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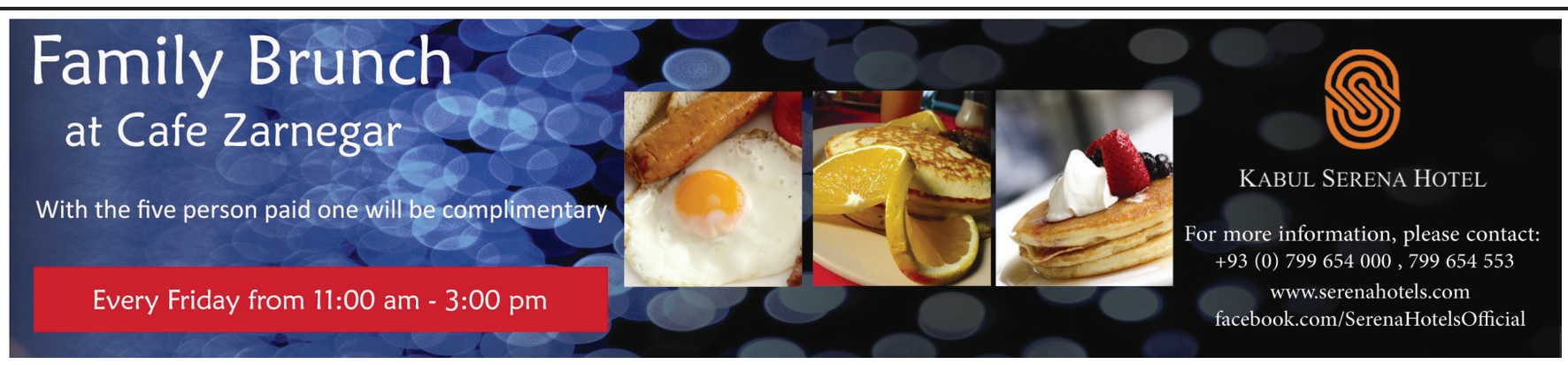

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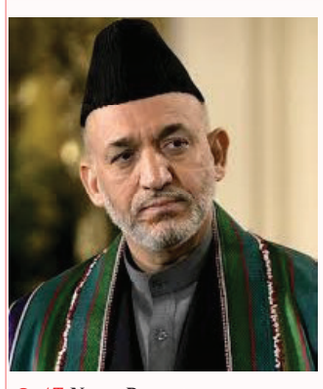
Karzai condoles over Jihadi figure death



AT News Report

Former President, Hamid Karzai on Monday expressed condolences over the death of Khaled Farooqi, a Jihadi figure and a senior member of the Hezb-e-Islami executive council. Farooqi passed away of an illness.

"Late Farooqi was a well-known figure of the jihad era of Afghanistan wand was a prominent supporter of the peace and stability strengthen," Karzai said in a statement.

Farooqi was also an adviser to the former president as well as a member of the parliament.

Karzai called his death a "tragedy", wishing him paradise and patience for his family and friends.

56 insurgents killed nationwide

AT News Report

During the past 24 hour, the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces conducted joined offensive operations in order to protect lives and properties of people also defeating the insurgents in different parts of the country that as a result, 56 insurgents including three local commanders of Taliban and two Daesh affiliates killed and 35 others have been wounded. This joined operation of the Defense Security Forces was held by supporting of the artillery and air forces in Nangarhar , Kapisa , Paktia , Khost , Ghazni , Kandahar , Urozgan , Farah , Ghor , Kundoz , Faryab , Takhar , Balkh and Helmand provinces. During these operations, in Alchin area located in Center of Kundoz , 13 killed including a Pakistani National who was group leader of Taliban, 7 others wounded , in Beshran area located in Center of Helmand , 12 Taliban terrorists killed and 6 others wounded , 2 hideouts and 5 motorbikes were also destroyed , in Chamtal and Charbolak districts of Balkh , 8 insurgents killed , 12 wounded , in Shah Wali Koot district of Kandahar , 8 insurgents killed , 9 wounded , 2 cars and 12 motorbikes destroyed. Similarly , in Sherzad district of Nangarhar , 6 insurgents killed and a cars was destroyed , in Watapor district of Kunar , 2 Daesh fighters killed , in Andar district of Ghazni and Zormat district of Paktia , 4 insurgents killed , in Khas district of Urozgan , 2 insurgents killed , also , a commander of Taliban (Baryalai) killed in Pasaban district of Ghor province. Afghan National Army as nation's defense forces, are ready to make sacrifice to bring peace and security for people and has strong determination to eliminate terror groups.

It's time for new approach

Editorial p-6

Civilians at snag

Kunduz-Baghlan highway closed for traffic after clashes

AT Monitoring Desk

KABUL: The Kunduz-Baghlan highway has been blocked for traffic on Monday after fierce clashes erupted between Afghan security forces and the Taliban insurgents in Aliabad district, an official said.

The district's administrative chief, Hayatullah Faqiri, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the Taliban insurgents attacked security check-posts on the highway in Madrassa area of the district at 05:00am local time.

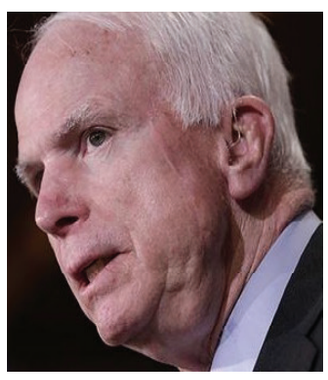
According to him, the Taliban insurgents created obstacles ahead of civilians as they (Taliban) established checkpoints on the busy road, which had blocked the highway for traffic. He added that the Afghan security forces are making efforts to push back the insurgent and reopen the highway in immediate time.

At the same time, fierce clashes erupted between security forces and the Taliban insurgents in Talwakah area of Kunduz province. A security source revealed that an Afghan army base was under Taliban siege and clashes underway.

However, Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's spokesman, claimed causalities had been inflicted on security forces in Charkhab and Mullah Sardar area of Kunduz province. Several tanks had been destroyed, he claimed.

Peace not possible in Afghanistan without Pakistan: McCain

During a visit to Islamabad, the American senator said a strategic partnership between Pakistan and the U.S was critical to achieve peace in the region.



U.S Senator John McCain said on Sunday in Islamabad that there could be no peace in Afghanistan or the rest of the region without Pakistan's cooperation. McCain, who serves as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, met with Sartaj Aziz, advisor to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and the Pakistani army chief of staff general Qamar Javed Bajwa. "Our relationship is more important perhaps than ever before," McCain said. This comes after two U.S officials told Reuters last month that U.S President Donald Trump's administration is exploring hardening its approach toward Islamabad over Pakistan-based militants launching attacks in Afghanistan. On Sunday, McCain, who was accompanied by senators Lindsey Graham, Elizabeth Warren, Sheldon Whitehouse and David Perdue, said: "We will not have peace in the region without Pakistan." Aziz said that the strategic partnership between Pakistan and the United States "was critical to achieve peace and stability in the region and beyond".

U.S officials say they seek greater cooperation with Pakistan, not a rupture in ties Reuters reported that experts on America's longest war have said militant safe havens in Pakistan have allowed Taliban-linked insurgents a place to plot attacks in Afghanistan and regroup after ground offensives. Critics claim Islamabad is not doing enough to crack down on militants such as the Taliban and its affiliated group, the Haqqani network. Islamabad Urges Resumption of QCG process Meanwhile, Pakistan's ministry of foreign affairs said in a statement that Pakistan remained committed to supporting efforts for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. "The adviser (Aziz) said that Pakistan remained committed to supporting efforts for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. Adviser noted that QCG process remains a credible and effective vehicle to facilitate reconciliation and restore peace, stability and economic prosperity in Afghanistan," the statement reads.

The statement says Pakistan looked forward to constructive engagement with the United States on all efforts and initiatives that would lead to a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. Aziz also said that Pakistan was ready to strengthen and deepen its partnership with the U.S to counter emerging terrorism threats including the expanding footprint of Daesh in the region. **(TOLOnews)**

ACCI officials have said the lack of cargo scanning machines at Kabul and Kandahar airports is a problem for traders exporting goods to India

ACCI concerned about lack of cargo scanners at airports

Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) officials said on Monday that the lack of cargo scanning machines at Hamid Karzai International Airport and at Kandahar Airport was slowing down the clearance process in terms of exporting goods to India.

This comes after a new air cargo corridor was recently launched between Afghanistan and India. ACCI officials meanwhile said customs officials were having to physically unpack and check all cargo before it was loaded on to planes. One of the criteria for Afghanistan products to be exported was that international packaging standards are met. According to ACCI officials, the goods being air freighted are packaged accordingly by traders but are then having to be unpacked for clearance purposes due to the absence of scanners. "India ahead of the import of goods from Afghanistan via the air corridor had made the necessary preparations at its airports; but in Afghanistan, airports still have no scanner machines and our goods get checked manually," said Khan Jan Alokozay, ACCI deputy head. This comes after President Ashraf Ghani said at the launch of the new air cargo corridor that airport officials need to resolve the scanner shortage within a week. However, nothing has been done as yet to install the required machinery. Meanwhile, officials from the finance ministry said they are busy working on the issue to install the necessary scanners. "Checking cargo at the airports is the responsibility of a few institutions; but we are trying to install the necessary machines at airport customs to provide the necessity facilities for cargo checks," finance ministry spokesman, Ajmal Hamid Abdulrahimzai said. Since the inauguration of the air corridor, 62 tons of goods have been flown out of Kabul and a further 40 tons from Kandahar to India.

(TOLOnews)

4 civilians killed in Kandahar bombing

AT Monitoring Desk

At least four civilians including two women have been killed after their vehicle hit with a roadside bomb in the Khakrez district of southern Kandahar province, an official said on Monday.

Provincial Police Spokesman, Zia Durrani, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the incident took place when a Corolla car struck a roadside bomb in Dara area on Monday morning. "The incident happened at a time when car occupants were heading from southern Helmand province to visit a shrine known as Shah Agha Ziarat in Dara area." He added that two women and two men were killed and one other woman received injuries in the explosion. Allegedly the roadside bomb was planted by the Taliban insurgents. It is worth mentioning that civilians are the worst victims of roadside bomb, planting by the Taliban insurgents to target Afghan security forces. "The Taliban militants usually plant bombs on roads to target Afghan security forces, but most of the victims were civilians," he said, adding that police defused several roadside bombs in Kandahar on a daily basis. Landmines pose serious threat to the security forces and the civilians, causing much causality in Kandahar during past several years. The Taliban insurgents did not comment on the incident yet.

Key HIA member Farooqi dies of heart attack

KABUL: Presidential advisor and Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) member Khalid Farooqi has died of heart attack in Kabul, an official said on Monday.

The former lawmaker suffered the heart attack on Sunday night and breathed his last on his way to hospital, said a source in the Hekmatyar-led party.

President Ashraf Ghani's deputy spokesman Dawa Khan Minapal also confirmed the death of Farooqi and expressed his profound shock. **(Pajhwok)**

Growing insecurity

Uprising for Change resumes protest in Kabul

AT News Report

KABUL: The Uprising for Change, a movement who want some reshuffles in the government bodies, on Monday resumed protest in reaction to the so-called recent horrible terrorist attacks and violence that lead to the death of over 100 and wounded of over 500 people on May 31, in Kabul.

Protestors blamed government leaders and security officials for inefficiency and wanted them to resign.

They were carrying banners read "we want government leaders and security officials to resign", "we want justice", "we want government to bring those who fired against protestors during Ramadan to justice" and "we want reforms in security organs."

The protesters marched from Khorasan road to Masoud square, which was also followed by loud horns of cars they were driving.

"Protests will be followed with different programs in future, if the government not positively answered to the demand of protestors," said Haroon Mutaref, one of the organizers of the protest.

He said that hundreds of people attended the protest and it will be continued with changes in future.

Protestors released a resolution in which they asked the government to bring before justice those who fired and ordered for firing against protestors during Ramadan month, seeking resign of Minister of Interior Taj Mohammad Jahid, National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar and Head of National Security Directorate Masom Stanikzai. They blamed the national unity government leaders for inefficiency and demanding their resign as well as asking United Nation and Other International organization to support the protestors for boost up of democracy in Afghanistan.

It is pertained to mention that around one month ago hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets of downtown Kabul in a bid to march on the Presidential Palace. They had been protesting against last month's massive truck bomb in the city that killed over 150 people. Protestors blaming security officials with failure in security reinforcement and were seeking their resignation.

Demonstrator established strike tents on the street in different part of Kabul city, which created huge traffic jam and caused a matter of concern for people.

Out of seven tents six were removed in mediation of Parliament members by protests and one forcedly removed by the government after repeatedly suggestion of parliamentarians and public.

Protests during Ramadan month lead to violence which as result two protestors killed and 27 others were wounded. Also 11 protestors were in detention for 12 to 24 hours.

Following protest Parliamentarian once again show reaction and asked them to follow demonstration at the frame of laws and regulation.

Member of Parliament Naderkhan Katawazai said that considering current situation it is not the time to run protest.

Another Lawmaker Allah Gul Mujahid said that coming out on the street blocking roads and protesting is not the solution way.

He said that we strongly defend from government and demands from protestors to not harass Kabul citizen anymore and not misuse their patients.

US, NATO vow full support in war on terror

Top diplomats also paid tribute to the security force members, killed in the May 31 truck bombing, who had stopped the vehicle from entering the Green Zone.

The United States and NATO have reaffirmed their full support to Afghanistan in the war against terrorism and extremism, saying the U.S and NATO were determined to fight terrorism together with the Afghan government and the people.

U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens labeled terrorists a small contingent of people who only think about destruction and hatred.

Meanwhile, general John Nicholson, the commander of NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RS) in Afghanistan has paid tribute to the Afghan National Police (ANP) officers who defied the May 31 suicide bomber and sacrificed their lives to stop the truck from entering the Green Zone.

He said these officers sacrificed their lives for the sake of their country and the people.

These remarks were made at a special gathering in Kabul attended by officials from the U.S embassy, German embassy, UK embassy and some top Afghan government officials where they honored the slain security force members killed in the massive truck bombing in the city. "We can personally express our gratitude and respect to your sons, your husbands, your fathers. They were our heroes, you are our heroes. They were strong and brave, you are strong and brave," said Nicholson. The U.S ambassador warned that terrorists have two options - either to lay down arms or face justice.

(TOLOnews)

New coalition is due to Ghani's poor leadership: Deputy speaker

Afghan parliament deputy speaker claimed on Monday that President Ghani's poor leadership is the reason behind formation of a new political coalition under the name of "Coalition to Rescue Afghanistan".

"It is great if the objective behind a political coalition is the survival of Afghanistan, some parliamentarians fear of the new coalition and I think it is not a matter of concern," deputy speaker of the House, Hamayoun Hamayoun said. **(ATN)**

Unemployment ,hidden treasures

July 1st coincides with (Saratan 10th) is known as the "World Day of Industry and Mine", the issue that is seemed to be discussed more on it. Because, majority of youth in the country are sleeping on treasure with empty stomach because of lack of employment and poverty.

This is in a time that the master key of all economic problems and unemployment of our youth is hidden in the heart of the soil of this country.

With leaning to capabilities of professional youths, the government should extract these treasures and lay down at the service of economy.

Since long, the hidden treasures and underground and surface waters of Afghanistan are remained intact or useless.

Now, with the existence of professional and educated youths, our country can adopt some measures in connection with extraction of mines and control of its waters.

If within recent few years, millions of dollars donated to Afghanistan were utilized for establishment of factories and providing job opportunities, qualified education and immigration of refugees, today, the youths of other nations ought to be referred to Afghanistan for employment.

There are over one trillion dollars underground mines in Afghanistan.

The measure of existence of lithium, iron, copper, cobalt, gold etc. is how much that if be extracted professionally and according to international standards, Afghanistan would be changed into one of important countries of the world that is enjoying from mines.

The New York Times and site BBC Persian program introduced the underground mines of Afghanistan as 1400 varieties.

Likewise, there are the great petroleum storages such as Badambagh, Beni Hessar and Reg-i-Shah Mardam, the storage of Puli Khumri, Hairatan, Badar-i-Aaqina, Tourghundi of Herat.

The storage of petroleum of Islam Qala in Herat as a whole estimated to 165804 tons are active in the country.

Extraction of these hidden treasures and utility from fuel and gas resources of the country not only is important for Afghanistan but it affects in lifting of other nations requirements as well.

Utility from natural and underground resources of Afghanistan, causes 80 grade change in economic situation and rescue our youths from vagabondage.

But unfortunately, it should be mentioned that so far, we have no serious program and plan in this respect and crisis of division of management in the country taken completely the competence of thinking about.

Daily-increasing insecurity made people disappointed about their tomorrow life.

Non transparency, official corruption in all government organs, lack of capital and healthy management are the main factors behind vagabondage of youth and remaining hidden of underground treasures in our homeland.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan especially, the capital city of Kabul is threatening by the dangers of explosions and suicide attacks and these claim the lives of our compatriots and make families mournful.

No one of project and infrastructural programs are implemented because of insecurity and no one is ready to invest in the country.

Till the domestic and foreign investors feel danger of insecurity, they never express their readiness for investment in our mines extraction.

Because, this economic project needs long-term process and security is the basic requirement for continuation and reaching into a result in this regard.

A researcher in international Strategic Studies Center says utilization from underground resources of Afghanistan would not be simple.

I don't image how you utilize from the mines of Afghanistan while heavy military operations are continuing there.

Daily increasing of insecurity, suicide attacks, assaults of armed insurgents in different parts of Afghanistan including high ways is changed into an unsolvable issue and this caused the domestic and foreign investors be disappointed on extraction of mine in the country.

As long as, the government of Afghanistan is unable to curb the suicide attacks and ensuring of security, the investors would not invest in the country.

Increment of terrorist groups, poverty, lack of serious determination, discrimination in appointments, political instabilities and ruling of insecurity in majority of provinces especially those provinces that are enjoying from huge quantity of mines, are the basic hurdles and problems before contacts and extraction of mines.

Roadmaps:

A: The first and foremost roadmap for starting extraction of mines is ensuring of security in the country. The leaders of national unity government should solve their own mutual disputes and take in hand effective roadmaps for maintaining security.

Transparent domestic foreign policies, maintaining justice, definition of foe and friends, counter-corruption, enforcement of intelligence services, giving morale to national army and police, establishment of harmony between people and these forces as well as mass medias, strengthening of borders of the country and comprehension of people's problems are the basic roadmaps for security sectors of the country.

B: The national unity government should pay serious attention towards management of human forces and youth and pave the way for their employment inside of the country. Because, the labor force is the source of durable expansion in economic growth.

C: The in-charges should provide opportunities for enhancement of foreign investment in the country. The projects management should be professionalized and appoint experienced cadres in important positions.

Till the government not to have long-term economic motive and doesn't absorb neighbors for cooperation with Afghanistan, the latter would be grappling with poverty and unemployment.

D: The master key for solution of problems in Afghanistan is hidden in underground mines of this country.

With leaning on energetic forces of experts and professionals, the national unity government leaders should solve the problems of unemployment and economy in the country.

E: Absorption of investments, providing facilities necessary for investment, establishment of free industrial regions, making effort for ensuring security of investment and contractors.

The result:

1- Afghanistan is from among rich countries by having rich underground mineral resources. But, because of lack of plan and drafting correct programs, official corruption, insecurity, its people are sleeping with empty stomach on hidden treasures and because of unemployment, our youth are fleeing for overseas.

