to chaos in Afghanistan has loomed over proposals to scale back. Even now, the Taliban control or contest about half the country's territory, more than at any time since it was ousted in the American-led intervention.

Dunford, who is set to retire in October, said at a Pentagon briefing on Aug. 28 that Afghan government forces are still incapable of securing the country without American military support. "Right now, it's our judgment that the Afghans need support to deal with the level of violence that is associated with the insurgency today," Dunford said then. "If an agreement happens in the future, if the security environment changes, then obviously our posture may adjust." (Bloomberg News)

### (3) Russia, India ...

launched in Moscow in February 2019. They vowed to continue intensive discussions on Afghanistan and encouraged interested states to make the peace process in Afghanistan broad-based, preserve the constitutional order and to turn Afghanistan into a peaceful, secure, stable and independent state. They called for the immediate cessation of violence. (Pajhwok)

### (4) First Container...

in the design and construction of the new road of the Uzbek side. The Afghan side will engage in attracting financial resources for the implementation of the project. In April this year, the special envoy of the Chinese Foreign Ministry for Afghanistan, Deng Xijun, at a meeting with the Special Representative of the President of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan, Ismatulla Irgashev, said that China was ready to join the project for the construction of the new Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway. (Trend)

### (5) Angelina Jolie ...

"Every film made in Afghanistan is a triumph against the odds," Jolie said. "At a time when the future of Afghanistan is hanging in the balance, it reminds us of all that is at stake for millions of Afghan women, who deserve the freedom, independence and safety to make their own choices - in their own homes, and throughout society as a whole." Karimi said: "We would like to thank [Venice chief] Alberto Barbera and the Venice festival for inviting my movie and giving me a platform to bring attention to the issues my country is facing - in particular, the need to guarantee fundamental women's rights in Afghanistan. Gender equality enables a country to gain prosperity and is fundamental for global peace." (Agencies)

### (6) President Ghani's...

who is still pursuing the killing of the innocent people is meaningless," President Ghani said in a statement. Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah also condemned the attack and called it a "barbaric act". He said the Taliban wants to win more leverage in the peace process by launching such attacks.

Mr. Abdullah said that such acts by the Taliban will only increase hatred of the Afghan people against the group.

He added that the Taliban will not get any points in the peace process by such attacks.

This comes as the Afghan government and the Taliban are expected to hold the first direct peace talks in the near future in case the US and the Taliban sign the draft framework agreement they wrapped following months of diplomacy in Doha. Since his appointment to the post in September, US chief negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad held nine rounds of talks with the Taliban in Doha and the UAE. However, during this period, there have been conflicting reports about the US's intention of bringing sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

Last week, US chief negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad said that the United States and the Taliban have reached an agreement in principle, but it is not final until US President Trump agrees on it.

Mr. Khalilzad said that based on the draft agreement, the US will withdraw 5,000 troops from five bases in Afghanistan within 135 days if conditions in the agreement are addressed by the Taliban. On May 9, the sixth round of US-Taliban talks ended in the Qatari capital, Doha. The talks so far have been focused on four key issues: US forces withdrawal, counterterrorism assurances, a ceasefire, and intra-Afghan negotiations.

Last week, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington is not seeking a permanent military presence in Afghanistan after the Taliban said they are close to finalizing a peace agreement with the United States.

The Afghan conflict has cost almost 2,400 American lives and hundreds of billions in taxpayer dollars. As the war approaches its 18th year, 14,000 US troops are still in Afghanistan and senior intelligence officials have repeatedly warned that the country remains fragile and could once again become a terrorist haven. (Tolo news)

### (7) US Lawmakers...

Afghan people deserve to know what the Administration's diplomatic strategy is for Afghanistan. Your testimony will help inform Members and provide necessary transparency regarding the Administration's Afghanistan strategy," wrote Engel.

"After nearly two decades of war, we all want to see the fighting in Afghanistan come to an end. But we want to make sure we are negotiating peace and not simply a withdrawal," he said.

He writes that "given the challenges this Committee has faced in getting information from the Trump Administration on this issue, I want to be clear: I do not consider your testimony at this hearing optional".

