

## (1) Govt to Bring

management for the soldiers;

- Increasing the number of helicopters, warplanes such as Super Tucano, military jets and also mobilizing the Afghan Air Force;
  - Increasing and mobilizing Commando units;
  - Bringing reforms in supplying forces or activating a non-stop supply system for troops;
  - Empowering intelligence, investigative and engineering sectors.
- "The plan will thoroughly follow the supplying of 82 percent of our units as well as weapons and airplanes. The financial assistance of the plan will be provided by the United States," the Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish said. He said Washington has started a new approach to mobilize the Afghan security forces in their fight against terrorists.

"The incumbent administration and the Defense Ministry of the United States have decided to supply the Afghan forces in the fight against terrorism before it is too late," he added. Meanwhile, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, said at an event this week there is a need to continue supporting the Afghan security and defense forces. Reports indicate that an American delegation will visit Kabul in the near future to assess the security plan. The delegation will discuss with their Afghan partners the delivery of 200 new helicopters and airplanes to the Afghan Air Force. (Tolnews)

## (2) India,

two sides had extensive discussions on a variety of issues concerning bilateral trade and economic relations," the commerce ministry said in a statement.

The Indian delegation was led by Commerce Secretary Rita Teotia and the Afghan delegation was headed by Mohammad Qurban Haqio, Deputy Minister for Commerce. Both the countries also deliberated upon ways to increase trade of rough gemstones, increasing customs cooperation, besides opportunities for investments. (DNA)

## (3) NATO Urges

In the first working session today (Friday), the ministers will look at how to further strengthen the transatlantic bond, with higher and better defence spending and fairer burden-sharing across the alliance. "NATO's role in fighting terrorism and projecting stability will also be on the agenda. We will take stock of our work with partners, including our efforts in Iraq, where our training will help the Iraqi forces fight ISIL and our counter-IED courses will help save lives. (Pajhwok)

## (4) Drones Added

northeastern zone including Kunduz province.

"The number of these aircrafts is secret, they are controlled by the Defense Ministry's detective department," he said.

He said drones were completely owned by Afghans and many centers of militants had so far been destroyed in Imam Sahib district of Kunduz.

Kamawal said detective organs put the number militants operating in Kunduz at around 1,800 including foreigners. The fighters posed a great threat to Afghanistan and Central Asia, he said.

"Foreign fighters in Taliban ranks are from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Chechen and Northern Turkistan. They have created many problems for their own countries and Afghanistan, we want the world's powerful countries to help Afghanistan in eliminating these rebels," Kamawal said.

The Taliban had the plan to overrun at least five provinces including Kunduz last year, but they failed as Afghan forces strongly stood against them, he said.

He confirmed militants' infiltration in Afghan forces but said detective organs had launched their efforts to remove such figures.

About Russia's interference, he said Russia would meet the same fate once it suffered in the past if Moscow again interfered in the country's internal affairs.

"It is in no country's interest to interfere in our affairs, we will strongly respond to such attempts," he said. He ensured good coordination between security forces in Kunduz and said no one would be allowed to disrupt security of the province.

"Security situation is very good in Kunduz, we have taken special measures and past incidents would not recur, people should not worry about the situation," Kamawal added.

Kunduz has become one of the most unstable provinces of the country af-

ter it fell twice to rebel control in the past two years. (Pajhwok)

## (5) Russia Sees

type of invitation was given. It means that only representatives of the government will participate," he stated. Meanwhile, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said at an event this week that they would support an Afghan-owned peace process.

"We also support and we are in favor of a reconciliation process, but it has to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. As long as it is an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process, we support the initiative to find a peaceful solution to Afghanistan," Stoltenberg said.

Meanwhile, a number of Afghan analysts commented on the reasons behind Russia's interest in Afghanistan.

"Competition of powerful countries in Afghanistan has turned the country into a battlefield that causes Afghan people to be killed every day," said Farhad Majidi, a member of Wolesi Jirga, the Lower House of Parliament.

"As more countries get involved in the Afghanistan issue, it will get more complicated and it would not benefit Russia, but will increase instability in Afghanistan," said Nasrullah Stanikzai, a lecturer at Kabul University.

This comes after the Commander of the United States Central Command Gen. Josef Votel said at a session in the US Senate this week that Russia might provide support to the Taliban in order to be an influential party in Afghanistan. (Tolnews)

## (6) Peace Talks

primarily funded by the Congress, the ambassador said: "We are waiting for the new US administration to announce the outcome of its review." Based on that announcement, the diplomat added, Pakistan would like to engage with the United States one of the main players. The two sides needed to work together to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan, he remarked.

Chaudhry, who landed in Washington two weeks ago, said the perception prevailing in the US was lagging behind the realities in Pakistan -- a nationwide consensus against terrorism.

"We are now engaged in combing out terrorists who are hiding in urban centres," the ambassador said, noting all this had had an impact on the economy of Pakistan, which was growing at a much faster pace.

Chaudhry said there was a full consensus in Pakistan that peace in Afghanistan was an absolute imperative and instability flowed into it from across the border.

About a recent interview of President Ashraf Ghani, Chaudhry said the current security situation was not good in Afghanistan. Sixty percent of territory is under Afghan Government, 10 percent under the Taliban and 30 percent contested. "We are talking about a huge ungoverned space. That can be a magnet of terrorism in the world."

He believed there had to be a determined effort from Afghanistan also on the issue of border management. Border protection was a common responsibility, he observed, lamenting there had been no corresponding action from the Afghan government. "The present (Afghan) government has chosen to have a considerably hostile approach against Pakistan. We believe hostile rhetoric is not an answer. This is an oversimplification of problems in Afghanistan," he said, adding Pakistan treated Afghanistan as a sovereign country. (Pajhwok)

## (7) War on

last six months is that the concept has been proven and it is possible to tackle impunity," added Jeremy.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Alif Irfani, general director of ACJC, has said that the ACJC will tackle two major corruption cases, in the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI), once it has wrapped up an embezzlement case involving the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing.