2- With absorption of capital, the government should utilize from foreign investment, human resource, Afghanistan should utilize from hidden capitals and natural resources so that the country to reach to its self-sufficiency from one hand and on the other, the employment be provided for millions of our unemployed youth. 3- Maintaining economic security, counter official corruption, transparency in contracts, and enforcement of government legality as well as enforcement of government managements are from among important roadmaps for access to economic welfare in the country. The in-charges of national unity government should rely on these issues for access to its economic goals. **(Kabul Times)**

Pakistani army starts fencing border with Afghanistan

Pakistan's military has begun erecting fencing along the country's porous border with Afghanistan in order to stop cross-border infiltration and improve security in the region.

According to a high-ranking Pakistani security official, in the first phase, at least 43 border posts have been constructed in the northwestern tribal region along the border. Sixty-three others are under construction in Dir Lower, Bajaur, Mohmand Agency, and Khyber Agency border areas.

The plan includes building 338 border posts and army forts along the border.

"There are several legal routes to cross into Afghanistan in Chitral, Dir, Bajaur, Mohmand Agency, Tor Kham Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency, North and South Waziristan, and the Chaman area of Baluchistan, but despite these legal routes, there are over 300 [illegal] crossing points, and terrorists always enter via those hard mountainous routes to carry out attacks in Pakistan and now the army will close them," media outlets quoted the official as saying.

Speaking to local TV media on Friday, Pakistani military spokesman, Major General Asif Ghafoor, said the move to fence the border was aimed at curtailing the movement of militants and stopping them from entering the country. "The Daesh terrorist group has been gaining strength in Afghanistan along the Pakistan border, as we heard media reports that the group has also captured Afghanistan's Tora Bora area. Pakistan will never tolerate any terrorist group setting foot on our soil and these are all efforts underway to eliminate terrorist groups," Ghafoor said.

Both countries have long pledged to improve security in the region and go after militant groups based in the rugged and mountainous border areas. But the exact location of the border has long been disputed by Kabul.

Last year, Pakistan started building a barrier at the main border crossing in the northwestern town of Torkham. The move irked the Afghan government.

The Pakistani military has dismissed Afghanistan's criticism of the fencing plan, saying the activity is being performed well inside the Pakistani territory.

The two countries are in a dispute over the demarcation of the border, which is a key battleground in the fight against the Taliban and other militant groups.

Laden Pakistani trucks are seen near Torkham, close to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, April 14, 2017. (Photo by AFP)

Islamabad recognizes the Durand Line, the 1896 British-mandated border between the two neighbors, but Kabul says activity by either side along the line must be approved by both countries.

Successive governments in Afghanistan have never recognized the British-drawn colonial era border line.

Pakistan and Afghanistan regularly accuse each other of sheltering their enemy insurgents. Both sides, however, deny such an allegation.

Kabul blames elements inside the Pakistani spy agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), for supporting the Taliban militants, while Islamabad blames the Afghan government for giving refuge to militants on its side of the border. The two sides also accuse each other of not doing enough to stop militants engaging in cross-border raids. **(Press TV)**

Afghanistan's President under renewed pressure to enact reforms after ethnic leaders form new coalition

The three members of the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan have promised to hold mass protests until their demands are met

Leaders of Afghanistan's three major ethnic minority political parties, all of whom hold senior positions in the government, announced from Turkey on Saturday that they have formed a coalition to save Afghanistan from chaos, issued a list of demands for reforms by President Ashraf Ghani, and vowed to hold mass protests unless they are met.

The stunning development followed weeks of gathering political turmoil and public unrest after a devastating terrorist bombing in the capital on 31 May. It brought together a group of powerful ex-militia leaders, once rivals in a civil war, in an extraordinary alliance that could present Ghani and his shaky government with its most serious challenge since taking office in 2014.

The group's statement was issued from Ankara where Abdul Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek strongman who is still technically first vice president in the Ghani government, moved recently on grounds of ill health despite being under investigation in Kabul for sexual assault against an elderly political rival. Dostum's aides circulated the statement on social media. The other leaders -- Muhammad Atta Noor, an ethnic Tajik and provincial Governor; Mohammed Mohaqiq, an ethnic Hazara leader and deputy to the government's chief executive; and Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, a member of Noor's Jamaat-e-Islami party -- have been visiting Dostum in the past week for a family wedding in the lavish home where he has often lived in periods of exile.

The group, calling itself the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan, said their aim was to "prevent the collapse of the government, avoid chaos and restore public trust." They demanded that Ghani devolve power to cabinet ministries and provinces, stop "overreaching" his authority for personal motives, schedule long-promised elections, and obey the constitution and the law. It also called for Dostum's full authority to be restored and a government attack against him to be investigated.

Ghani's office responded coolly and calmly to the provocative salvo. Presidential spokesman Shahhussain Murtazawi told news outlets that the Government "welcomes any move" that contributes to national interests, but noted that the individuals leading the coalition are "involved in the Government" and thus also "accountable for its shortcomings." If the group has "any alternative plans for overcoming the current situation," he said, "they should share them."

There was no comment from the office of Abdullah Abdullah, the chief executive officer who has been estranged from Ghani for many months. Abdullah, from the Jamaat-e-Islami party, has disappointed party figures such as Noor for making too many concessions to Ghani in an effort to keep the struggling government afloat.

Taliban claims responsibility for attack in Afghanistan

A variety of political figures and observers reacted sceptically to the news, suggesting that the ethnic minority leaders, all of whom have had differences with Ghani while in office, may be less interested in government reforms than in using a period of public anger and unhappiness to press for political advantage. They also noted that Ghani, an ethnic Pashtun, has been criticised for concentrating power in the hands of his ethnic and tribal allies and marginalising other ethnic groups.

A spokesman for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Pashtun former fugitive warlord who returned to Kabul recently in a peace deal with Ghani, said the new coalition seemed "suspicious" and might be more interested in "personal demands" than public ones. "Why have they been silent for so long?" asked the spokesman, Kareem Amin. "You can't be inside the system and criticise it too. "

Hekmatyar, in a separate statement Saturday, called on all Afghans to unite and support the Ghani government at a time of crisis. The country is suffering from high unemployment and a protracted insurgent conflict. The 31 May bombing was a major blow to the nation's confidence in its rulers.

It was unclear whether the ethnic opposition leaders, who have called for city-wide demonstrations starting Monday, would be able to draw much support from the protesters that filled the streets of Kabul for most of June after the huge bombing and several subsequent violent incidents.

The groups erected tent colonies on major streets where speakers demanded change night after night. The tents were dismantled by security forces on 20 June, but protest groups vowed to return to the streets in force after Ramadan and Eid, the Muslim fasting month and holiday that ended this week.

But although many of the protesters' demands were similar to those listed by the ethnic leaders, the composition and tone of their impromptu movement, called "Uprising for Change," was completely different. A mix of students, academics, liberal activists and women's groups, as well as families of bomb victims, they called mainly for justice, security and more responsive governance. The most strident voice in the new coalition has been that of Noor, a wealthy northern Governor who, until recently, was negotiating with Ghani to obtain a greater share of power. During the fraud-plagued 2014 elections, which both Abdullah and Ghani claimed to have won, Noor threatened to create violent unrest if Ghani was declared the winner.

Last week, delivering a message to a large crowd at the end of Ramadan in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, Noor warned that if Ghani did not meet the group's demands, "we will come by the thousands and thousands to Kabul." Sources in the security community said the group planned to gather its forces in several suburban locations and march to the Presidential Palace. **(INDEPENDENT)**

West Indies bounce back from Afghanistan defeat to surprise India

West Indies beat India by 11 runs to stay alive in the series. India lead 2-1 with the fifth and final game on Thursday at Kingston, Jamaica.

West Indies on Sunday bounced back from a stunning defeat against Afghanistan last month to beat India in a low-scoring fourth One Day International at Antigua.

Captain Jason Holder took 5/27 as West Indies beat India by 11 runs to stay alive in the series. India lead 2-1 with the fifth and final game on Thursday at Kingston, Jamaica.

Neither team impressed with the bat at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium at North Sound.

West Indies scored only 189/9 after winning the toss and choosing to bat. It turned out to be enough as India lost their last five wickets for only 19 runs - collapsing from 159/5 in the 45th over to 178 all out with two balls to spare.

India opener Ajinkya Rahane hit 60 off 91 balls, including seven fours, and Mahendra Singh Dhonilaboured to 54 from 114 balls with one boundary. Dhoni's dismissal left India needing 14 to win in the final over with two wickets left.

Holder, who took his five-for in 9.4 overs, claimed the final wicket of Mohammed Shami.

Evin Lewis and Kyle Hope were joint top-scorers for West Indies on 35. Umesh Yadav took 3/36 and Hardik Pandya 3/40.

The victory may still not be enough for the West Indies to get a direct entry into the 2019 World Cup in England. They are currently ranked 9th in the world and top eight sides on September 30 cut-off qualify for main draw.

West Indies, who are standing at the ninth spot in the ODI rankings, failed to gain any point from the drawn series against Afghanistan in June.

The five-match series against India was their last realistic chance to try to get those ranking points up in a bid to qualify automatically for the 2019 World Cup. West Indies will have to beat India in the final ODI and win all their 50-overs matches against England and Ireland to keep their hopes alive. **(With inputs from AP)**

Australian firm to draw up blue print for second salang tunnel

The ministry of public works said technical and feasibility studies will be carried out over the next three years at a cost of $30 million USD.

The Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) said on Monday that an Australian company has been awarded the contract to conduct technical and feasibility studies on a possible second Salang tunnel.

Officials from the ministry said it is expected that the Australian company will start work on assessing the viability of the planned 12km tunnel within a month. This phase will cost over $30 million USD, officials said.

The National Procurement Commission confirmed the contract was given to the Australian company – adding it will conduct studies over the next three years.

"The Technical and Economic Review of Salang's new tunnel by the National Procurement Commission has been completed and it is expected that the project will start in the near future by the foreign company. This is a public works project," said Bakhtiar Najman, head of contracts for the commission.

The planned Salang tunnel will be in the Awolang area and will cut through the Hindu Kush mountains to DoShakh in Baghlan province.

However, the total cost to build a new tunnel has not been set but the Ministry of Public Works has said it could be in the region of $1 billion USD.

"Technical studies of this project will be completed by the Australian company over three years and the Asian Development Bank has promised to fund the project. Also there will be no problems in the implementation of the project," said Mahdi Rohani, a spokesman for the MoPW. Based on information from the ministry, a second tunnel is being considered in order to ease traffic flow through the existing tunnel, which was completed by the Soviet Union in 1964. **(TOLOnews)**

Ghani to sign 8 economic contracts in his visit to Turkmenistan

President Ashraf Ghani in his three-day official visit to Turkmenistan will sign eight economic contracts with Ashgabat, Presidential Palace said.

Ministry of Economic officials are said to believe that the contracts between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan will save the country from the siege of the economy.

"The Afghan government view was to save the country from the siege of economy and it is a positive step in order to meet the demands," said Bay Nazar Nazari, spokesman of the Ministry of Economic.

According to analysts the cooperation of Middle Asian countries with Afghanistan will reduce the country's affiliation to some countries and help the economic growth.

President Ghani heading a high level delegation including Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi, Minister of Economy Abdul Satar Murad, head of the administrative affairs Abdul Salam Rahimi, senior presidential adviser Dr. Humayoun Qayumi, senior presidential envoy for the Central Asia Mohammad Shakir Kargar, and senior presidential adviser for public relations and strategic relations Shah Zaman Maiwandi left Kabul for the neighboring Turkmenistan on Moday to boost cooperation between the two countries.

Previously, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have signed several contracts which are under implementation. **(ATN)**

UAE Red Crescent distribute relief item to 387 orphans

AT News Report

KABUL: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Red Crescent with the cooperation of the UAE embassy in Kabul, distributed clothes to orphans and needy children in Kabul province.

A press statement issued here said that following orders of the President of UAE Shaikh Khalifa Ben Zahid Al-Nahyan, Vice President of UAE, Prime Minister, and UAE Governor Shaikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktom, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Deputy Commander of the Army Force Shikh Mohammad Ben Zahid Al-Nahyan, Governor Representative in west zone and Head of UAE Red Crescent Shaikh Hamdan Ben Zahed Al Nahian the UAE red crescent in cooperation with the UAE Embassy has provided cloths to 387 orphan and needy children through Eid program in Kabul.

Mostly the beneficiary families were widow and needy families in Kabul, added statement.

Running cloth donation to orphan and needy children aimed at assisting poor children by the UAE Red Crescent, noted the statement.

Statement said that relief item donation by the UAE red crescent will be continued to needy people and orphans in different provinces of Afghanistan in future.

Beneficiaries praised the UAE Red Crescent charitable programs and urged it for further assistance of needy people in future.

From 'Full House' to Afghanistan: An American teaches street children music

SPIRIT OF HUMANITY Lanny Cordola, a US rocker, had toured with well-known names in music, and he had appeared in a couple of episodes of the ABC comedy as a musician. But everything changed when he learned about two attacks in Afghanistan.

On a warm Thursday morning last August, a very odd group of people gathered outside the Abu Fazal mosque in Kabul, Afghanistan. The mosque was the site of a horrific attack in December 2011 that left more than 80 dead. The unlikely group in August included Afghan children younger than 14, two older Afghan men, and a slightly older US man with long curly hair, a golf cap, and a guitar. Much to the surprise of the onlookers outside the mosque, the group broke into a song.

A little loud and a little out of sync with each other, the young members of the Miraculous Love Kids and their American teacher, Lanny Cordola, were performing the song "Don't Panic" by the British rock band Coldplay. Not that anyone present in their audience of older Afghan gentlemen and a few women knew what it was – until a few children sang part of the lyrics in Dari, one of Afghanistan's national languages. As the youths sang "We live in a beautiful world" in the local language, the initially suspicious crowd warmed toward them. Within no time, a small congregation had formed around them, smiling and cheering for the children.

Mr. Cordola, a rock musician, moved to Kabul in early 2016. Before that he had toured with well-known names in music such as Gilby Clarke from Guns N' Roses, and he had appeared in a couple of episodes of the ABC comedy "Full House" as a musician. But everything changed when he learned about two attacks in Afghanistan.

"I saw this photo on the news of a young girl in green crying, surrounded by dead bodies. It really moved me," Mr. Cordola says. "But when I read about these two sisters ... who were killed in another attack while working on the streets selling scarves, I knew I had to do something."

Cordola hoped that his music could bring healing to child survivors of the frequent attacks – and at the outset, he specifically wanted to help the family that lost the two daughters. "On one of my visits to their house, I brought my guitar along, and one of the [other] daughters – Mursal – asked to play it," he narrates. "I taught her a few moves, and seemed to make her very happy."

Making a difference when disaster strikes

His mission became clear: "That's when I thought, 'Why not do this – teach music?' " he shares. His venture has been largely self-funded.

In particular, he wanted to work with street children. So Cordola and his Afghan associate, Jamshid Bik, drove around parts of Kabul to talk to such youngsters. "They were a bit distrusting at first, so we told them to bring their fathers, uncles, and brothers along – anyone who made them feel safer," he recalls. "After they started coming regularly, the word got out, and next thing we know we had a large classroom."

Today more than 60 children participate, the classes taking place in a large apartment rented by Cordola in central Kabul. Parents rarely accompany the children now, although he adds with a chuckle, "Some of the mothers and fathers have also picked up the guitar and sat for a lesson or two."

A key factor in families' acceptance of the music lessons is the fact that they provide stability and a routine. And in addition to music, Cordola and his team of volunteers teach the children English and other subjects. "Jamshid also teaches them the Quran, which also encourages parents to send their kids to us," Cordola notes.

Making a difference when disaster strikes "Working with Mr. Lanny has been a very fulfilling experience," says Mr. Bik, Cordola's interpreter and colleague. "I am going to be here for as long as God wills me to be here." Of course, the undertaking hasn't been without risks. **(CSMONITOR)**

Sesame workshop debuts new Afghan muppet – a 4-year-old boy

Season 6 of Afghanistan's popular children's TV program Baghch-e-Simsim will feature a new Muppet named Zeerak – Zari's friendly, younger brother

Following last year's successful debut of the first Afghan Muppet, a six-year-old girl named Zari, Sesame Garden, or Baghch-e-Simsim in Afghanistan – on Sunday introduced Zeerak, Zari's friendly and curious younger brother.

Zeerak will appear in Season 6 of Baghch-e-Simsim (Sesame Garden), the local Afghan co-production of Sesame Street, premiering Sunday.

The introduction of Zeerak is a continuation of Baghch-e-Simsim's work to promote gender equity, and Season 6 will feature segments that model boys' respect for girls and show Zeerak's love for his big sister.

As a young boy who aspires to go to school with his sister when he gets older, Zeerak can be a strong role model for children in a country where over 60 percent of children – two thirds of them girls – are not able to complete school.

Since the project's premier in 2011, Baghch-e-Simsim has promoted early childhood development, literacy, and numeracy, with a focus on girls' empowerment, mutual respect and understanding, diversity, and national identity.

The Baghch-e-Simsim TV and radio programs are available in both Dari and Pashto.

A January 2017 survey of over 1,500 parents and caregivers of children ages 3-7 across Afghanistan shows that Baghch-e-Simsim is having a positive impact and reaching more children and families than ever before.

Zari was the most mentioned character when participants were asked to name children's TV characters, and she is beloved by both boys and girls, who together are vital in the effort to shift societal perceptions of girls and what they're capable of.

Currently 3.1 million children ages 3 - 7 are tuning in, up 45 percent from 2015.

And Baghch-e-Simsim isn't only engaging children - more than 70 percent of parents and caregivers watch the program alongside children, with Baghch-e-Simsim surpassing other Afghan children's shows in terms of adult-child co-viewership.

"We are excited to continue our work with Sesame Street. As a young Afghan boy who loves and respects his older sister Zari, Zeerak will promote gender equity and education for all children," said Saad Mohseni, Chairman and CEO of MOBY Group, the parent company of TOLO TV and LEMAR.

"Given Zari's extraordinary debut in 2016, we are confident that Zeerak will follow in her footsteps and that together they will have a strong positive impact on Afghanistan," he said.

Starting June 29, Baghch-e-Simsim will be broadcast six days a week on TV and radio. New TV episodes will air on TOLO TV and LEMAR every Thursday and Friday during the "Children's Hour" from 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm, with repeated episodes airing on Saturday and Sunday, and past episodes airing on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesday.

New Baghch-e-Simsim radio episodes will air Thursdays and Fridays on national, regional, and local radio stations nationwide. **(TOLOnews)**

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EMERGENCY CALLS

Police

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Hospitals

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0202500200-+93793275595

Rabia-i-Balkhi Hospital
Pule Bagh-e- Umomi
070263672

Khairkhana Hospital
0799-321007
2401352

Indira Gandhi Children Hospital, Wazir Akbar Khan, Kabul 2301372

Ibn-e- Seena
Pul-e-Artan, Kabul
2100359

Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital
2301741, 2301743

Ali Abad
Shahrara, Kabul
2100439

Malalai Maternity Hospital
2201377/ 2301743

Banks

Da Afghanistan Bank
2100302, 2100303

Bakhtar Bank
0776777000

Azizi Bank
0799 700900

Pashtany Bank
2102908, 2103868

Air Services

Safi Airways
020 22 22 222

Ariana
020-2100270

Kam Air
0799974422

Hotels

Safi Landmark
020-2203131

SERENA
0799654000

New Rumi Restaurant
0776351347

Internet Services

UA Telecom
0796701701 / 0796702702

Exchange Rate

1.00 USD
67.60AFN

1000.00 IRR
17.90AFN

1.00 UAE
18.40AFN

1.00 EUR
74.20AFN

1000.00 INR
1030.00AFN

1000.00 PKR
635.00AFN

Bangladesh Supreme Court scraps parliamentary authority to impeach judges

Bangladesh's Supreme Court in a landmark verdict today declared void a 2014 constitutional amendment empowering parliament to impeach apex court judges, a ruling which the government said could "undermine" the sovereign parliament's authority. "By unanimous decision the (government) appeal is dismissed," Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha pronounced as a seven-member apex court bench unanimously upheld a previous High Court judgment calling the 16th amendment to the constitution illegal. He said the seven-member apex court bench dismissed the appeal "with some findings" after hearing the arguments for and against the government appeal against the High Court decision for over 11 days.