Mr. Engel warned that he will consider other options if Khalilzad did not respond this time.

Based on the agreement, which needs US President Donald Trump's approval, the US will withdraw 5,000 troops from five bases within 135 days, according to Mr. Khalilzad.

This comes as the Afghan government has shown frustration about the US-Taliban deal which is "agreed in principle" and has said that it is concerned about the consequences of the agreement. (Tolo news)

### (8) Afghanistan's Women ...

But for her, the coming months pose a grave danger. And once again, it is mainly men who are deciding women's fate. "We don't know what the Taliban have in mind for us, but we know the Taliban have not changed," she said, recalling the days when the insurgents were in power and frequently stoned women to death, banned them from school and forced them out of public spaces.

"Peace is good to silence the sound of guns, but the fear is a bad deal may also silence all voices," said the 48-year-old Kabul resident, whom Time magazine in 2009 named as one of the world's most influential people.

- 'Women will suffer a lot' - Zahra, a 24-year-old artist and designer who only gave her first name, has had to overcome many hurdles to follow her dream.

"When I started working as an artist, instead of receiving encouragement, many people told me it was not a good profession, especially for a woman," she recalled. They told her: "You cannot have a good income from doing art and told me to quit before it is too late," she said.

Zahra, who was only a child when the Taliban were in power, said if the militants return to Kabul, most women will quickly lose their jobs.

"We, the women, have struggled a lot to gain our rights, and we cannot afford to lose them. I believe the war will not end, even if there is a peace deal," Zahra said. For her, many Afghans' views of women's rights have evolved since 2001, but

by no means to the extent where men see women as having equal rights.

- 'We won't accept them' -

Haida Essazada, 23, is head of Afghanistan Youth Network, a resource for young people in a country where more than 62 percent of the population is under 25.

"We are working every single day to bring change to this society," Essazada said.

"We want it and we mean it, and if Taliban are not going to accept our rights, we won't accept them either."

She doubted whether the Taliban could ever really adapt their views.

While the insurgents paid lip service to women's rights during negotiations with the US, they always framed them in the context of "Islamic values" -- which are open to broad interpretation.

If the Taliban become "part of our government, the only concern I have is that they will not accept women's rights as fully as they should," Essazada said.

"I'm really worried about our future because the current generation, my generation, is a totally different generation."

- Like an 'explosion' -

Marghuba Safi, 40, has since 2016 run a Kabul business that makes soaps and creams, many of whose ingredients are sourced from an organic farm.

"We are happy to have peace in our country, it is our big dream but we have concerns," she said, expressing doubts that women like her could continue working if Taliban influence grows.

"I am a single mum, I am responsible for my whole family, for my children, for my house," she said.

Safi employs about 20 women, most of them recovering drug addicts, to help run her farm. If they are no longer allowed to work, it would be like an "explosion", she said.

- 'We are tired' -

Fawzia Amin owns a beauty salon in Kabul and employs about 15 women on her staff.

She fears her business would be devastated by any surge in the influence of the Taliban, who barred women from leaving their homes and punished women who resisted wearing an all-covering burqa.

"All the women in Afghanistan, they are really afraid," Amin said.

"We are very tired right now ... (but) I have to fight." (AFP)

### (9) Asia Can Lead ...

and finance were a key theme throughout APCW 2019, with a focus on communities and ecosystems that need it most.

On the issue of building resilience to climate change, representatives of indigenous peoples from the Asia-Pacific region and academics as well as other stakeholders with diverse backgrounds engaged at an event where they stressed the need for a shift in mindset in the fight against climate change.

The group proposed concrete pathways to help transform societies to achieve long-term resilience for all.

Other issues discussed at APCW 2019 were carbon pricing, the enhanced transparency framework, capacity-building and regional climate finance, above all for highly vulnerable nations.

At Asia Pacific Climate Week, work started on a new climate strategy for Indian Ocean Island States to access finance for priority projects, similar to the sub-regional Climate Finance Strategy developed for the four Melanesian island States of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The UN Climate Change Secretariat is assisting 10 sub-regions involving 77 countries in Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in preparing strategies to access scaled up climate finance.