The verdict came amid a visible conflict between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League government and the Supreme Court over the apex court jurisdiction in disciplining lower judiciary judges. Attorney General Mahbebey Alam expressed his "frustration" over the judgment fearing it could undermine the "sovereign parliament's authority" but said he could take steps to seek its review by the apex court itself on consultation with the government. Several lawyers said the verdict would automatically restore the previous provision of Supreme Judicial Council, comprising the chief justice and two senior most apex court judges, in removing Supreme Court judges on moral or health grounds.

Alam, however, tended to contradict the idea saying legal complicacies might not allow automatic restoration of the previous provision. The Supreme Court in unitary Bangladesh have two divisions – the Appellate Division and High Court Division – unlike countries with federative structures like India. The parliament passed the amendment in September 2014, repealing the provision of the Supreme Judicial Council authorising the judicial body to investigate allegations against judges and recommend their removal to the President as the head of state.

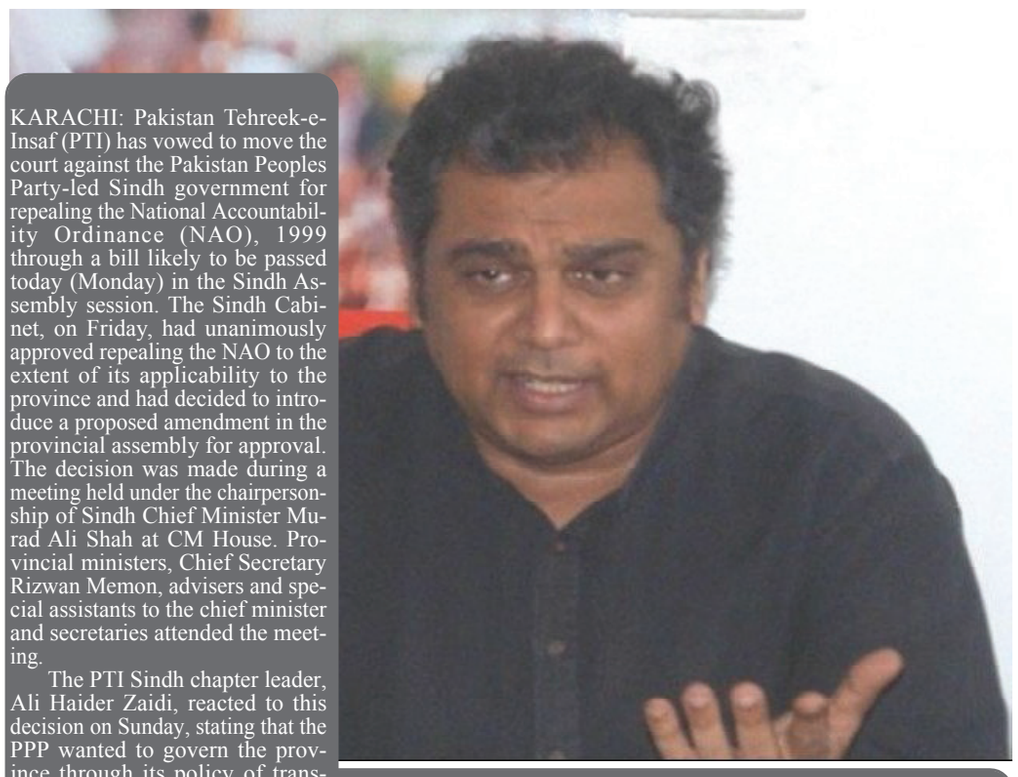
Bangladesh's original 1972 constitution had empowered parliament to remove Supreme Court judges but a 1975 amendment entrusted the President with the authority while a subsequent amendment in 1978, when a military regime was in power, bestowed the authority on the Council. The apex court earlier appointed nine senior lawyers or jurists as "amici curiae" or "friends of court" for giving their opinions on the matter while one but all suggested repealing of the 14th constitutional amendment.

The apex court earlier in 2010 scrapped the fifth constitutional amendment that validated all activities of the first martial law regime when it, however, condoned the introduction of the Judicial Council.

On a writ petition by a Supreme Court lawyer, the High Court in 2016 declared void the 16th amendment calling it a "colourful legislation" and contradictory to the principle of separation of judiciary and basic spirit of constitution. It also described the original constitutional provision of 1972 as an "historic accident".

(Outlook)

PTI threatens to move court against PPP for repealing NAO



KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has vowed to move the court against the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government for repealing the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO), 1999 through a bill likely to be passed today (Monday) in the Sindh Assembly session. The Sindh Cabinet, on Friday, had unanimously approved repealing the NAO to the extent of its applicability to the province and had decided to introduce a proposed amendment in the provincial assembly for approval. The decision was made during a meeting held under the chairpersonship of Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah at CM House. Provincial ministers, Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon, advisers and special assistants to the chief minister and secretaries attended the meeting.

The PTI Sindh chapter leader, Ali Haider Zaidi, reacted to this decision on Sunday, stating that the PPP wanted to govern the province through its policy of transgressing the law and the Constitution. He opined that without fulfilling the legal formalities, the provincial government's move against the NAO reflected its treachery. He added that either the government should bring in an entirely new law or propose a reasonable amendment to the existing law.

"How come the Sindh government has found all of a sudden that the NAO did not [need to be] implemented in the provinces?" he questioned, casting doubts on the PPP's intentions, accusing the party of repealing the ordinance for political gain. On Friday, the Sindh Cabinet was informed that the NAO was enacted in pursuance of the proclamation of emergency of October 14, 1999 and Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) of October, 1999 was also made applicable to the provinces and was subsequently included in schedule VI of the Constitution, along with Local Government Ordinance (LGO), 2001 and Police Order, 2002 in order to prevent the provinces from repealing or amending the laws. The cabinet was told that the proclamation of emergency of October 14, 1999 and PCO were declared without lawful authority by parliament and schedule VI of the Constitution was omitted under the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Scrutiny of political parties' accounts a matter of public importance: SC The meeting's participants were informed that the federation legislated on three subjects – local government, police order and measures to combat corruption and offences with respect to provincial subjects – under an unlawful emergency and the provinces have already repealed or amended the LGO, 2001 and Police Order, 2002. In light of the briefing given to the cabinet by Law Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar and Advocate-General Zamir Ghumro, it was unanimously decided to repeal the NAO and present the draft bill in the assembly. The bill is likely to be presented in the assembly today as it has been mentioned in the session's agenda. Besides moving the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999 Repeal Bill, 2017, two other bills, the Sindh New Captive Power Plants Subsidy Bill, 2017 and Sindh Companies Profits (Workers Participation) (Amendment) Bill, 2017 will also be presented. The session will start at 3pm.

(Tribune)

SC asks ECI to respond to plea alleging tampering with EVMs

The Supreme Court today asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to file in two weeks its response on a plea for probe into the allegations that EVMs were tampered with in the assembly polls earlier this year. A bench comprising Chief Justice J S Khehar and Justice D Y Chandrachud was informed by the ECI's advocate that similar matters filed by some political parties, including Mayawati- led BSP, was pending before another court in the apex court.

The ECI said that notice has already been issued in the matters pending before a bench headed by Justice J Chelameswar and this plea should be tagged along with them. Advocate M L Sharma, the petitioner in the case, opposed the ECI's contention and said that his PIL was on a different subject matter and a political party cannot come before the court with a PIL. "My matter is completely different. He (ECI counsel) is misleading the court. Those petitions are filed by political parties. How was the PIL filed by political parties," he said. To this, the bench observed that "Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are the subject matter of challenge. You say EVM is not good. It is the same thing."

Sharma, however, said the issue pending before another court also contained a prayer that in future elections, EVMs should have voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) attached with them, whereas he had not raised any such issue in his petition. "My subject matter is different. If the matters are clubbed, my petition will be destroyed," he claimed. The bench, however, asked the ECI to file its reply to the petition within two weeks and asked the petitioner to file a rejoinder to the response within two weeks thereafter. The apex court also tagged the plea with the petition pending before the other court. The court had earlier asked the ECI to file its response on the plea which has sought investigation by software experts into the allegations that the EVMs were tampered with in the assembly polls held earlier this year.

The PIL has also sought a direction to the Centre for registering an FIR to investigate the alleged tampering of EVMs "for vested interest by a political party and to file their report before the apex court".

The plea has sought examination of "quality, software/ malware and hacking effect in the EVMs from a reliable electronic lab/scientist and software expert and to file their report before this court for further action/prosecution". The petitioner has also referred to the allegations of EVM tampering in the assembly elections held in five states, as well as the Maharashtra civic polls. The PIL has claimed that it was admitted by the poll panel itself that EVMs were tamper-proof only till their technical, mechanical and software details remained a secret. "These details can be detected via reverse engineering by any expert. Wireless device/software can be prepared via reverse engineering, and with their help voting records can be changed in any location and at any time," it has claimed. (This article has not been edited by DNA's editorial team and is auto-generated from an agency feed.)

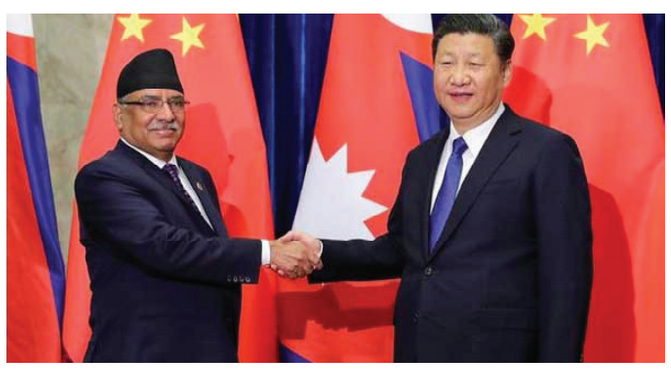
(Dindia)

Sri Lanka blacklists 67 foreign recruitment agencies in 2017

The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment has blacklisted licenses of 67 foreign recruitment agencies in the first half of this year. Lack of cooperation for dispute settlement, illegal recruitment, and preparing fake documents were among reasons to blacklist recruitment agencies. The bureau said in a statement that in 2016 they blacklisted 61 foreign recruitment agencies in the country. After blacklisting them, the Foreign Employment Bureau takes action related to the issues including legal action. At present, there are 702 licensed foreign employment agencies in Sri Lanka with Colombo district alone having 355 agencies.

In Kurunegala district, there are 130 agencies, while Kandy and Anuradhapura both have 44 agencies each.

(lankabusinessonline)



Nepal seeking access to China's land, sea ports

Nepal is seeking access to two land and three sea ports in China and is set to propose the plan to Beijing for enhancing connectivity with Europe. The Ministry of Commerce has prepared a draft and sent it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for consultation, reports the Kathmandu Post. The proposal will soon be put on the table at a meeting to be held in Kathmandu for formulating a protocol on the Transit Transport Agreement (TTA), which was signed with China in March last year during then prime minister K. P. Sharma Oli's visit to Beijing. Presently, Nepal conducts trade with third countries only through India, but the protocol, which is key to actualisation of the treaty, will allow t to conduct trade with third countries through China as well. "This is purely based on our interest and will be put on the table at a meeting to be held in the near future. The proposal will be negotiated with the Chinese side," the Kathmandu Post quoted Commerce Ministry Joint Secretary Ravi Shanker Sainju, as saying.

(ANI)

Foreign relations: Bangladesh appoints new envoy to Oman

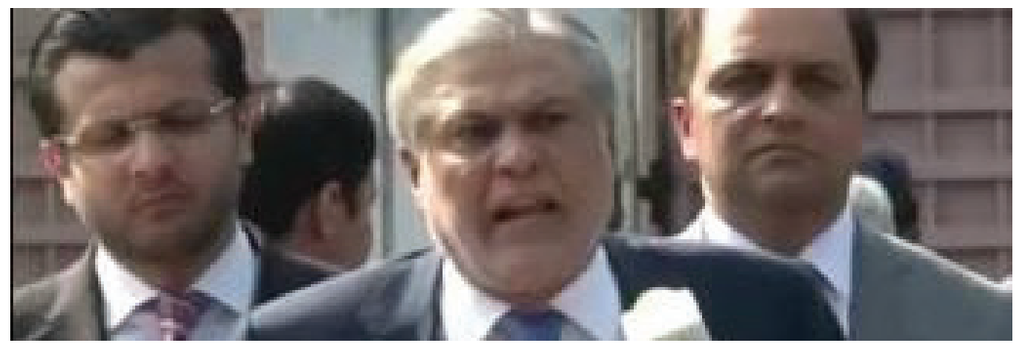
Bangladesh has appointed a new ambassador to Oman, the Foreign Ministry of Bangladesh said. Mohammed Golam Sarwar, a career diplomat of 10th BCS (Foreign Affairs), will be the next Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Sultanate of Oman. Sarwar joined the foreign service in 1991 and is currently serving as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bangladesh to Sweden. "In his distinguished diplomatic career, he served as the Consul General in Jeddah and Minister in Washington DC. He has also served in Bangladesh Missions in Kathmandu, Kuala Lumpur, Yangon in different capacities," the Foreign Ministry of

Bangladesh said.

Sarwar completed his Masters of Commerce in Accounting from the University of Dhaka. He also completed an advanced course in diplomacy in Germany and an Overseas Executive Course from the Near-East South Asia Centre for Strategic Studies (NESA) in Washington DC. He has also completed several professional training courses at home and abroad, and represented Bangladesh at numerous bilateral and multilateral meetings. The present Bangladesh Ambassador to Oman, Sekander Ali, was appointed four years back. Ali had served at various Bangladesh missions, including at the Bangladesh Embassy in Abu Dhabi, Brussels and at the Bangladesh High Commission, Kuala Lumpur. He has also served as Minister (political) at the Embassy of Bangladesh in Doha.

(Timesofoman)

Dar accuses Imran Khan of tax theft, lying in post-JIT hearing presser



Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, after an appearance before the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) probing the Sharif family's business dealings abroad, slammed Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, terming him a "liar" and challenging him to present himself for accountability. Dar, who addressed a press conference at the Federal Judicial Academy — where the JIT's headquarters are house — frequently resorted to personal attacks on the PTI chief, who he termed a "liar". "How much will you lie?" he asked, addressing Khan. "You should be ashamed of conducting politics on the basis of lies," he thundered. "With what face did you file a petition against Nawaz Sharif under Article 62? Look at yourself first." "Imran Khan is a scared man, basically. A man who hides his marriage. When you ask him where he married Jemimah Khan, he says Paris ... He's lying." "Imran Khan — even if no one else knows, I know," Dar warned. Continuing on his diatribe, Dar said: "My love-hate relationship with Imran Khan is very old, but [right] now I am disappointed ... In 1993, when I was president of the Lahore Chamber after resigning from the Investment Board, he used to come to my office in the chamber as well as my private office. He would sit with my two sons and wait for me [to ask for donations]." "How has he become the second richest parliamentarian? He is not the son of an industrialist like Nawaz Sharif. "He [Imran Khan] is three times richer than I am, and I am a chartered accountant, I have a value. My juniors from 40 years ago are asking between Rs20-25 million a month.

News-in-Brief

France, Germany pledge more support for Italy on migrants, offer vague

France, Germany and the EU executive on Monday promised Italy more support in handling the influx of migrants arriving by boat from Africa, agreeing to bolster training and funding for Libya's coastguard and to relocate asylum seekers more swiftly. But they made no direct reference to Rome's appeal for European Union nations to ease the pressure by allowing rescue boats carrying migrants to dock in their ports. Italy, Germany, and France's interior ministers, as well as the EU's migration commissioner, met in Paris on Sunday ahead of a wider meeting in Tallinn on Thursday. In a joint statement that was thin on details, they also agreed to draw up a code of conduct for non-government organisations operating in the Mediterranean, to increase assistance for the International Organisation for Migration, and to lend greater support to a review of how to strengthen Libya's southern borders. "We are asking for the work to be shared," Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said at a U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization conference in Rome shortly before the statement was released. "This is necessary if ... we are to avoid the situation in Italy becoming unsustainable and stoking hostility in a society which until now has responded in an exemplary way, with cohesion."
(AP)

Iran Deprives Iraqi Kurdistan of Drinking Water

Erbil – Kurdistan Regional Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources announced that Iran has for over the past ten days been cutting the flow of Little Zab River, creating a suffocating water supply problem. The ministry declared it will resort to the UN and international community to stop Tehran's policies. Kurdistan's Minister for the Agriculture and Water Resources Abdulstar Majeed told Asharq Al-Awsat that water from Little Zab River was cut off from Kurdistan after Iran completed the construction of the Klousa dam near Sardash, which flows into Qaladze. The river provided 60 percent of the water flowing to the region's Dukan dam. "We cannot provide necessary drinking water to the residents of Qaladze," he warned. Majeed said he reported the issue to the Region's Prime Minister and his deputy, underlining the dangers of the water supply cut. He also spoke to the Iranian Consul General in Kurdistan and other officials and even informed the Iraqi government. "Iraq is the biggest loser in this problem" and Baghdad has to step up and get involved as the issue of water is a "sovereign one," according to the minister.
(CNN)

Sudan's wanted president to visit Russia next month: Ministry

Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir will travel to Russia next month, Khartoum authorities said on Monday, a rare overseas trip for a leader wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity.

Sudan's foreign ministry said Bashir was invited by Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss bilateral, regional, and global issues.

The visit, scheduled for the second half of August, comes as Sudan awaits a decision by the United States on whether to lift a 20-year-old trade embargo and other major sanctions.
(REUTERS)

18 missing in German bus crash 'probably dead': Police

Bus burst into flames after colliding with truck near the Bavarian town of Stammbach in southern Germany.

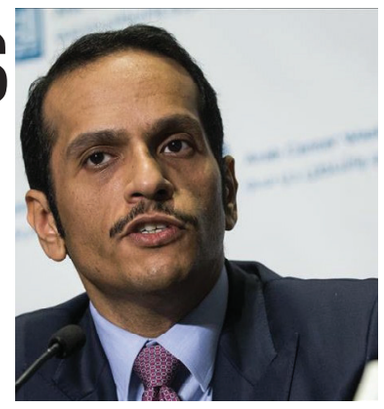
At least 18 people who are unaccounted for after a bus crash in southern Germany are believed to have died as a fire engulfed the vehicle, police said. The bus burst into flames after colliding with a truck near the Bavarian town of Stammbach on Monday. "Thirty passengers were taken to hospitals, some with serious injuries. The others are believed to have died in the burning tour bus," which had been carrying 48 people, police said in a statement. Earlier in the day, police spokesman Juergen Stadter told local media that there was "only a glimmer of hope" that some of the missing would be found alive outside the charred bus. "Maybe someone ran away in shock," he said.