APCW 2019 is the third Regional Climate Week to be organized this year, following a Regional Climate Week in Africa in Accra, Ghana in March and a Regional Climate Week in Salvador, Brazil in August. Altogether a total of 10,000 registrations were recorded for the 3 events demonstrating the growing interest for these issues.

Next year a new Regional Climate Week in the Middle East and North Africa region will take place in the United Arab Emirates and will be delivered in collaboration with the World Green Economy Organization (WGE), the hosting organization for the UN Climate Change Regional Collaboration Centre based in Dubai, for the MENA region and the South Asian region. (PR)

### (10) Afghan Forces ...

"The operations which are conducted to retake areas or push terrorists back should be followed by proper plans to maintain those areas and keep them away from threats," said Assadullah Nadim, a military affairs analyst.

Badakhshan shares borders with Pakistan, China, and Tajikistan. It has turned into an insecure province over the last

few years while it was among the most secure regions in the country. (Tolo news)

### (11) Taliban's Shadow ...

among 60 militants killed.

Basharat said security forces conducted air-and-ground operations for reopening the Kabul-North highway on Wednesday night.

He said the security forces reopened the highway for traffic on Thursday morning and people could freely travel the route. The clearing operations were still underway for the reopening of the Pul-i-Khumri-Mazar highway, he concluded.

On the other hand, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected the claim regarding the killing the group's shadow governor. He insisted Maulvi Obaidullah was alive and currently leading the fighting in Baghlan.

Mujahid claimed capturing a number of security check-posts and inflicting casualties on dozens security forces during attacks on the provincial capital over the last four days. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Pope Denounces...

the same land, who let themselves be corrupted."

Mozambique is ranked among the most corrupt countries by Transparency International, which cites recent estimates that corruption cost Mozambique some \$4.9 billion from 2002-2014.

More recently, Mozambique plunged into financial crisis in 2016 after a scandal came to light involving some \$2 billion in undisclosed government-guaranteed loans that were ostensibly meant to acquire fishing vessels but instead went to three state security services to buy weapons.

The International Monetary Fund and other international donors stopped providing aid to Mozambique after learning of the concealed loans, setting off a debt crisis. A former foreign minister is awaiting extradition to the U.S. to face charges in the scandal.

Francis appeared to refer to the scandal in his homily when he referred to corrupt public officials, saying, "It is very dangerous to think that this is the price to be paid for foreign aid."

Francis has frequently denounced corruption during his foreign trips, insisting that political leaders must always put the common good of their people before their own personal interests. He has frequently urged young people in poor countries in particular to resist the temptation of taking bribes and kickbacks.

Before the Mass, Francis met with HIV-infected mothers and children at the Zimpeto medical center on the northern outskirts of the capital, Maputo. It is the latest to be opened by the Sant'Egidio community, a Rome-based charity that helped broker Mozambique's 1992 peace accord and then launched a comprehensive AIDS initiative to provide antiretroviral therapy to infected Mozambicans. Since the DREAM project was launched in 2002, some 200,000 people have been treated.

Many of them are pregnant women who received therapy to prevent transmission to their unborn children. According to the World Health Organization, sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected region, with 1 in 25 adults living with HIV, more than two-thirds of the global total. In Mozambique last year, 2.2 million people were living with HIV, 60 percent of them women, according to UNAIDS.

Mozambique, which endured a 15-year civil war, has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world at nearly 13 percent. Sant'Egidio says the rate is 23 percent in Maputo.

Francis, who famously washed the feet of HIV-infected people while archbishop of Buenos Aires, praised the willingness of the hospital staff to embrace a seemingly impossible task.

"This center shows us that there are always people ready to stop and show compassion, who do not yield to the temptation to say "There is nothing to be done" or "It's impossible to fight this scourge"" he said. "Instead, you have set about finding solutions. You have heeded the silent, almost inaudible, cry of countless women, so many of them living in shame, marginalized and judged by all." He urged staff and patients alike to keep hope alive, and always be willing to reach out to someone in need.

"Having emerged from the nightmare of suffering, and without concealing their condition, they are now a sign of hope for many persons," Francis said of those treated for HIV. "Their willingness to dream can serve as an inspiration to many people lying on the wayside who need a welcoming hand." (AP)

### (13) 'She Is Indeed...

later apologized for the "joke," in a statement, saying he did not intend to offend and that he had wanted to "show that relevant and urgent issues for the country don't receive the space they deserve in

the public debate."

Guedes' comments follow a war of words between Bolsonaro and Macron over the Amazon fires, and echo the sentiments expressed by the Brazilian leader on Facebook about Brigitte Macron's appearance last month. Macron said at the time that his comments were "extraordinarily disrespectful" to his wife, and that the women of Brazil were "probably feeling ashamed of their president." (RT)

### (14) Amazon Is On...

world's news outlets, who blamed the pro-industrial policies of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for accelerating the forest's demise.

And it's not just Brazil that's burning. With swathes of Africa, the Arctic, and Asia on fire, the New York Times declared a "nightmare scenario" for the world's forests; one that could drastically reduce the planet's "lung capacity."

But is that all true? The forests are indeed burning, and the fires riddling the Amazon are the worst seen there since 2010. But globally, wildfires have decreased drastically in the last two decades. That information doesn't come from a climate-skeptic blog or the editorial board of the Wall Street Journal, it's from NASA, which has been studying wildfires with satellites since the 1980s.

According to the space agency, the area scorched every year by wildfires has dropped 24 percent since 2003. While land is still being deforested, it is now being more commonly done with machines, not fire, NASA researchers said. Indeed, "the changes in savanna, grassland, and tropical forest fire patterns are so large that they have so far offset some of the increased risk of fire caused by global warming," NASA scientist Doug Morton said. (RT)

### (15) X-Ray Machines...

can claim them," Krisada said, "the X-ray machines will be switched on early next year." Krisada said at present the Thai customs resorts to random check method by human staff, which results in smuggled goods being slipped through sometimes. He also said that with the X-ray machines, customs officials can immediately see what is in the luggage and immediately prompt the passengers to pay the Customs duty before leaving the airport. "The X-ray machines at Suvarnabhumi International Airport will not only help with tax collection, but also prevent the smuggling of sensitive goods into the country, such as agricultural products, palm oil, fuel oil and drugs," said Krisada. (Xinhua)

### (16) Kyrgyz PM...

implement the instructions, related to the improvement of the public procurement system. Following the results of 8 months of 2019, out of 47 thousand 938 successfully held tenders, the purchasing organizations granted privileges on only 8 thousand 364 tenders, which is 17.4%.

In this regard, Abylgaziev stressed the Government aims to achieve a radical change in the situation in the field of public procurement and instructed to strengthen monitoring to ensure that all organizations provide appropriate benefits to domestic producers and contractors. Finance Minister Baktygul Zheyenbayeva said at present the work is being done to introduce an e-catalogue for the development of small and medium businesses in the regions of the country for the opportunity to participate in procurement procedures in small amounts.

PM Abylgaziev instructed to strengthen measures to support domestic producers and the development of small and medium-sized businesses and to ensure the timely launch of the electronic catalogue. (Trend)

### (17) Iran's FM...

said Indonesia would like to see the nuclear deal "implemented fully and effectively."

As the nuclear deal steadily unraveled over the past months, the Iranian government scaled back its commitments under the accord. It began breaking limits of the deal, such as just creeping beyond its 3.67%-enrichment limit and its stockpile rules. Using advanced centrifuges speeds up enrichment and Iranian officials already have raised the idea of enriching to 20% - a small technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

But in Jakarta, Zarif insisted Iran's nuclear program remained peaceful and lashed out at the U.S.

"Unfortunately, the U.S. not only doesn't normalize economic relations with Iran, but punishes others for normalizing economic relations with Iran, which is totally unacceptable," Zarif said.

Iran's atomic energy agency was to make an announcement on Saturday detailing its next nuclear step, which President Hassan Rouhani has described as highly significant. Details would be unveiled at a press conference in Tehran, Iranian media said. (AP)