Another police spokeswoman, Anne Hoefer, told AFP news agency that the passengers were "old people" and that some may not have made it out of the bus. German Chancellor Angela Merkel voiced "great dismay" over the crash, her office said.

"Our thoughts go to the victims and their family members, as well as to the injured. We hope that those who have been rescued will recover from their injuries," Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said. According to the Bild newspaper, the coach was travelling from the eastern region of Lausitz and heading for Nuremberg. If those missing are confirmed killed, the accident would be one of the worst to hit Germany.

Among the deadliest in recent years was a collision in June 2007, when 13 people were killed as their tour bus drove off the road and plunged several metres down a slope in eastern Germany's Saxony-Anhalt state.
(Aljazeera)

Qatar delivers response to Gulf demands



Four Arab states presented a list of 13 demands to Qatar to end their blockade

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah met on Monday with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani, who delivered his country's official response to a list of demands by four Arab states. "The emir has received Qatar's response to the demands by the four Arab states during the meeting," Kuwaiti diplomatic sources told Anadolu Agency on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to media. Last month, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing Doha of interfering in their domestic affairs and supporting terror groups.

They also imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on Qatar.

The four states presented a list of 13 demands, including the closure of the pan-Arab Al Jazeera television, to end the blockade on Qatar or face further sanctions.

They gave Doha a 10-day deadline that ended on Sunday to answer the demands, before they extended it by 48 hours.

The Qatari government has strongly rejected the accusations and stressed the blockade was a violation of international law.
(Anadolu)

China says India violates 1890 agreement in border stand-off

China said on Monday that India was violating an 1890 border agreement between Britain and China that previous Indian governments have pledged to uphold, and it should be respected to end a "very serious" incursion by India. The border stand-off on a plateau next to the mountainous Indian state of Sikkim, which borders China, has ratcheted up tension between the neighbouring giants, who share a 3,500 km (2,175 miles) frontier, large parts of which are disputed. According to the Chinese interpretation of events, Indian guards crossed into China's Donglang region early in June and obstructed work on a road on the plateau. Troops from the two sides then confronted each other close to a strategic valley controlled by China that separates India from Bhutan - a close Indian ally - and gives China access to the so-called Chicken's Neck, a thin strip of land that connects India to its remote northeastern regions. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a daily news briefing that the Sikkim part of the border had been settled in the 1890 agreement, and previous Indian governments had many times affirmed that in writing. "Pacts must be respected - this is a basic principle of international law," Geng said.

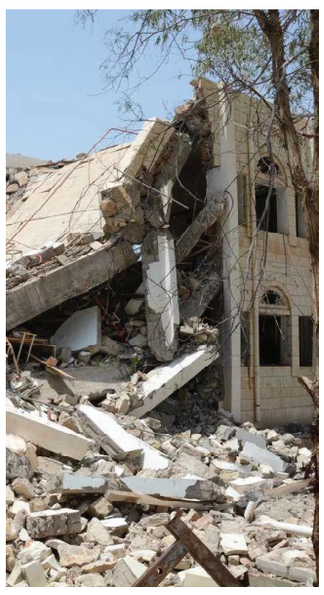
Indian troops crossing onto the Chinese side were a violation of this historical agreement and the United Nations charter, he added.

"The nature of this is very serious," Geng said, reiterating a demand for India to withdraw its troops to its side. India's Ministry of External Affairs referred to a statement it made on Friday, when it warned China that construction of the road near their common border would have serious security implications. Analysts in New Delhi said that India had intervened on behalf of Bhutan. As the tiny Himalayan Kingdom was not party to the 1890 agreement between Britain and China, the dispute was between China and Bhutan over where their common border lies. Bhutan said last week that the road was being built inside its territory.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are attending a summit of the G20 group of nations in the German city of Hamburg later this week.

Geng would not be drawn on whether the two could meet there, saying bilateral meetings for Xi at the summit were being arranged.
(Reuters)

Yemen: Drone strike kills 2 Al-Qaeda leaders

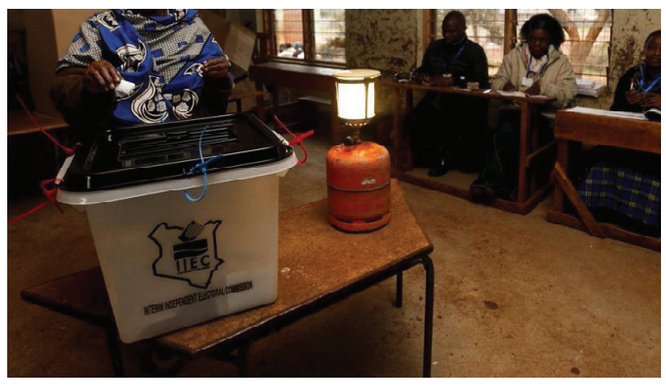


Two suspected Al-Qaeda fighters were killed in a drone strike in southern Yemen on Saturday according to Al Arabiya.

The men were travelling on a motorbike near the town of Al-Wadei when a drone strike targeted the vehicle killing both suspected Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) fighters. One of the suspected fighters is reported to be Ibrahim Al-Adnani, a local leader of AQAP.

It is unknown who was behind the drone strike however the United Arab Emirates, which is partaking in a Saudi-led coalition to reinstate Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, has included objectives to assist the US to target AQAP. Saudi Arabia remains focused on targeting the Iranian-backed Houthi group which has gained control of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a.

Since 2004, the United States of America has been executing drone strikes in Yemen with the military objective of degrading AQAP. The US has not publically commented on the latest strike.
(Middleeastmonitor)



HRW warns of violence ahead of Kenyan elections

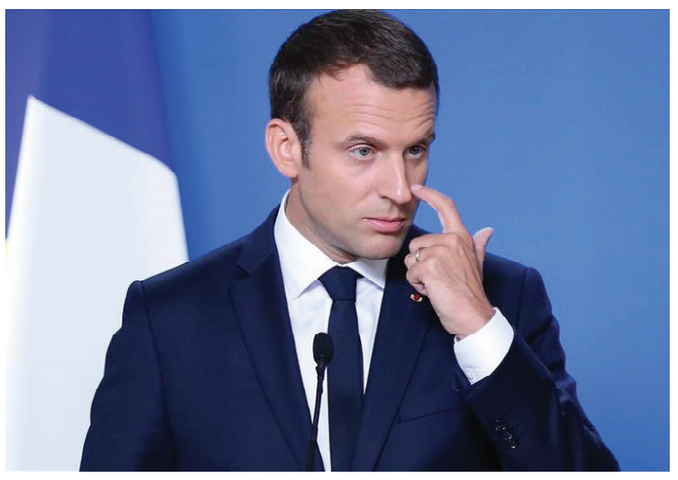
Report by Human Rights Watch includes accounts of victims of the 2007 post-election violence

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has warned of violence prior to the Kenyan general elections due next month, in a report released on Monday. HRW says it interviewed opposition and ruling party supporters, human rights activists, and government officials in the report it released in the Kenyan capital Nairobi. The report has accounts of victims of the 2007 post-election violence in the country that claimed 1000 lives and left 650,000 displaced. Many Kenyans are afraid of stepping out to vote for they fear that authorities have not done enough to ensure a peaceful election process, the report states.

A 34-year-old mother of two who spoke to HRW said, "Police rarely respond effectively when people report these threats and this undermines confidence of the people in them." Otsieno Namwaya, Africa researcher at HRW, called on the Kenyan government to ensure that all citizens are able to take part in a free and fair election without fear of violence. "Kenyan authorities should do more to prevent a repeat of the 2007 bloodshed in Naivasha," he added.

Politics in the east African country has historically been ethnically driven with many people voting for their tribes. Kenya is set to go to the polls on Aug. 8 when its citizens will vote for a new government.
(Anadolu)

Frenchman charged over Macron assassination 'plot'



A 23-year-old French male was arrested and charged with terror offences on Saturday for an alleged plot to assassinate the President Emmanuel Macron, local media reported on Monday. The suspect, described as a "far-right nationalist", reportedly said he wanted to make a political gesture by killing Macron during a July 14 Bastille Day parade on the Champs-Elysees. Reports by broadcaster RMC suggested he also expressed a desire to kill "blacks, Arabs, Jews and homosexuals". He was arrested last Wednesday in the suburb of Argenteuil near Paris and charged on Saturday.

When contacted by Anadolu Agency, French police refused to comment ahead of a statement from a prosecutor. RMC went on to say French intelligence services flagged up the man after he tried to get hold of a Kalashnikov assault rifle and expressed his will to commit an attack in a chat room linked to an online game. The broadcaster reported the suspect is "unemployed man, psychologically unstable but conscious and determined". Quoting police sources, L'Express newspaper said he "appeared to have been inspired by previous mass shootings, including the Colombine massacre".

On July 14, 2002, Maxime Brunerie, a neo-Nazi sympathizer, attempted to assassinate President Jacques Chirac during a Bastille Day military parade.

Brunerie was sentenced to 10 years in prison before being released in 2009.
(AP)

Egypt issues 20 death sentences over Rabaa events

Twenty people have been sentenced to death for taking part in violence following the Egyptian security forces' breakup of two sit-in in Cairo in August 2013, a judicial source reported. "The Cairo Criminal Court, headed by Judge Mohammad Sherine Fahmy, sentenced 20 people to the death penalty."

The case involves 156 defendants accused in the case known as the Kerdasa massacre. The defendants can appeal against the ruling at the Court of Cassation within 60 days. Speaking before the verdict was handed out, Fahmy said:

"Some committed murder themselves, others stole, or burned, some guarded the road so the assailants could commit their crimes, and some blocked the roads to prevent help from coming, some incited citizens against the military and police using mosque speakers and microphones on the streets. If it were not for all of that, these crimes would not have been committed."

On 14 August 2013, Egyptian security forces raided two camps of protesters in Cairo: one at Al-Nahda Square and a larger one at Rabaa Al-Adawiyaa Square.

The two sites had been occupied by supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsi, who had been removed from office by a military a month earlier.

The raids were described by Human Rights Watch as "one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history".

According to the organisation, a minimum of 817 people and more likely at least 1,000 were killed during the dispersal.
(Middleeastmonitor)

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The constitution says

Article 03:

Article Three: No law shall contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam in Afghanistan.

EDITORIAL

It's time for new approach

With spending of millions of dollars in fight against militant but di verse result made. Still peace and stability remained a distant dream despite multiple military campaigns, political strategies and reconciliation process. Oppositely, war on terror is getting more complicated as the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group, which also known as Daesh terrorist emerged under the presence of US in Afghanistan. US entered Afghanistan to eliminate militants—however, militant outfits are getting bigger day to day. No result-oriented efforts have so far been made in abolition of rebellious. It has been for 16 years that international community, especially the United State has been trying to solve puzzle in Afghanistan, but always in vain. Noting this, it is time that US should enter the theatre differently with new framework of conflict management. What's more important is intention. If there is intention the ongoing fight against militants would yield result, but, at somehow such hold up is seems very rare. It is quite visible that Afghan masses have been the most victims in the global war against militants. It is worth mentioning that Afghan security forces are also in the frontline to battle this evil force. Undoubtedly, the brave security forces are fighting militants with high moral—already proved bitter medicine to the insurgents. However, since militant outfits are supporting and harboring by some regional players, so it is almost impossible to win war without cooperation of regional countries, especially Pakistan—a state that never been shunned backing militants. Pakistan is the godfather of the militants. Today world is also repeating the same sentence, calling on Pakistan to halt supporting and harboring militants. This has shows the notion that the passage of peace in Afghanistan passes through Islamabad—unfortunately the country is not honest in its approach. Rightly or wrongly, Pakistan is considered crucial to achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan. In his recent visit to Pakistan, US Senator John McCain has said that there could be no peace in Afghanistan or the rest of the region without cooperation from Pakistan. His comment come as US is reportedly considering hardening its approach toward Islamabad over Pakistan-based militants, launching attacks in Afghanistan. Moreover, the US administration is to soon announce its new strategy on Afghanistan. This meeting of high-level of US administration is also coming at time when Kabul repeatedly said that Afghanistan is fighting undeclared war from Pakistan. Relations between the two neighbors have already reached at the boiling point. Pakistan has never stopped its duplicity policy with Afghanistan. Now when Pakistan's role is crucial to maintain peace not only in Afghanistan but to the region, question arise here that does US help the two countries develop such cooperation, and can convince Pakistan to halt supporting militants—instead prospects of joint security operation against terrorists in both sides. To be honest, it's hard for Kabul to once again trust Pakistan, as it always stabs at back. At the past, Kabul tried level best to mend ties with Pakistan, but for all time received cold shoulder. Let's see weather Pakistan adopts new approach, or would still stand with its policy of supporting militant outfits.

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Canada @150: Still trying to keep the US happy

By Andrew Mitrovica

Andrew Mitrovica is an award-winning investigative reporter and journalism instructor.

Often, birthdays are a moment to take stock of the past and reflect on the future. On July 1, Canada marks its sesquicentennial. It's a date infused with myth and symbolism. On the eve of the anniversary, Canada's perpetually effervescent foreign minister, Chrystia Freeland, made a much-anticipated speech that heeded the nation's past to help navigate its future during these turbulent times. Freeland, a former editor and columnist for a variety of establishment publications in Canada, the United States and Britain, has exploited her deep journalistic roots to cultivate ties with her ex-colleagues who routinely gush over her credentials and intellect (Disclosure: Freeland was a senior editor at The Globe and Mail while I was an investigative reporter there many years ago). It was hardly surprising then that Freeland's foreign policy "opus" - delivered in the House of Commons earlier this month - was applauded almost universally by swooning pundits and academics who cheered its "breathtaking" originality, defence of multilateral institutions and "hard power" diplomacy in the cacophonous age of Donald Trump. Stripped of its veneer of profundity, the sophomoric nature of Freeland's supposed defining diplomatic blueprint and the attendant prescriptions was immediately apparent. The speech was an amalgam of Freeland's selective and sentimental trip through her family's controversial past and the usual tropes and bromides proffered by a succession of Liberal foreign ministers who have paid requisite homage to the deified memory and legacy of former Canadian prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Lester Pearson.

Indeed, diplomatic sources confirm that Freeland's statement was fashioned principally in reply to belated concerns that a sweeping defence policy review undertaken by the Department of National Defence - the findings were announced a day after her address - would also, de facto, establish Canada's foreign policy priorities.

Hence, the imperative to quickly and, it turns out, haphazardly stitch together what amounted to a cliche-ridden, dissonant "major" statement designed to reassert publicly the diplomatic corps' primacy over international affairs. As if to prove the point, Freeland began her speech with what a veteran diplomat described to me as "warmed-up crap" by claiming that Canada is an "essential" nation globally. Curiously, Freeland didn't or couldn't name the countries who also consider Canada "essential" - thereby laying bare this pollyannish and self-congratulatory tripe.

Despite the media-propelled myths, Canada isn't seized with departing dramatically from its traditional diplomatic modus operandi, but cementing it to satiate the demands of the nation that, in its geopolitical calculus, truly counts - the United States of America.

My goodness, if Canada is considered so "essential" by its allies why did it lose so decisively to tiny Portugal the last time it seriously contested a seat on the UN Security Council in 2010? Oh well, in her meandering address, Freeland promptly abandoned the notion of human security championed by her Liberal predecessors - that is to say, if a state becomes a predator against its own people, other states have the right and responsibility to intervene. In one, little-noticed passage, Freeland discarded that previously sacrosanct principle, insisting instead that the "rule" of the "sanctity of borders … is under siege." This philosophical volte-face allowed Freeland, of course, to parade her Cold War bona fides and bash "the illegal seizure of Ukrainian territory by Russia" - no doubt pleasing a healthy chunk of Canada's 1.2 million strong Ukrainian Canadian community. Not done executing sudden U-turns, Freeland acknowledged implicitly that her boss's strategy of playing nice with Trump by bending the ear of his close surrogates and enlisting the overrated schmoozing services of widely reviled former Conservative prime minister, Brian Mulroney, had been a diplomatic dud. Trump's response to Trudeau's icky charm offensive was blunt and uncompromising: Serve prompt notice to reopen the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and declare, in effect, a trade war over Canadian exports of softwood lumber. Freeland's rejoinder: Canada was going to "step up" and out of the US sphere of influence by spending billions more on the military to throw its phantom "weight" abroad. Arguably, this headline-grabbing rhetoric was less a declaration of independence, but rather a blatant and subservient sop to Trump's repeated demands that America's NATO partners boost their military spending. Trump barked and Canada, ever the faithful poodle, scurried to comply and called it, ironically, an act of sovereignty. Meanwhile, the starry-eyed New York Times suggested the wily Canada is the architect of an ingenious end-run around the obstinate Trump by dealing directly with states and mayors on a range of bilateral issues, including trade and climate change. Newsflash to the Times: diplomats stationed at Canada's embassy and consulates in the US have, for decades, been making their case to governors and mayors of major and influential cities. The Times' silly boosterism and Freeland's mendacious flag-waving hyperbole can't disguise the reality that Trump has left Justin Trudeau and company acutely troubled and unsure about how to respond to the potentially devastating consequences of his impulsive bilateral gambits. Still, what Freeland didn't have time for or couldn't be bothered to say in her speech is further testament to its scribbled-on-a-napkin quality. Not a word about Israel's 50-year-old illegal and inhuman occupation of Palestinian territories. This, despite Freeland professing solemn fidelity to the "notion of territorial integrity …respect for the rule of law" and her insistence that: "Peace and prosperity are every person's birthright." Sure they are. Freeland did, however, predictably trot out the pat line that Israel arms itself obsessively because it "faces a clear and immediate existential challenge." Canada: The Middle East's "honest broker". Sure it is. Not a word about the looming prospect that Canada will send troops back to Afghanistan at NATO's urging to "deal with a resurgent Taliban". Canada pulled out in March 2014. More than 150 soldiers were killed, and another 2,000 injured after more than 12 years of trying to tame those same "resurgent" Taliban. Not a word about Canada's murky "non-combat role" in Iraq where a Canadian sniper reportedly killed an Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) fighter last week in a "non-combat role." Not a word beyond a passing reference to China's emerging status as an economic behemoth while stubbornly remaining an unrepentant and systemic human rights violator. Not a word about the swelling concentration of global poverty in Africa and the implications for grinding inequality, nor an unrelenting refugee crisis, continental instability, nor the rights of women and girls.

Not a word about the Arctic where ever accelerating climate change is bound to complicate further disputes involving transit through waterways and tense skirmishes over competing jurisdictional claims. Like so many aspects of the image-obsessed Trudeau government, Canada's "new" foreign policy is a poll-driven, manufactured mirage: more flowery gibberish than substance.

Despite the media-propelled myths, Canada isn't seized with departing dramatically from its traditional diplomatic modus operandi, but cementing it to satiate the demands of the nation that, in its geopolitical calculus, truly counts - the United States of America.

(Aljazeera)

Trump has wasted the major advantage he had coming into office

By Fred Hiatt

President Trump is giving outsiders and drain-the-swampers a bad name. A president who comes to power with little dependence on either party and wins election by running against the special interests, could, in theory, do a lot of good work. He could use his popular support to push reforms that are in the national interest but have gotten stuck in Washington. Three examples come to mind — none of which has, at least so far, inspired the president to action. The first, and in some ways most obvious, is a carbon tax linked to infrastructure modernization. This would be a win-win-win for the country. The tax would encourage conservation, which would be good for the environment and for slowing climate change. Republicans would have reason to cheer a market-friendly approach, as opposed to government picking energy winners and losers; GOP luminaries such as James A. Baker III and George P. Shultz have endorsed such a tax. Some of the proceeds could be used to augment the earned-income tax credit, to counter its regressive nature. That would give Democrats reason to cheer. The rest of the revenue could be distributed to states to spend on infrastructure. The federalism would make Republicans happy. Blue states could spend more on mass transit, making Democrats happy. This makes such sense that you might think it would pass even without a push from an above-the-fray president, but it won't. Republicans are too bound to their no-tax ideology. Democrats might object to the loss of federal control. Special interests, deserving and otherwise, from Amtrak to windmill companies, would clamor for a piece of the pie. Presidential leadership would be needed to keep those interests in check and the deal on track. Then there is immigration reform. This is another case where the shape of a compromise is well-known, but where neither side can say yes without a strong push. A deal would offer undocumented immigrants a path to legalization, in theory cheering Democrats, while stepping up enforcement to block further illegal immigration, in theory cheering Republicans. Congress could then work out how many legal immigrants, and of what sort, the country should accept in the future. Easy, right? Well, no. Most undocumented people would welcome such a deal to bring them out of the shadows, but their professional advocates, and therefore many Democrats, would object to anything short of citizenship. Republicans who clamor for strict enforcement would, in many cases, object to the most efficient method: holding employers accountable for hiring undocumented workers. Again, therefore, you would need presidential leadership. Trump, strange as it may sound, would be well-positioned to push such a deal. Though he called for deporting the 11 million undocumented people in the United States, he also said that the "good" ones could quickly return. The makings of a deal are there — and could include some segments of his wall. For tax reform, too, the outlines of a deal are in theory universally admired: cap or abolish the deductions that taxpayers can claim — the "loopholes" — and then lower the rates that everyone must pay. The universal admiration quickly wanes, however, under special-interest assault. Realtors in every congressional district explain why the mortgage-interest deduction can't be disturbed. Hospitals, churches and universities remind Congress that opposing the charitable deduction is un-American. Folks from financial services recount how the elderly will go hungry without tax-advantaged 401(k) accounts. Realistically, the best hope would be not to abolish any of these deductions but to cap how much relatively wealthy people could claim in any given year. And to accomplish even such a cap would require the attention of an above-the-swamp president, making a case for the country at large.

(WP)

How US presidents missed the Russia threat — until it was much, much too late

By Anne Applebaum

"I feel like we sort of choked." That's how one former administration official recently described President Barack Obama's failure to react to intelligence reports on Kremlin attempts to influence the U.S. election. Plenty of other people — including, with extraordinary cynicism, President Trump — have also asked why more wasn't done. But now that the details of that story are finally coming into focus — now that one Trump associate has been linked directly to Russian hackers — it's important to remember the bigger picture. For the real mystery is not why Obama didn't stop Russian hacking in 2016 but why didn't either Obama, or President George W. Bush, or any of their Cabinet members, recognize the peculiar dangers posed by a resurgent, aggressive Russia years earlier — and how did that failure help boost the careers of people such as Trump? The answers have to begin in the 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed and most Americans dropped the whole subject of Russia with great relief: At last, the Cold War was over and we could begin thinking about something else — maybe climate change, or the Middle East. Russian speakers in the State Department began retraining to learn Arabic, strategists focused their talents elsewhere, and President Bill Clinton invited Russia to join the Group of Seven (G-7), which became the G-8.

In subsequent years, nobody paid much attention as Russia, which many had hoped would become a Western-oriented, liberalizing state, turned into something quite different. Or perhaps I should put it more strongly: Nobody in Western politics paid much attention, but many others in the West were eager to aid that transformation. In particular, many were eager to help a cabal of revanchist former KGB officers, in league with Russian organized crime, to steal money that belonged to the Russian state, launder it abroad, bring it back and use it to take power. While Western presidents and prime ministers were distracted by other things, Western lawyers, accountants, unscrupulous offshore bankers and even mainstream bankers were happily taking cuts. Everybody wanted a piece of the action. In 2006, Rosneft, a Russian company blatantly built on stolen assets, debuted with great fanfare on the London stock exchange. The prospectus warned that "crime and corruption could create a difficult business climate in Russia," but it was convenient, and very lucrative, to pretend that Russia had a "normal" business environment — with that small exception — nevertheless. The same week the stock debuted, President Vladimir Putin hosted a G-8 meeting in St. Petersburg. Here I am offering a truncated version of this long and complicated story. But it's worth recalling the basic elements because they help explain where we are today. Think about this: We still don't know exactly how much Russian money was invested in Trump's real estate empire. But we do know that Russian money flooded into New York real estate (and London real estate) over the past 15 years, where it pumped up prices, distorted housing markets, contributed to rising inequality and helped enrich Trump, among others. We know that Trump, among others, did deals with many people who had Russian or ex-Soviet connections. We also know that he has admired Putin for many years, perhaps because Putin used money to win political power and then used political power to make money, which is exactly what Trump clearly aspired, successfully, to do, too. We also know that he was not alone. Russian money was corrupt in a legal sense, but also in a softer sense: There was so much of it that it tempted banks and businesses to cut corners and persuaded politicians to change sides. It drew in the former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who works for an arm of Gazprom, a Russian gas monopoly, and argues Russia's case on German television. It funded the National Front, an extremist, anti-NATO and anti-European French political party whose leader made it into the final round of the French presidential elections. It still supports extremist groups and extremist propagandists of both the far left and the far right all across Europe and, it now seems, in the United States as well. For nearly two decades, in fact, the Russian government and Russian companies spent money systematically to create corrupt business relationships as well as to undermine democracies in both Eastern and Western Europe. During that period, no U.S. president or secretary of state ever took any threat from Russia seriously, all of them either overestimating the Kremlin's goodwill or underestimating its capacity to do damage. Bush "looked into Putin's eyes" in 2001 and got "a sense of his soul." Obama dismissed Putin back in 2013 as behaving "like a bored kid in the back of the classroom." Neither one of them ever understood the corrosive effect of Russian money, whether on New York real estate or Western democracy.

Neither understood the subtle ways in which a large, kleptocratic, semi-criminal state on Europe's borders could threaten Western political stability. Neither understood that the U.S. political system, like that of France, Germany and Ukraine, had become so vulnerable, or that U.S. political operatives may have turned to Russian hackers for help. By 2016, it was already too late to stop Russia, because most of the damage had already been done.

(WP)

The crisis in Congo is spiraling out of control

By Ida Sawyer

Congo is facing a political and economic crisis, and it's only growing worse. President Joseph Kabila was due to step down in December 2016, at the end of his constitutionally mandated two-term limit. But he has managed to hold on to power by delaying elections and overseeing a brutal crackdown against those calling for the constitution to be respected. A deal mediated by the Catholic Church, signed on Dec. 31, included clear commitments to hold elections by the end of 2017 and specified that Kabila would not be a candidate or try to amend the constitution. Additionally, the main opposition coalition would lead the transitional government and a national oversight council, and measures would be taken to open political space. These commitments have largely been ignored, and the prospect of credible elections by year's end seems increasingly unlikely. The country's influential conference of Catholic bishops warned this month that the country is in a "very bad" state and called on all Congolese to "stand up" and "take [their] destiny into [their] own hands." This followed an "urgent appeal" from former United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan and nine former African presidents, who warned that the future of the country is in "grave danger." As repression against the political opposition, activists, journalists and peaceful protesters continues, violence by dozens of armed groups and government security forces has intensified across much of Congo — which is the size of Western Europe and shares borders with nine other countries. The country is also facing a deepening economic crisis, which has contributed to massive youth unemployment. During a series of apparently well-planned prison breaks in recent weeks, more than 5,000 prisoners have escaped, fueling insecurity and setting justice efforts back years. Some of the worst violence has been in the central Kasai region, which until recently had been largely peaceful. Large-scale violence broke out there last August, when government security forces shot dead a local customary chief whose loyalty was in question. This triggered the spiral of violence that has now spread across five provinces and has displaced more than 1.3 million people. At least 3,300 people have been killed, according to the Catholic Church. More than 600 schools have been attacked or destroyed, and an estimated 1.5 million children are affected by the violence.

Government security forces have responded with excessive force, summarily executing suspected members or sympathizers with a militia formed initially to respond to the execution of the local chief. In some cases, soldiers went door to door, killing anyone inside. In the past two months, a government-backed militia, known as the Bana Mura, has destroyed entire villages and "shot dead, hacked or burned to death, and mutilated" hundreds of villagers, including pregnant women, babies and small children, according to the United Nations. At least 42 mass graves have been identified in the region, most believed to be the work of government security forces. It was during their investigation of these widespread human rights abuses in March that two members of the U.N. Group of Experts on Congo — Michael Sharp, an American, and Zaida Catalán, a Swede – were executed and buried in a shallow grave. The government has provided no credible information on responsibility for the murders. The four Congolese who had accompanied them — their interpreter, Betu Tshintela, and three motorbike drivers — are still missing. This month, the U.N. Human Rights Council authorized an international investigation into the violence in the Kasai region. The resolution, adopted after weeks of intense negotiations, doesn't go as far as the situation warrants. But it does bring hope of uncovering the truth of the horrific crimes and identifying those responsible. And it's a step toward justice. Yet recent statements by several senior Congolese officials — contending that the international role will be limited to technical support for a Congolese investigation — raise doubts. The United States and the European Union have taken strong positions in pressing for justice for the murders of the U.N. experts and the thousands of Congolese victims and recently imposed new targeted sanctions against top Congolese officials. The U.S. sanctions showed that Kabila does not have the unconditional support from the Trump administration that many Congolese officials were hoping for. But more could be done. The United States and E.U. could go further up the chain of command and also sanction those who have helped to finance Kabila and his government's campaign of repression and abuse. Congo's neighbors and other regional players — including Angola, whose government appears increasingly concerned about Kabila's inability to resolve the crises facing the country — could also take a stronger stance in pressing Kabila to allow for a peaceful, democratic transition before year's end. There is still time to heed the dire warnings of the Catholic bishops and former African leaders and stop the escalation of violence, abuses and instability that threaten both Congo and the entire region. But this requires high-level engagement and sustained, targeted and well-coordinated pressure on Kabila and his government at the national, regional and international levels.

The region cannot just stand by as Venezuela veers toward civil war

By Editorial Board

VENEZUELA'S POLITICAL and humanitarian crisis, which has long been desperate and deadly, this week tipped toward the surreal. On Tuesday, a helicopter swooped over the Supreme Court and interior ministry, dropping grenades and firing shots; President Nicolás Maduro called it a U.S.-backed coup attempt. But no one was injured in the incident, and when the pilot of the helicopter turned out to be an actor who has played a police commando in the movies — and who has yet to be detained by authorities — opposition leaders understandably wondered whether the incident was orchestrated by Mr. Maduro. If so, it wouldn't be suprising. The corrupt clique around the president, which inherited the leftist populist movement founded by Hugo Chávez, is resorting to increasingly far-fetched tactics to combat a mass protest movement that has the support of the vast majority of Venezuelans. It has dispensed tons of tear gas at the daily marches and demonstrations, and fired thousands of bullets, both rubber and real; at least 78 people have been killed since the unrest began in April. Five died on Wednesday.

The regime has detained more than 3,200 people, many of whom have been beaten and tortured, according to independent human rights groups. More than 300 are facing summary trials before military tribunals and sentences of decades in prison. Mr. Maduro meantime is pressing forward with a plan for a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution prepared under Chávez. It likely would eliminate the opposition-controlled National Assembly and convert Venezuela into a regime modeled after Cuba's. When the government's own attorney general protested the manifest illegality of the constitutional rewrite and the brutal repression of demonstrations, the regime banned her from traveling and moved to strip her powers. Mr. Maduro meanwhile delivered a bloodcurdling speech in which he promised to "go to combat" to defend the regime. "What couldn't be done with votes, we would do with weapons," he said. You'd think the specter of civil war in a major oil-producing country of more than 30 million people would finally rouse its democratic neighbors to action. But Latin America remains largely paralyzed over Venezuela's chaos. Last week, a group of countries led by Mexico tried to pass a resolution at the Organization of American States calling for the establishment of a contact group of nations to broker a peaceful solution, including free elections and the release of prisoners. It failed, thanks to the opposition of a handful of Venezuelan clients, including tiny Carribean nations bribed by Caracas with discounted oil. It didn't help that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson withdrew from the OAS meeting, preferring to focus on the boycott of Qatar by other Arab states. While the Trump administration has sporadically acted on Venezuela, imposing sanctions on some senior regime figures and issuing statements, it appears to have no strategy for addressing the most consequential crisis in the hemisphere since the Central American wars of the 1980s. The United States can't rescue Venezuela, but there are things it can do to pressure the regime: more sanctions against individuals and entities involved in repression; dissemination of information about the involvement of regime leaders in drug trafficking and other corruption; démarches to those Caribbean states and to Cuba. Standing by while Mr. Maduro stokes "combat" should not be an option.

(Truthout)

Intelligent dissent improves corporate and societal performance

By Dr. Mohamed A. Ramady

It is a prevalent state of affairs that in most Gulf companies, dissenting from the familiar and established corporate rules and policies are frowned upon, but in progressive companies around the world, employees are encouraged to participate in a corporate culture that encourages intellectual development through curiosity, critical thinking, imagination and open mindedness.

Considered and well-argued dissent is encouraged as long as the dissenter has a clear articulation of the objectives of the dissent. Not allowing this often sows the seeds of company disasters, as people find it easy to discuss the familiar but are reluctant to talk about corporate risks whether this is from individual behavior let alone the behavior and orders of their leaders.

Most find it embarrassing, dangerous or both to raise these subjects and dissent and so let it pass. With the Gulf embarking on many visions, missions and transformation plans, instilling the seeds of argued dissent and critical thinking in the current generation of students and government employees is crucial for a successful outcome to avoid allowing such initiatives to become one man driven. How leaders take this dissent is important to establish a corporate culture. Good leaders balance confidence with humility, principal on rules with pragmatism, and candor with compassion For many in the Gulf, social attitudes ensure that there is little questioning of the ability of superiors magnified by reverence and unquestioned loyalty. Healthy skepticism channeled into intelligent and forceful questioning of the status quo is unheard of. The reason is simple: in many institutions allocating responsibility clearly ensures that all know who is in charge, and this culture is rooted in history, whether in the military or the private sector to avoid chaos.

However, as military campaigns of the world also illustrate, battle outcomes have been changed when a lower ranked officer dissented from established orders and took an opportunity that was presented to him to change the course of the battle. How leaders take this dissent is important to establish a corporate culture. Good leaders balance confidence with humility, principal on rules with pragmatism, and candor with compassion. At the board level, the existing mode of chumminess and connections found in many Gulf boards need to be replaced by assessing risky aspects of leaders characters and discussed openly at the board meetings, otherwise being appointed an "independent" board member becomes meaningless.

Drafting policies

Most important for managers who are accustomed to set policies and rules is how does one respond, when objectives clash with principles? How does one deal with subordinates who get the right result by crossing corporate red lines and what about some employees who forgo deals that are important for the long term survival of the company because they would not cross these red lines? What do employees do when faced with a rule that does not work in the real world but only in the planned forecasts that have no touch with reality? Does one shrug his shoulder, obey the rule and achieve the wrong result? Does one work around the rule and disregard it completely? Does one have that intelligent dissent conversation with his superior?

In the real world most people opt for the first option, but this undermines the ground rules, risking serious company consequences, whereas feedback from intelligent dissent reinforces the company and improves it.

The company culture

On the other side of the equation – what happens if something goes wrong? Does one tell his superiors and analyze what went wrong and why? Does the company culture then makes sure that weaknesses are fixed and lessons learned quickly? In classroom discussions, my students found it odd that I encouraged them to make mistakes and to learn from these mistakes. They had been brought up to blindly obey and not raise questions, and more likely that they graduated with a mindset that the problems they faced are discussed amongst themselves, if at all, and then buried. Mishaps happen to all institutions, and often without grave consequences and these provide valuable feedback as to how the system is working or not. Part of the reason for the persistence of this blind obedience culture to superiors is that leaders have not created psychological safe spaces where subordinates, let alone other similar level leaders, can admit to mistakes and deal with them. Whatever the cause, good common sense judgment is undermined and organizations fail to learn, leaving weaknesses embedded and unresolved until the next problem blows up.

(Alarabiya)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Collation is not best way to resolve crisis

As per report, the new political alliance has been formed by three leaders of Jamiat-e-Islami, the National Islamic Movement and the National Unity of People of Afghanistan during a meeting held on Friday in Ankara, the capital of Turkey.

In this critical situation, the people of Afghanistan need leaders to come together and find ways out of the current problems, but they (leaders) sit outside of the country and made a plan to topple down the National Unity Government for their and some others neighboring countries interest.

Our leaders and we as an Afghan have to bear in mind that peace would never come like this, but to have unity and put aside all such things, while sitting with each other to define the government weakness and solution toward it.

Letter to editor will be edited for policy, content and clarity. All letters must have the writer's name and address. You may send your letters to: afghanistantimes@gmail.com

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The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Afghanistan Times.

China sends warships, fighter jets to intercept US destroyer in South China Sea

Just days before Trump's meeting with the Chinese president in Hamburg later this week for the G-20 summit, the Trump administration sent a guided-missile destroyer near Triton Island in the South China Sea, Bloomberg reported, a move "which may cause concern ahead of President Donald Trump's meeting with his Chinese counterpart." According to an anonymous official cited by Bloomberg, the U.S. Navy sent the destroyer USS Stethem within 12 nautical miles (22 kilometers) of Triton Island on Sunday, passing through the contested waters on the basis of "innocent passage." The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Stethem

It was the second such operation conducted by the US during Donald Trump's presidency. On May 24, the US Navy guided-missile destroyer, the USS Dewey, came within 12 miles of the Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands, another disputed archipelago that lies in the southern part of the South China Sea. At that time, the Chinese Defense Ministry also sent two frigates to "warn off" the US vessel and said that it was "firmly opposed to the US behavior of showing force and boosting regional militarization." The news of the US ship deployment to the contested area comes just days after reports suggest China has completed construction of new missile shelters on Mischief and Fiery Cross reefs. The sea patrol move could signal that the U.S. is displeased with China based on the extent of its efforts to pressure North Korea to curb its missile and nuclear programs. The White House has made several moves in recent weeks, including announcing economic sanctions against Chinese companies with ties to North Korea. And while in recent weeks China has shown remarkable restraint in not responding, or retaliating, to US escalations today Beijing finally reacted instantly and with "outrage" with People's Daily reporting that China deployed military vessels and warplanes to "warn off" the USS Stethem, according to Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang. "Under the pretext of 'freedom of navigation,' the US side once again sent a military vessel into China's territorial waters off the Xisha Islands without China's approval," the spokesperson said in a statement, adding that such US behavior "has violated the Chinese law and relevant international law, infringed upon China's sovereignty, disrupted peace, security and order of the relevant waters and put in jeopardy the facilities and personnel on the Chinese islands, and thus constitutes a serious political and military provocation." "The Chinese side is dissatisfied with and opposed to the relevant behavior of the US side," Lu added. Escalating matter further, China's foreign ministry also accused the US of "deliberatrely stirring up troubles" in the contested waters and warned Washington to "immediately stop such kind of provocative operations that violate China's sovereignty."

(ZEROHEDGE)

8 killed in rescue copter crash in Indonesia

TUBAN, Indonesia: A helicopter carrying eight passengers and crew members from Indonesia's Search and Rescue (SAR) Agency crashed on Sunday into a cliff in the mountains. Major Gen. Heronimus Guru, the agency's deputy head of operations, confirmed to Anadolu Agency that the helicopter crashed in the hills of the central Mt. Butak in Temanggung on Sunday afternoon. "It is true that there was a helicopter crash carrying four crew members and four rescuers," Guru said. Guru said the rescuers were en route to rescue 10 injured by the eruption of a crater in the tourist area of ??Mt. Dieng, Banjarnegara. At least two of the bodies have been recovered, and the rest are still at the scene.

Guru said retrieval is difficult due to the lack of equipment and darkness.

Indonesia has a poor aviation safety record and has suffered major disasters over the last year, many of them involving air force aircraft. In March 2016, 13 people were killed after a military helicopter crashed in bad weather on Sulawesi Island.

(AA)

CENTRAL ASIA

Kyrgyz Parliament, Switzerland, UNDP intend to work together to strengthen parliamentary democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic

On June 30, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic Altynai Omurbekova, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Kyrgyz Republic René Holenstein and Acting Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Aliona Niculita signed a memorandum of understanding to support the consolidation of a strong and inclusive parliamentary democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic. The signing ceremony took place in the Parliament with participation of members of parliament, management of the apparatus of Jogorku Kenesh as well as representatives from international donor community, the Embassy of Switzerland said in a release on July 3. The memorandum of understanding foresees cooperation and commitment to promote the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda and its goal 16 aiming at the creation of peaceful, just and strong institutions, to support the implementation of the Strategy of Development of the Jogorku Kenesh in line with the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic. "Switzerland's rich experience with democratic governance can serve as a basis for exchange and collaboration between our two countries.

(Akpress)

Iran Navy holds military drills in Caspian Sea

The Iranian Navy has launched military drills in the Caspian Sea as a means of sending across the Armed Forces' message of "peace and friendship." The five-day drills, codenamed Lasting Security and Authority 96, started in an area measuring more than 88,000 square kilometers across the waters on Sunday. Speaking to reporters, Commander of the Navy's Northern Fleet Captain Ahmad-Reza Baqeri said the drills feature five stages. The first stage, which began four months ago, comprised scheduling and planning. During the subsequent stages, naval forces practice briefing, naval drilling, battles with mock enemy forces, performance of calculated warfare tactics as well as joint operations enlisting vessels, aircraft, coastal and seaborne operational units and logistical teams.

(Farsnews)

Nazarbayev vows Kazakhstan to continue developing strategic partnership with US and EU

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said his country will continue developing strategic partnerships with the U.S. and its new administration during the meeting on Monday at Akorda with the ambassadors of foreign states accredited in Astana. Central Asia is on the new stage of its development and Astana will be further focused on equal partnership, joining efforts to increasing the role of the region in the international affairs, Nazarbayev said. "We will pay close attention to joint work with our neighbors taking into account our historic, cultural, lingual roots," Nazarbayev said. "We will continue developing multilateral relations with the European Union — our biggest trade-economic and investment partner. We've signed an enhanced partnership deal, this document will pass the ratification processes in the EU countries. I ask and hope for the support from other countries. To those who've done ratification, we express gratitude," he said. Kazakhstan will also continue boosting ties with the former Soviet countries. Strengthening ties with Turkey is very crucial for Astana, he noted.

(Trend)

Syrian gov't, armed opposition confirm participation at Astana Talks

The Syrian government and armed opposition delegations will take part in the forthcoming reconciliation talks in Astana. Delegations of Russia, Iran and Turkey hold talks on Syrian peace at a hotel in Astana, Kazakhstan, Monday, Jan. 23, 2017. The Syrian government and armed opposition delegations have confirmed they will take part in the next round of reconciliation talks in Astana on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Kazakh foreign minister said. "The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic government confirmed its participation and will arrive today. Representatives of the armed Syrian opposition also confirmed their participation," Kairat Abdrakhmanov told reporters on Monday.

(Trend)

Xi: China, Russia ties at 'best time in history'

Chinese President Xi Jinping hopes his visit to Moscow will boost bilateral relations

Chinese President Xi Jinping touted the relationship between China and Russia at "best time in history", according to state news agency Xinhua on Monday.

His remarks came ahead of his two-day official visit to Moscow on Monday and Tuesday. Xi will meet his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. Saying that Beijing and Moscow are each other's "most trustworthy strategic partners", the Chinese president added: "China-Russia relations are at their best time in history."

Xi hoped his visit would bring impetus to the development of bilateral ties between the two countries. Energy, trade, high technology, and finance are among the fields Xi said Beijing sought to boost cooperation. According to a Kremlin statement, the two leaders will ink a number of bilateral agreements following the talks.

(Anadolu)

Signs of a Second Wave of Measures Against Qatar

Riyadh, Dammam- After Qatar rejected to comply with a list of demands made by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt on an ultimatum that expired Sunday night, signs emerged of a second wave of sanctions to be imposed by the four Arab states against Doha, which is accused of supporting terrorism. Last month, the four Arab states gave Doha 10 days to comply with a list of 13 demands or face unspecified consequences. On Sunday, the states boycotting Qatar agreed to a Kuwaiti request to extend by 48 hours Sunday's deadline. While Qatar confirmed that its official response to the list of demands will be handed over to Kuwait on Monday, there has been information that the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain will meet in Cairo on Wednesday "to follow up on the developing situation regarding relations with Qatar."

Egyptian and Gulf diplomats and economists expect Qatar's economy to face a new wave of measures, including the pulling of deposits from Qatari banks and the removal of permits given to Qatari bank branches operating in the four Arab states.

The measures against Doha would also touch Qatari investments in European countries and the US. Reuters reported on Sunday that commercial bankers in the region believe that Saudi, Emirati and Bahraini banks might receive official guidance to pull deposits and interbank loans from Qatar. Meanwhile, the Saudi Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Ambassador Abdullah bin Yahya Al-Mu'allemi stressed that Qatar insists on destabilizing Saudi and regional security in addition to supporting terrorism that threatens the whole world. "Qatar has chosen to be an ally of Iran and for the past 20 years it has been continuing its support for terrorist groups with its knowledge of their plots against the countries of the region," the Saudi ambassador said.

(AAWSAT)

NATO Considering 'Petya' Malware a Potential Act of War

On Saturday, Kevin Scheid, a US Department of Defense veteran, was placed in charge of NATO's cyber operations. The appointment wouldn't be big news if it weren't for the fact that he's joining the organisation at a hair-raising point in history. The vicious malware triggered NATO to announce on Friday that the attack is believed to be the work of a state actor and is a potential act of war.

There was a lot of ruckus back in May when Donald Trump met with the leaders of NATO and failed to confirm that the US is committed to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. That's the clause of the agreement that pledges the members of NATO to mutual defence. Legally speaking, if Article 5 is triggered by an attack on one member, the other members are required to join in retaliation. This week NATO's Secretary General confirmed that a cyber operation with "consequences comparable to an armed attack can trigger Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and responses might be with military means." But Friday's press release emphasises that we don't know enough about the origin of NotPetya or the intentions behind its release at this time. NATO researchers have concluded that the malware "can most likely be attributed to a state actor," and if a nation is determined to be responsible, "this could be an internationally wrongful act, which might give the targeted states several options to respond with countermeasures."

What sort of countermeasures? Well, pretty much anything. Independently Michael Fallon, the UK defence secretary, announced this week that his country was prepared to respond to cyber attacks "from any domain - air, land, sea or cyber."

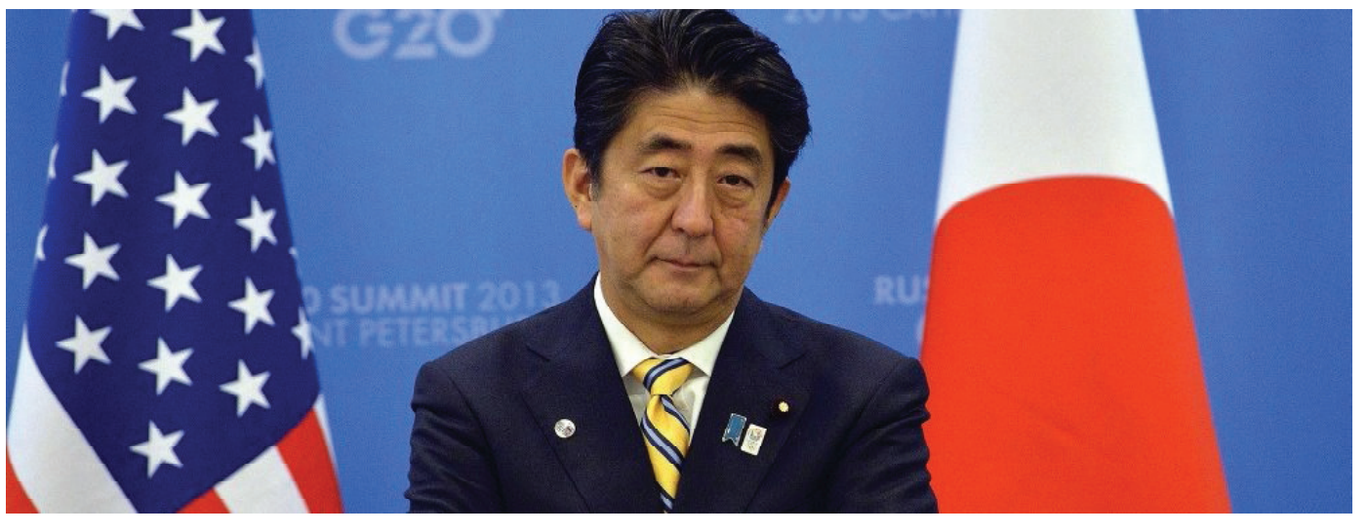
(AP)

EU backs Serbia's new government amid Russian doubts

The European Union's enlargement chief on Friday welcomed Serbia's new government despite Russian claims Belgrade's EU membership bid is set to fail. On Thursday night the Serbian parliament chose a new government lead by Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, the country's first female and openly gay premier. Recently-elected Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic backed Brnabic after he stepped down as prime minister to run for office as head of state. European Commissioner for Enlargement Johannes Hann congratulated Brnabic and said he looked forward to working with her team to improve Serbia's EU accession process. Serbia became an EU candidate country in 2012. Earlier, Serbia's parliament approved the opening of a new Ministry of European Integration. Serbia recently opened two more chapters in EU membership negotiations in Luxembourg, focusing on intellectual property legislation and the EU customs union. Serbia has thus opened 10 of 35 negotiating chapters. In a speech at parliament, Brnabic emphasized how Serbia would continue a delicate balancing act between the West and Russia, a traditional ally. "EU membership remains our main direction," Brnabic said.

(Anadolu)

Toeing the Line: Japan Jumps on US Bandwagon With China Sanctions



Taking a cue from Washington, the Japanese government has imposed sanctions on the Bank of Dandong, a regional bank in China which is accused of financing North Korea's nuclear and missile program. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga announced the decision during a news conference in Tokyo. Tokyo is also considering freezing the Japanese assets of Dalian Global Unity Shipping Co., a transportation service firm in Dalian, China.

Can Japan Convince Russia, China to Impose More Sanctions on N Korea?

The experts Sputnik has talked to all said that Beijing would respond by putting on hold the China-Japan-South Korea summit Tokyo wants so much.

"Activity," declaring it "a foreign bank of primary money laundering concern." Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on June 27 that, according to "concrete intelligence data," the bank has served as a gateway for North Korea to access the US and international financial systems, facilitating "millions of dollars of transactions for companies involved in North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs." Mnuchin added that the US will continue to take "very significant action" against North Korea and would roll out additional sanctions against the county to cub its "illegal financial activities."

Washington is also considering sanctions against China's Dalian Global Unity Shipping Co., and two Chinese nationals accused of maintain business ties with Pyongyang. The measures came after Washington had to admit that its hopes to use China to bring additional pressure against North Korea had fallen flat. In an interview with Sputnik China, Valery Kistanov, an expert at the Institute of the Far East in Moscow, said that Beijing's response to Tokyo's move would not be long coming.

He noted that, as a close ally of Washington, which ensures the country's security in light of the alleged "North Korean threat," Japan simply can't afford not to back US sanctions against Chinese companies. "China is not happy to see Japan's ramping up of cooperation with the US. It also believes that Washington is using North Korea as a pretext for military muscle flexing. The dispatch of three nuclear aircraft carriers to North Korea smacks of US gunboat diplomacy and Japan's support of such a policy only serves to stoke up tensions," Kistanov said. He noted that that Beijing had already responded by pushing back the China-Japan-South Korea summit and it looks like Tokyo's recent warming to China's "one belt, one road" project will prove short-lived. Still, the current cooling off of relations between Tokyo and Beijing does not mean the end of all other contacts between them. China wants to mend fences with Japan, and if President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe do meet on the sidelines of the upcoming G20 summit in Hamburg, this would mean that Beijing is ready for a continued dialogue with Tokyo, Kistanov added. In an interview with Sputnik, Zhou Yongsheng, a foreign policy expert at China's Diplomatic Academy, said that Japan's commitments to the US have driven it into a dead end, preventing it from improving relations with China.

(Spuntak)

Australia, New Zealand start free trade talks with Latin American bloc

Australia and New Zealand have launched free trade talks with Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia. Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull gestures to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the end of an official signing ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, March 24, 2017

Australia and New Zealand have launched free trade talks with Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia, who make up the Pacific Alliance, their trade ministers announced Saturday.

"Australia's experience negotiating with three of the Pacific Alliance members positions us well to conclude an agreement relatively quickly," Australia's Steben Ciobo said in a statement.

Australia is seeking a "comprehensive, high quality" pact to create new export opportunities for its farmers, miners, manufacturers, educators, service providers and investors, drive economic growth and create jobs, the minister said.

Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski said on Friday that Australia, Canada, Singapore and New Zealand had lined up to join the trading bloc as associate members.

New Zealand's Trade Minister Todd McClay also announced his country started talks with the alliance, which accounts for 38 percent of Latin America's population and 57 percent of its total imports. "This is a big win in the fight for better access for New Zealanders to important overseas markets.

We've worked hard for trade talks with the Pacific Alliance over the last two years and today's announcement will be welcome news for our exporters," McClay said. He stressed a "high-quality" free trade pact will open the door for New Zealand's companies to do more business with the Pacific Alliance countries and increase the $1.1 billion of two-way trade they currently have.

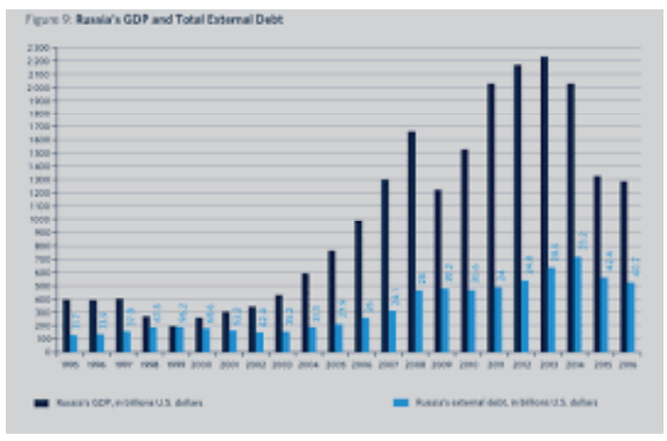
(BBC)

China, Brazil need to boost cooperation on clean, renewable energy

China and Brazil have a solid foundation of cooperation in the energy sector, and they need to boost cooperation on clean energy, Chinese ambassador to Brazil, Li Jinzhang, said Thursday. In addition to oil and electricity, "we need to boost cooperation on technology and investments in new, renewable energy. We put a lot of trust in this cooperation," Li told Xinhua. While attending the South American Seminar on the Belt and Road Development and Global Energy Interconnection held here Thursday, the Chinese ambassador stressed that there is potential for Brazil-China cooperation on global energy interconnection, especially on clean energy. In this handout photograph provided by Sunrun, real estate experts install solar panels on a home in Las Vegas. Li highlighted that Brazil has a clean energy matrix, with a lot of natural resources which accommodate extensive exploration of hydroelectric, wind and solar power. Talking about Brazil's role in the energy cooperation in Latin America, the Chinese ambassador said, "the Brazil-China cooperation is a strong role model for Latin America and the entire world."

(AP)

Nearly 40pc of Russian economy still in shadow sector



According to the international Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, 39.3 percent of the Russian economy remains in the shadow sector, making Russia one of the leaders in this regard and meaning that 35.55 trillion rubles (600 billion US dollars) of economic activity there are off the books and not paying taxes. Not only is the share of the shadow economy in Russia almost twice (1.84 times) that of the worldwide average, but it has remained almost unchanged there since 2011 while it has declined over that period in other countries from 23.1 percent to 22.5 percent (svpressa.ru/economy/article/175987/ and rusjev.net/2017/07/02/rossiya-obognala-afriku-po-razmahu-tenevoy-ekonomiki/). Russia has surpassed the level in Kenya (where it is 26.8 percent) but not yet reached the level of Nigeria (47.7 percent), the ACCA says. And it lags far behind the three countries that have the smallest shadow sectors, the United States (7.69 percent), Japan (9.89 percent), and China (10.17 percent).

Shadow economies flourish where taxes are high and thus there is a great deal of tax avoidance, where government pressure on business is intense and where the level of poverty is high as well. In Russia, the ACCA says, all these things are true as are underlying weaknesses in democratic institutions and the current recession.

According to one poll, two-thirds of Russians either support or at least do not oppose the shadow economy because they back the desire of businesses to avoid paying taxes or registering with the state. Indeed, this public support for the shadow economy is currently at the highest levels in modern times. Moreover, ever fewer Russians express opposition to the shadow economy: in 2001, 42.2 percent did; now only 16.4 percent do.

(Windowoneurasia2)

Boycotting countries invoke WTO's 'national security' clause in Qatar row

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt informed the World Trade Organization on Friday of the legality of their actions after boycotting Qatar, exercising their sovereign rights guaranteed by international law to protect their national security. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Trade and Investment said that this came on the sidelines of a meeting with the WTO Council on Trade in Goods held in Geneva, Switzerland, on the compatibility of the decisions taken by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt with the organization's regulations. Speaking on behalf of all three countries, the Bahraini diplomat at the WTO's Goods Council said the measures were "in accordance with Article XXI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade", which allows the usual rules to be broken for national security reasons, the official said. The article states that during a dispute in international relations, the obligations of the convention allows member states to take the steps they deem necessary to protect their interests and their national security. Article 14 of the Services Agreement and Article 73 of the IP Convention signed by Member States guarantee all the sovereign rights of States to take any action to protect their national security and stability from violations they may be subjected to.

Last month, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Qatar, citing Doha's role in supporting terrorist groups.

(ALARABIYA)

Bashar al-Assad appears on Syrian currency for first time

President Bashar al-Assad has appeared on the Syrian currency for the first time, his portrait printed on a new 2,000-pound banknote that went into circulation on Sunday. Central bank governor Duraid Durgham said the 2,000-pound note was one of several new notes printed years ago but the decision to put it into circulation was delayed "due to the circumstances of the war and exchange rate fluctuations".

The new note is equal to around $4 at current exchange rates. The currency has plunged in value since the conflict began in 2011, from 47 pounds to the dollar in 2010 to around 500 pounds to the dollar at present.

Wear and tear

Citing wear and tear of the existing notes, Durgham said the time was right to put the new note into circulation, the state news agency SANA reported. Central Bank of Syria governor Duraid Durgham speaks during a news conference as he holds the new Syrian 2,000-pound banknote that went into circulation on July 2, 2017, Syria. (Reuters)

Previously, the highest denomination of Syrian banknote was 1,000 pounds. Assad's father, the late President Hafez al-Assad who died in 2000, appeared on coins and on an older version of the 1,000 pound note, which is still in circulation. Durgham said the new note was put into circulation "in Damascus and a number of the provinces".

After years of war estimated to have killed hundreds of thousands of people, Assad appears militarily unassailable thanks in large part to direct military support from his allies Russia and Iran.

(CNN)

Abu Dhabi airport says it's now exempt from US laptop ban

The flag carrier of the United Arab Emirates says its flights out of the country's capital are now exempt from a US ban on laptop computers being in airplane cabins.

Long-haul carrier Etihad said in a statement on Sunday that it welcomed the decision by the US Department of Homeland Security, which comes "subject to enhanced security measures" at Abu Dhabi International Airport.

Abu Dhabi's airport already has a US Customs and Border Protection facility that allows passengers to clear screening they'd otherwise have to go through when landing in America.

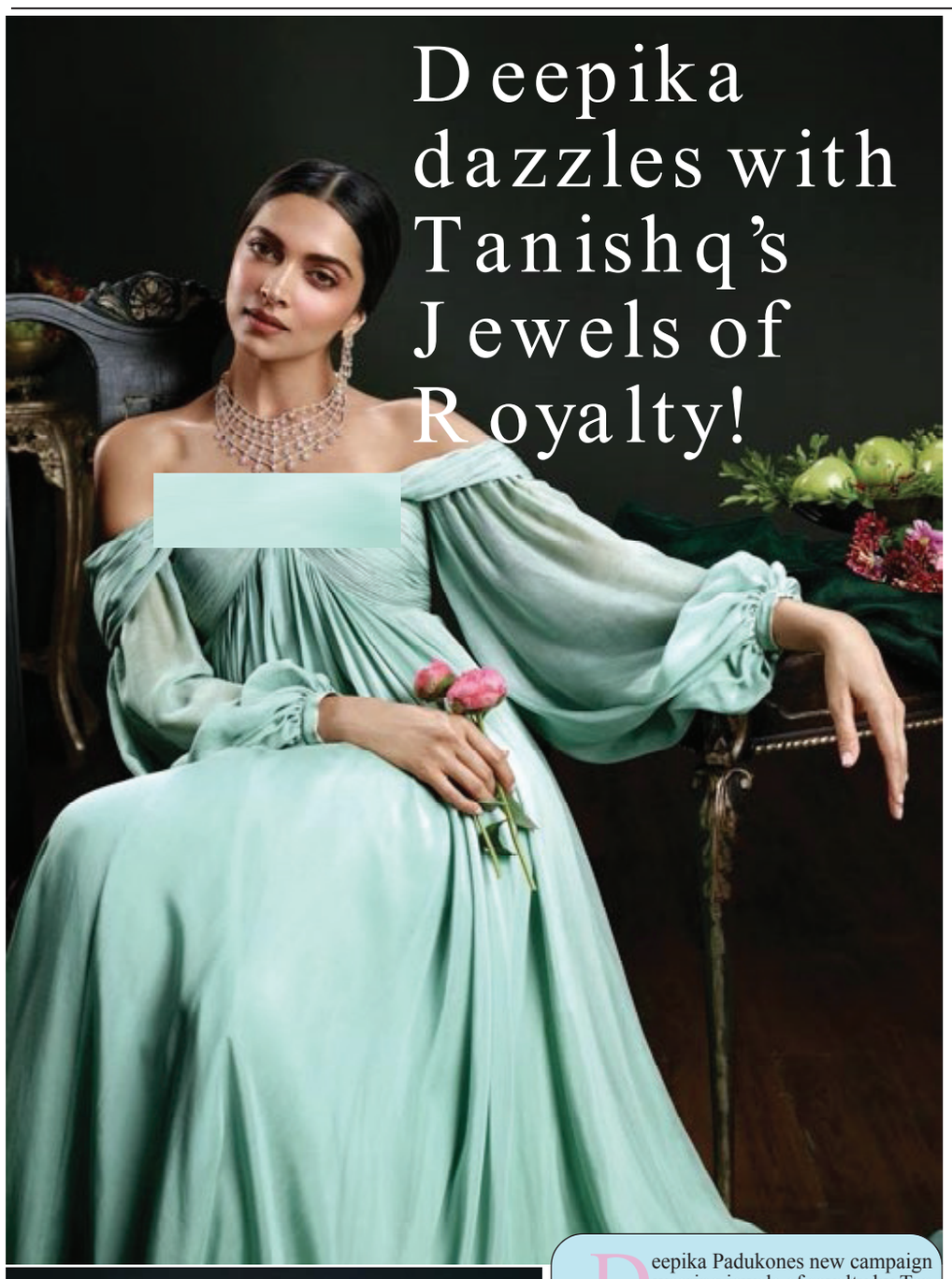
The US ban now applies to nonstop US-bound flights from nine international airports in Amman, Jordan; Kuwait City; Cairo; Istanbul; Jeddah and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Casablanca, Morocco; Doha, Qatar; and Dubai in the UAE.

(Alarabiya)

South Sudan's million-strong refugee crisis is a test for the World Bank

magine, if you will, a city the size of Birmingham with a population of a million or so. Now imagine that a disaster has befallen that metropolis, a brutal war that has caused its citizens to flee with little more than the clothes on their backs. Picture the lines of refugees heading west to find a place of safety, which they eventually find across the border in Wales. There, despite severe financial constraints, the million displaced people are met with warmth and generosity. This is not a science-fiction story. Substitute South Sudan for Birmingham and Wales for Uganda and you get an inkling of what is happening in one of the poorest parts of the world's poorest continent. The number of refugees globally has not been higher since the end of the second world war and a million of them have crossed from South Sudan into Uganda, mostly into the West Nile district. In all, an estimated two million people have been displaced by the civil war and ethnic cleansing that has been raging in the world's newest country for the past four years. Approximately three quarters of South Sudan's children are out of school – the highest number in the world. **(Theguardian)**

Deepika dazzles with Tanishq's Jewels of Royalty!



Deepika Padukones new campaign wearing jewels of royalty by Tanishq saves nothing less than magical. `Jewels of Royalty` is the latest collection by Tanishq which has stunning statement pieces inspired by Indian Royalty. The collection that Deepika is seen in these pictures,wearing draws inspiration from iconic royal houses from all over India; from the royals of Baroda to the Maharajas of Indore, and from the Chola dynasty, to the monarchs of Patiala. This collection that Deepika is seen wearing, is exclusively designed for the modern Indian woman, with a taste for the exquisite and for the most special occasions in her life. Tanishq has given these classical designs a modern twist by combining the latest in international trends such as flat diamond tassels, pixelated pearl strings and exaggerated diamond adorned centres. Deepika is truly looking a celestial beauty with these jewels of royalty on her. Speaking about the launch of Jewels of Royalty, Deepika Tewari, General Manager - Marketing, Jewellery Division, Titan Company Limited said, `The woman of today emanates poise and panache. Tanishq's latest Jewels of Royalty collection is spectacular, set in plain gold or white gold and bursts of colour that complement the beauty of this woman. Celebrating the classical royal heritage in gemstone jewellery, diamonds and white topaz, Jewels of Royalty is unique and offers a touch of royalty to every woman's attire`. **(Santa Banta)**

Revealed: Aishwarya's character in Fanney Khan

Anil Kapoor's Fanney Khan is set to feature Aishwarya Rai Bachchan as a glamourous singer, producer Prernaa Arora has confirmed. Fanney Khan will mark the directorial debut of Atul Manjrekar, and is the Hindi adaptation of the 2000 Dutch release, Everybody's Famous! The musical-drama shows Aishwarya as a glamorous singer. Aishwarya, who is currently on a family vacation in New York, will start her preparations for the role as soon as she is back in Mumbai.

`Aishwarya is a stunning and an extremely talented actress. In Fanney Khan, she will be seen in a completely different avatar from all our past films. She is the spunky, enchanting female protagonist who will make you smile with her screen presence,` Prerna said in a press statement. Talking about rumours that Aishwarya makes her singing debut with Fanney Khan, Prernaa Arora said, `For now she is not singing, but yes she is playing a singer in the film, but in reality we still have to wait for that big moment when she decides to sing.` Fanney Khan's lead actor Anil Kapoor may be lending his voice for a number of songs for the film. Anil will kick off shooting in the first week of August. Aishwarya joins him by the month end and the film will wrap up in a start-to-finish schedule by October. Anil and Aishwarya were earlier seen together in Subhash Ghai's Taal (1999) and Satish Kaushik's Humara Dil Aapke Paas Hai (2000).

(Santa Banta)

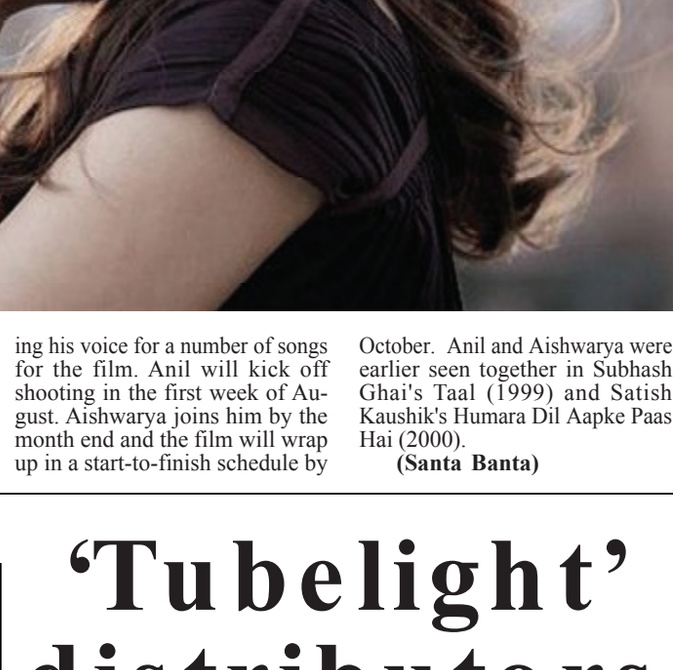
Anushka explaining the meaning of 'Sejal' to SRK

Team 'Jab Harry met Sejal' have released yet another 'mini trail' from the film. This new insight into the film features a cheerful Anushka aka Sejal explaining to Shah Rukh aka Harry the meaning of her name. Anushka is seen at her Gujarati best as she enacts the meaning of her name to Punjabi Harry.

The mini trail further serves as an insight into the relationship shared by Harry and Sejal in the film. An innocent Anushka is seen explaining to Shah Rukh Khan aka Harry the meaning of her name while beginning to enact the same as a cue. Unfazed by her efforts, Shah Rukh is seen dismissing her act. While montages from the film bring to the forefront the talkative, free-spirited side of Anushka aka Sejal, Harry is seen at his outspoken best. Jab Harry met Sejal's new mini trail further draws the audience into the characters of Harry and Sejal. Anushka Sharma took to Twitter to present this peppy aspect of Sejal to the audience. She tweeted, "Mera naam hai Sejal! Sejal ka matlab pata hai? ? @iamsrk @RedChilliesEnt" To which Shah Rukh Khan replied, "Ma'am! Kitni baar kahoon, mere liye Sejal hi kaafi hai! @AnushkaSharma #JHMSMiniTrail4" Jab Harry met Sejal is one of the most anticipated films of the year and with these short and spellbinding mini trailers, the curiosity now knows no bounds.

(Hindustan Times)

'Tubelight' distributors in tears after incurring huge losses



Bollywood actor Salman Khan's films that have released on Eid have always been unbeatable, enjoying bumper openings at the Box Office. Considering this, it's really no wonder how the superstar considers Eid to be a lucky charm for his career. However, this time, things have turned out quite differently. Salman's recently released film Tubelight has received mixed reviews from the audience, as well as from the critics. Never felt overshadowed by Salman bhai: Sohail Khan In fact, the Kabir Khan directorial also had a below than expectations opening at the Box Office on day one. It's been almost five days since its release and Tubelight is still struggling to touch the INR100 crore mark, when one was expecting the film to break Bajrangi Bhaijaan's record, reported Business of Cinema. According to the trade buzz, the single screens showing the film have suffered huge losses due to the less-than-favourable response. According to reports, two cinemas in Ferozabad and in Uttar Pradesh (UP) that ran Tubelight have suffered a loss close to INR1 million. Reportedly, another cinema in UP has lost all the money that they had earned during Baahubali 2: The Conclusion and Dangal. The buzz also suggests that many distributors are in tears and have reached Mumbai in hope of meeting Salman and requesting him for a refund. Those who order war should be sent to the front and asked to fight: Salman Khan It remains to be seen how Salman reacts to this, because he is apparently not bound by any contract to refund the money to distributors. It would be a very special gesture by the actor if he agrees to compensate. Directed and written by Kabir Khan, Tubelight is based on 1962 Sino-Indian War and sees Salman playing an innocent boy. It also features Chinese actress Zhu Zhu, Salman's brother Sohail and the late Om Puri, among others. The film released on June 23.

(Tribune)

Adele hints at retirement from touring

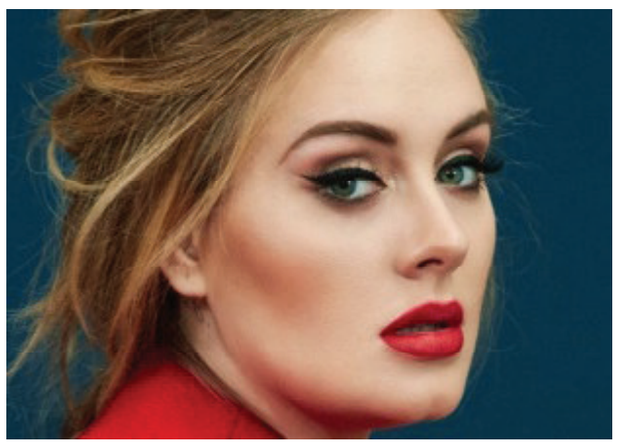
English balladeer Adele, one of the top-selling artists of the 21st century, says she may retire from live performances as she winds up a massive tour, reported AFP. The 29-year-old singer thanked fans in a message Thursday night at London's Wembley Arena, where she is playing four final shows on a 123-date global tour. "Touring is a peculiar thing.

It doesn't suit me particularly well," said a handwritten note included in the program, which several fans posted on social media. "I'm a real homebody and I get so much joy in the small things.

Plus, I'm dramatic and have a terrible history of touring," she wrote.

Adele visits London apartment building after deadly fire

"I wanted my final shows to be in London because I don't know if I'll ever tour again and so I want my last time to be at home," she wrote.



Adele has defied pop formulas by winning massive fan bases through mournful, nostalgic ballads such as Someone Like You and Hello off back-to-back blockbuster albums 21 and 25. Adele has frequently spoken of suffering stage-fright and disappeared from the public eye for several years, during which she had a son, before releasing 25 in 2015.

She has kept packing arenas despite eschewing the on-stage theatrics that have become commonplace for top-tier pop stars. Her tour took her across Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. In Los Angeles, she broke a record by selling out eight consecutive shows at the Staples Center.

(Tribune)

Gurinder Chadha to team up with Priyanka Chopra for film 'like Bend It Like Beckham'?

Bend It Like Beckham and Bride And Prejudice director Gurinder Chadha wants to cast Priyanka in her next film.

Indian-origin British filmmaker Gurinder Chadha is likely to team up with actress Priyanka Chopra for a movie. "I am in talks with Priyanka's mother, Madhu Chopra, for something (referring to a film). I met her mother in Cannes and I told her I have great ideas. She said 'yes, let's work it out'," Gurinder told PTI. Gurinder, however, states she has not discussed the idea of a film with Priyanka yet. "I will be going to America soon, so I will be meeting her (Priyanka) and will talk about the idea that I have." A still from Bend It Like Beckham. On whether the film with the Quantico actor will be an international project, Gurinder says, "She has been producing films and I hope it is international (the one that we do together). I can't think of doing India-centric film alone as I am half British and Indian." There have been reports of her making a sequel to Bend It Like Beckham but Gurinder says she is instead contemplating to get the stage version of the 2002 hit movie to India. She further says she is working on a film which is on the lines of Bend It Like Beckham. "There is a project that I am working on with England's support. It is about a boy and girl. It has the same feel as 'Bend It Like Beckam' but it is different. It does not have a background of football or sports. It is more about music. I will have the British-Asian perspective in the same way as 'Bend It Like Beckham'," she says.

Gurinder is currently in India to promote the Hindi version of her film Viceroy's House, titled Partition: 1947. The film will release in India on August 18.

(Hindustan Times)

Here's Manoj Bajpayee, Sidharth Malhotra as mentor-protege in 'Aiyaary'

Neeraj Pandey's next 'Aiyaary' has released a new still from the film and it brings to the forefront the mentor - protege bond shared by Manoj Bajpayee and Sidharth Malhotra. Neeraj Pandey and Sidharth Malhotra have been taking to social media to share with their audience the shooting experience from the sets of 'Aiyaary'. While Sidharth Malhotra has been treating his audience with pictures and videos from Aiyaary's first shoot schedule in Kashmir. The actor also gave a sneak peek into the look that he will be seen donning in 'Aiyaary' as an army man alongside Manoj Bajpayee who carried the uniform with the utmost class. Director Neeraj Pandey also shared the visuals straight from the director's view as he posted a picture of a drone camera used to shoot Aiyaary The drone had in its surrounding the beautiful visuals of the valley and snow clad mountains, promising 'Aiyaary' to deliver breathtaking visuals. Continuing their spree of teasing the audience, makers of 'Aiyaary' have shared yet another still that highlights the special bond shared between Manoj Bajpayee and Sidharth Malhotra in the film. The duo will be seen together for the first time on celluloid and will be essaying the parts of a mentor and protege in the Neeraj Pandey directorial. Continuing his streak of bringing real life stories to the masses, Neeraj Pandey's 'Aiyaary' is also based on True incidents.

(Hindustan Times)

Jack Wilshere, Joe Hart, Calum Chambers: Who's back from loan, what now?

A number of players have returned to their parent clubs following loan spells away in 2016/17 but could they make an impact or will their futures lie elsewhere? Arsenal's Jack Wilshere, Manchester City's Joe Hart and Manchester United's Adnan Januzaj are among the players who are back with their regular employers. Here's a reminder of some of the men returning home and their possible next move...

Once tipped to be Arsenal's next great No 1, Szczesny has instead spent the last two seasons with Roma following Petr Cech's switch to the Emirates. He has impressed in Serie A, though, and looked set to complete a permanent move to Juventus earlier this summer. Talk of a move to the Champions League finalists persists. Another player once touted for great things, injury problems have held Wilshere back for his entire career and he was sent to Bournemouth on loan to get some much-needed first-team action. He made 27 appearances but his form tailed off throughout the season and he is set to miss Arsenal's summer tour after breaking his leg back in April. "At the end of the season, when I sit down and think about [my future], playing will be a big factor," he said. "I need to play, that's why I came here. Bournemouth gave me that opportunity."

West Ham are a reported option for the 2017/18 campaign but co-owner David Gold insists he is prioritising strikers and Wilshere's next move remains up in the air.

Joel Campbell - Sporting Lisbon

Campbell had a fifth loan switch away from Arsenal since 2011 after joining Sporting Lisbon on a season-long deal. However, he struggled to force his way into the side, making just 18 appearances and scoring three times. Campbell is out of contract next year and has been linked in the British media with moves to Aston Villa and Besiktas.

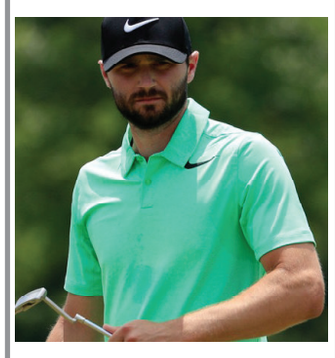
Calum Chambers - Middlesbrough

The young defender's career appeared to be stalling before an impressive season on loan at Middlesbrough, despite their relegation, and a solid campaign for England at the European U21 Championship.

Insisting he is gunning to make an impression back at the Emirates, he said: "(Last) season has been so important for me, playing games as a centre-back. The experience I have gained in that position is so valuable to me. I just feel it's just pushed me on another level."

(BBC Sport)

Kyle Stanley claims play-off victory at Quicken Loans National

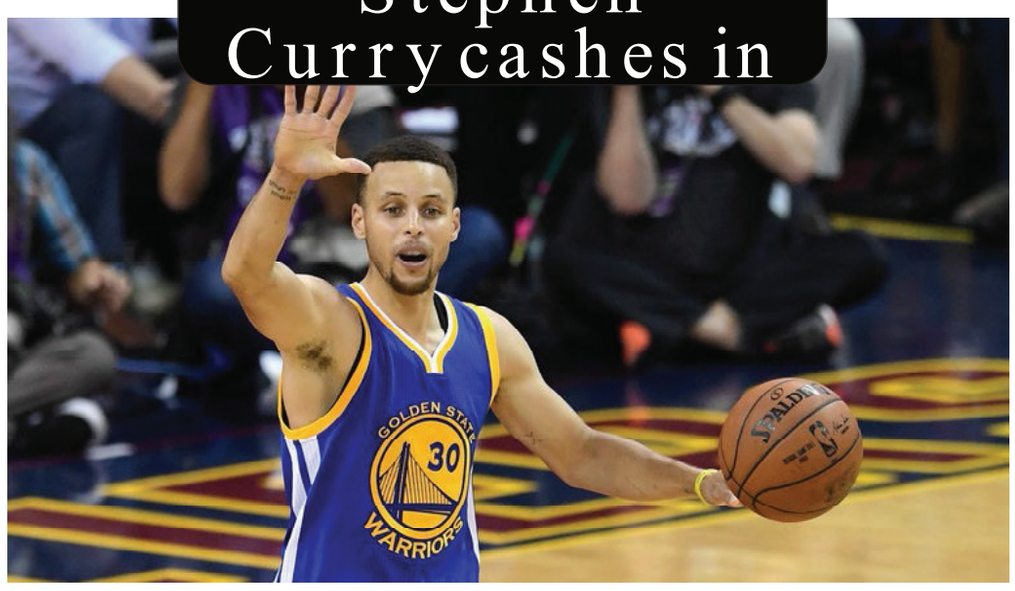


Kyle Stanley ended a five-year winless run on the PGA Tour with a play-off victory over Charles Howell III at the Quicken Loans National. The pair began the day four shots back but carded matching 66s at TPC Potomac to get to seven under and take the contest to extra holes, where Stanley prevailed with a par at the first extra hole. A birdie-filled 65 lifted Rickie Fowler into a share of third spot with Scotland's Martin Laird, with overnight leader David Lingmerth one of eight players a further stroke back on four under.

Lingmerth lost ground with two bogeys over his first five holes, as Daniel Summerhays briefly edged ahead but then double-bogeyed the fourth. Curtis Luck also temporarily topped the leaderboard after three birdies in a four-hole stretch, with Martin Laird posting a front-nine 32 and Sung Kang picking up shots at the seventh and ninth to make it a four-way tie. Fowler surged into contention with a run of four straight gains around the turn and cancelled out a three-putt bogey at the 11th with back-to-back birdies, only to double-bogey the 14th after finding water off the tee. Four birdies in a six-hole stretch from the fifth lifted Stanley into a share of the lead, as Howell made tap-in gain at the 10th and drained a 30-foot eagle at the 14th to get to seven under. Stanley made a two-putt birdie on the same driveable par-four to move alongside Howell, who was an inch away from holing a 20-footer for victory at the final hole. Victory gave Stanley one of four qualification spots for The Open, available to those inside the top 12 and not already exempt, with Howell III, Laird and Kang also securing a spot for Royal Birkdale.

(Sky Sport)

NBA free agency round-up: Stephen Curry cashes in



J.J. Redick is trusting the process. Gordon Hayward got his sales pitch from Miami. And David West, finally a champion, is coming back for one last season. The first day of NBA free agency Saturday saw things starting to take shape, though there's still dozens of moves to come in the next few days. After an opening flurry that saw Stephen Curry get a record-breaking £152m ($201m) deal from the NBA champion Golden State Warriors and Blake Griffin take about £133m ($175m) to stay with the Los Angeles Clippers, most teams started to look at names more within their price range. Redick agreed to a £17.4m ($23m), one-year deal with the Philadelphia 76ers. West is going back to the Warriors on a veteran's minimum, which is now worth £1.7m ($2.3m). And Detroit got some solid insurance at point guard, agreeing with Langston Galloway on a three-year deal. But all that, of course, was overshadowed by Curry's deal the biggest contract in NBA history. "Steph should be getting 400M this summer," Cleveland star LeBron James tweeted.

The rules, for now, only allow for Curry to get half of that. With nearly £760m ($1 billion) in deals agreed to just in Day 1 of this year's free agency period, there is still obviously no shortage of money out there for teams to hand out. And while Curry got the most, other point guards got plenty or will when contracts can start being signed Thursday. Jrue Holiday agreed to return to New Orleans for £95m ($126m) over five years, with incentives potentially pushing that to £114m ($150m). Patty Mills is returning to San Antonio for the next four years at £38m ($50m), and Jeff Teague agreed with Minnesota on a three-year, £43m ($57m) deal. Still out there is another massive offer: John Wall has a chance to sign a four-year extension worth £127.5m ($168m) with the Wizards, another deal under the so-called Supermax structure that allowed Curry to get his record payday. In other major free agent news Saturday:

Redick made his intentions for next season clear with three simple words. "Trust the process," he tweeted, his way of saying he was heading to the 76ers, who have made that phrase their mantra during their long rebuilding process. Redick averaged 15.0 points and made 43 per cent of his 3-pointers last season for the Los Angeles Clippers, who will now need two new starting guards next season after point guard Chris Paul was traded to the Houston Rockets. Hayward was greeted by Heat players for his free-agent visit, along with a banner strategically placed outside AmericanAirlines Arena showing him in a Heat uniform.

(Sky Sport)

Frank Buglioni retained his British title and Joshua Buatsi made an impressive start to pro career

Frank Buglioni defended his British title at the end of an explosive night of action, with Joshua Buatsi making an impressive start to his professional career. Buglioni retained his Lonsdale belt in an entertaining points win over Ricky Summers after a crop of exciting young talent had taken centre stage at The O2. All eyes were on Buatsi as he marked his debut with a classy stoppage victory, while Conor Benn and Lawrence Okolie displayed their ruthless instincts in swift wins.

Starting in style

Buatsi had caught the eye at last summer's Rio Olympics with his smooth combinations and the bronze medallist effortlessly adjusted to life in the paid ranks.

He will face tougher opponents than Carlos Mena, but did what was expected, effortlessly shifting shots from head to body as the Spaniard was halted inside two rounds. Anthony Joshua, the IBF and WBA 'super' heavyweight champion, knows all about the pressures on a young prospect and was full of praise for the 24-year-old light-heavyweight. "He seemed cool as he was walking in tonight, but you never know, even the toughest men get nervous," said Joshua, who was part of the Sky Sports team of experts. "He handled it well and was a beast in there with his body shots and uppercuts."

Back with a bang

Conor Benn had been absent from the ring since December, honing his skills with trainer Tony Sims, and he looked razor sharp in a third-round stoppage win over Mike Cole. The 20-year-old welterweight displayed those trademark hurtful hooks, but the 'Destroyer' also showed more subtlety with his footwork, head movement and shot selection. His jubilant father Nigel joined him in the post-fight interview and the former world champion predicted a bright future for his son. "I believe he will surpass me," he told Sky Sports. "He's got a long way to go, but he's on the right track."

(Fox News)

Andy Murray and Roger Federer tussle for Wimbledon favouritism

Andy Murray will head into Wimbledon with his longest odds since 2012 with Roger Federer Sky Bet's clear favourite at 2/1. Federer, who sat out the clay-court campaign, leapfrogged the Scot at the head of the betting after winning a ninth Halle tournament without dropping a set. Murray had been favourite since capturing world No 1 status and boosted hopes with a semi-final run at the French Open, but has drifted out from as short as 6/4 to 100/30 after losing to world No 90 Jordan Thompson in his opening match at Queen's Club last week. The reigning champion has landed just one title in 2017 and was forced to pull out of a second Hurlingham exhibition match due to a sore hip, raising further questions over his readiness and prompting his odds to drift again, with Sky Bet enhancing his price to 6/1.

Federer, in contrast, has won four of the six events he has competed in, starting the year with a shock comeback win at the Australian Open before back-to-back success in Indian Wells and Miami. The pair have been kept apart in the draw, with Murray in the same half as Rafael Nadal and the same quarter as Stan Wawrinka, who has never gone past the quarter-finals at SW19. Nadal followed up Federer's hard-court success by dominating the clay thereafter, winning four out of five titles, including a 10th French Open, and is third favourite at 9/2.

The Spaniard, who is a two-time champion, has failed to make it past the fourth round at Wimbledon since 2011 and missed last year's event due to injury.

(BBC Sport)

Team Sky say time-trial skinsuit is legal after criticism following Dusseldorf dominance

Team Sky have dismissed suggestions that their dominance of Saturday's opening time trial in the Tour de France was down to an illegal skinsuit. Team Sky riders made up four of the top eight on the 14km course around Dusseldorf, with Geraint Thomas taking the race leader's yellow jersey thanks to his first career Tour stage win. Thomas won the time trial by five seconds from BMC's Stefan Kung, with team-mates Vasil Kiryienka, Chris Froome and Michal Kwiatkowski also in the top eight on sodden roads in Dusseldorf. That led professor Frederic Grappe, performance director for the French FDJ team and a sports science expert, to claim after the stage that Sky's skinsuit had Vortex air bubbles woven into the fabric against UCI rules. Grappe claimed the material could have been worth "18 to 25 seconds" for each rider. "The rule is very clear. Any aerodynamic addition to the jersey is banned. Sky have clearly infringed," Grappe said. But Team Sky's sports director Nicolas Portal said Grappe had got it wrong and Portal was also backed by race commissaires. "We haven't cheated," he said. "Everything is legal and the equipment was validated by the race commission. "We wouldn't have taken the risk of losing the Tour from the first stage by cheating. Other teams use this material, but we're the ones being attacked. "We're not infringing the rules because the Vortex isn't added to the jersey, it's part of it - that's different." Race jury president Philippe Marien cleared Team Sky, saying the suit did not infringe rules. "On the basis of the regulations, I did not have a legal reason to prohibit this equipment," he said in comments reported by L'Equipe.

(Sky Sport)

Nezwaah proves Group One class in Pretty Polly

British challenger Nezwaah claimed Group One glory in the Pretty Polly Stakes at the Curragh.

Roger Varian's four-year-old was taking a significant step up in class having made a winning reappearance in a Listed event at Ayr in May and was a 13-2 shot in the hands of Andrea Atzeni. The admirable Creggs Pipes cut out the running for much of the 10-furlong showpiece but having set a furious pace, she predictably folded in the straight. Zhukova hit the front inside the final two furlongs, but Nezwaah ranged alongside soon after and the further she went, the better she looked. Rain Goddess came from out of the pack to try to lay down a late challenge, but Nezwaah was not for catching and was comfortably on top at the line. The big disappointment of the race was 15-8 favourite Journey, who beat only the fading Creggs Pipes home. Atzeni said: "She was very impressive and travelled beautifully. "She was a little bit slow into her stride. When I took the blindfold off she stood there for a couple of strides, but she travelled beautifully into the race and picked up really well. "I got quite a smooth run and just had to wait to get a gap. "Two days ago we didn't know if she was going to run or not because of the weather, but Roger felt the ground was going to be fine for her and she's proved him right." Varian said: "We're delighted with her and she's always promised a lot. "We thought we'd come here and have no excuses as the ground had dried out. We would have been a bit worried if the ground had been on the soft side, but it dried out nicely for her. "We've always thought a lot of her, thought she should run well today and we'd really learn how good she was. "I'm delighted she's won and I'm really grateful to Sheikh Ahmed (al Maktoum, owner) for being so patient with her. "I think there were four previous Group One winners in the race. You could probably name a small handful of very good fillies that aren't here, but still it was a good race on paper and none of these Group Ones are easy to win.

(Sky Sport)

Jason Holder's five-wicket haul sees West Indies beat India by 11 runs in Antigua

Captain Jason Holder produced a superb spell of bowling as the West Indies defended a paltry total to beat India by 11 runs in a low-scoring Antigua one-day international. Holder returned fine figures of 5-29 as India were bowled out for 178, their defeat keeping the series alive as the hosts now trail 2-1 going into the final match in Kingston on Thursday. Batting proved tough all day at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, although the West Indies innings started brightly with Evin Lewis and Kyle Hope putting on 57 before Hope (35) became one of three victims for Hardik Pandya (3-40). Lewis also fell for 35 while Hope's brother Shai made 25 and Roston Chase added 24, but they would prove to be the top four scorers for the West Indies as wickets tumbled with regularity, Kuldeep Yadav contributing the key wickets of Lewis and Chase. Umesh Yadav came back into the attack to run through the middle order, dismissing Jason Mohammed (20), Holder (11) and Rovman Powell (2), with their score of 189-9 looking well below-par at half-time.

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Afghans in Brussels stage protest against Pakistan

KABUL: The Afghans living in Brussels, the capital of Belgium, staged a rally in support of Afghan security forces and the government and against Pakistaninfo-icon.

Shan Pacha Shinwari, an organiser of the rally, told Pajhwok Afghan News the demonstration held in front of European Parliament was attended by dozens of Afghans.

He said a number of Afghans came from other European countries to Brussels to take part in the rally in support of peace and stability in Afghanistaninfo-icon.

Shinwari added the protestors chanted slogans against Pakistan and the terrorist groups enjoying safe havens in that country.

Participants reminded the worldinfo-icon, particularly the European Parliament, that terrorist hideouts in Pakistan not only disrupted security in Afghanistan, but also threatened the whole region, he said.

He alleged the terrorists trained in Pakistan were sent to Afghanistan for carrying out attacks. The rally told the international community to declare Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorists.

Shinwari said the protestors shared their demands and a resolution with the European Parliament.

The resolution letter, a copy of which was obtained by Pajhwok, urged the international community to impose political, economic and military sanctions on Pakistan and drag Pakistan's military to the International Court of Justice. The letter also asked NATO to continue supporting the Afghan security forces. The protestors called on the US to fully implement the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) it had signed with the Afghan government. **(Pajhwok)**

20 tonnes of chemicals used in heroin manufacture seized

HERAT CITY : Police have seized a container carrying 20 tonnes of chemicals used in heroin production in western Herat province, an official said on Monday. Provincial police chief, Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ayub Ansari, told Pajhwok Afghan News the chemicals were worth nearly $10 million. Seized in the fifth police district of the Herat City, the chemicals were being transferred to one of the southern provinces of the country. Called acid anhydride, the substance had been placed in a container, Ansari said, adding the driver was detained in connection with the smuggling. Initial investigations showed the smugglers wanted to use the chemicals for producing heroin, he said. **(Pajhwok)**

Helmand offensives

Khalili calls for comprehensive reforms in HPC

The newly-appointed High Peace Council(HPC) chief on Monday acknowledged the need for reforming panel whose strategies and policies required a comprehensive review.

Mohammad Karim Khalili issued the call at his introduction ceremony at the Presidential Palace. The ceremony was also attended by the president, chief executive officer (CEO), Kabul court judge and representatives of the international community.

"There is no doubt that a huge part of HPC's succession depends on reforms and changes in this organ, all the strategies and policies and performance of this council needs review," he said.

"I hope reforms will be introduced soon to ensure HPC efficiency, productivity and transparency. Transparency in financial matters, negotiations and agreements are the most important issues we would focus," Khalili added.

Stressing the importance of peace in the country, he said: "I call on all militant groups, particularly the Talibaninfo-icon, to join the peace process. Fight is no solution and we can rescue our nation through intra-Afghan talks."

He explained peace was not a game that was won or lost, but it was a victory both for the government and the militants. "The Quraninfo-icon says that both sides benefit from peace." The peace agreement with the Hezb-i-Islami. **(Pajhwok)**

54 militants killed, 27 others wounded

AT Monitoring Desk

KABUL: At least 54 Taliban insurgents were killed and 27 others received injuries during airstrikes and ground operations in southern Helmand province, local officials said on Monday.

Police spokesman Lt. Abdul Salam Afghan told Pajhwok Afghan News that the air and ground operations were carried out in Ainak, Loykalah, and Zhawar Sahib areas of Naw district on late Sunday night. According to him, 42 militants have been killed and 27 other were wounded. "Notorious commanders Haji Ahmad, Mullah Faizi, Sadiq and Haqbeen were among the dead." Four vehicles, 18 motorcycles, two machineguns and other ammunition belonging to the militants were also destroyed in the overnight offensive. Provincial governor spokesman, Omar Zwak, confirmed that Taliban suffered casualties in Nawa district, but he did not elaborate further.

Separately, 12 militants have been killed during an airstrike in Bolan area of the capital, Lashkargah. Sources said that security forces and civilian suffered no causalities in the Nawa and Bolan offensives.

However, Qari Yousaf Ahmadi, a Taliban spokesman in his tweeter account said that security forces suffered casualties in Greshk and Sangin districts late on Sunday night. It is worth mentioning that Nawa district had been the most secure district of Helmand in the past until it was overrun by the Taliban insurgents last year and is still under control of the militants.

Important Afghan-Pakistan trade route reopens

The Ghulam Khan trade route between Afghanistaninfo-icon and Pakistaninfo-icon, closed during a military offensive in the tribal region of North Waziristan, reopened on Monday, officials said. Pakistan Customs, Immigration Wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and other federal entities have put in the required arrangements for the resumption of trade activities through the route. However, the Angor Ada border crossing in South Waziristan Agency, Nawa Pass and Ghakhi Pass in Bajaur remain closed for all sorts of trade and business activities. Mohsin Dawar, a political activist based in North Waziristan, told a Pakistani newspaper that the Ghulam Khan route had reopened. He welcomed the decision as a positive tension-defusing move. **(Pajhwok)**

4 Daesh militants killed in Kunar drone strike

JALALABAD : A US drone strike killed four Daesh or Islamic State militants, two of them commanders, in the Watapur district of eastern Kunar province on Sunday afternoon, police said.

The drone strike took place in Sapari area of the district at about 4:30pm Sunday, killing four Daesh affiliates, Kunar police spokesman Faridullah Dehqan told Pajhwok Afghan News. A resident of the area, who declined to be named, confirmed the drone strike and said it had caused casualties to Daesh militants but he had no figures. **(Pajhwok)**

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