"Corruption cases have its own complexities and its extensive dimensions, it is difficult to investigate it within one day, two days or one month," he said.

"Up to 70 corruption cases are under investigation by the anti-corruption justice center; of these, ten cases have been referred to the court. Ten primary courts, two appeal courts and two final court sessions have organized their sessions and at least 34 individuals, including some high level officials, have been sentenced."

But there are concerns that the ACJC is still facing challenges within its structure.

A source at the ACJC has said that

the concerned body is still short of at least 50 attorneys.

"The scale of corruption is quite large, but the resources which have been provided to the center by the government of Afghanistan is very low particularly financial and human resources," said Nasir Taimoori, researcher at Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is ranked among the top eight most corrupt countries in the world. However many believe that taking on high level officials accused of corruption will help to curb the trend. (Tolnews)

## (8) Ghani President

values. This is Indonesian strength that they want to learn," he noted.

According to Piay, Indonesian National Counterterrorism Agency has outlined a cooperation framework for carrying out de-radicalization efforts that include holding dialog and strengthening the role of ulemas.

President Ahmadzai, who is scheduled to meet President Joko Widodo on the first day of his visit, expects to gain an insight into the best practices followed in Indonesia in terms of peace building and reconciliation efforts to help resolve the long-term conflict in his country.

During his first visit to Jakarta and Southeast Asia, President Ahmadzai and his delegations will also discuss ways to improve trade cooperation between Indonesian and Afghan businessmen.

The total trade value between Indonesia and Afghanistan is actually small, at only US\$16 million in 2016.

As a landlocked country, Afghanistan faces a challenge of importing commodities and consumer goods. Hence, Indonesia must also rely on other countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, to export its products to Afghanistan.

Afghan business delegations and their Indonesian counterparts will attempt to push for direct interactions during the meeting since the main challenge for the two countries trade relations is banking transactions.

"Although Afghanistan is not included as a blacklisted country, several of its entities are. That is why we find it difficult to export our products directly to Afghanistan," Piay remarked.

On the second day of his state visit, President Ahmadzai also plans to hold a discussion with Indonesian ulemas from Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah at the Istiqlal Mosque.

Indonesia has been supporting Afghanistan through 47 programs to strengthen institutions and build the capacity of its human resources.

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry and Nahdlatul Ulama have also cooperated to build an Indonesian Islamic Center in Kabul, which includes a mosque, medical clinic, library, and gathering place.

"Initiated in 2010, the mosque has been operating since the end of 2016. Currently, we are planning to continue the phase two of construction for building a medical clinic that will focus on the health of mothers and children," Piay added. (Monitoring Desk)

## (9) Border Closure

initiate action on lists of wanted terrorists that would be exchanged this month.

The visiting delegates said they wanted a peaceful Afghanistan. They explained the border closure hurt both Afghanistan and Pakistan and might escalate tensions between the neighbours.

Part of a track 1.5/II dialogue series, the meetings were a joint initiative of the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) and the Women Peace and Security Organisation (WPSO) in Afghanistan.

Janjua said he had no doubt that Afghanistan was a brotherly nation passing through an unfortunate and difficult time. "Pakistan and Afghanistan have a common fate and future, but it's very unfortunate that we have started to misunderstand each other."

The NSA said: "Peace and stability of Afghanistan is crucial for both countries, I have no doubt that if Afghanistan is not peaceful, Pakistan cannot be peaceful and vice versa."

Janjua linked the worsening situation to the growth of different enemies, saying the solution lay in sitting together for dialogue. He claimed Pakistan was facing terrorism as it did not let terrorists use its soil against any other country.

Both countries should invest in winning peace rather than war, the advisor suggested, saying reconciliation was the key to addressing the Afghanistan issue and regional peace. (Pajhwok)

## (10) Retired Officials

the Pensions Office.

However, Finance Ministry spokesman Ajmal Hamid Abdul Rahimzai said the Pensions Office should spend their allocated budget and then make new suggestions to the ministry.

"They should spend the money; the Ministry of Finance will cooperate with them with the remaining part same as the past," the spokesman told TOLONews.

At least 120,000 officials are registered in the Pensions Office, according to the office. (Tolnews)

## (11) NUG Defends

would not have any meaning," said another civil society activist Zahra.

Government Defiant Over Election Reforms Agenda

Amid speculation over government's lack of commitment for election reforms, the office of CEO Abdullah Abdullah on Thursday reaffirmed the NUG's commitment to conduct the poll as scheduled.

According to the CEO's office, the NUG was prepared financially and technically to conduct the elections this solar year.

"We are completely prepared financially and in terms of security; the process will be implemented this year," said the CEO's deputy spokesman Jawed Faisal.

Civil society activists cast doubt over the NUG's election reform agenda after government announced it had entered into negotiations with its international partners to implement an e-voting system which is aimed at ensuring the credibility and legitimacy of elections which had been badly eroded during the 2014 presidential elections.

In addition to this, the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) in Afghanistan has said that it is encouraged by current efforts underway to hold elections.

"The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is encouraged by the strong partnership between the government of Afghanistan, Afghan electoral institutions, and the international community towards the holding of credible, transparent parliamentary and district council elections," UNAMA said in a statement on Thursday.

Speaking after a meeting on elections chaired by President Ashraf Ghani and attended by Abdullah, senior government officials and the international community representatives, Pernille Dahler Kardel, UNAMA's acting head, said: "We all recognize the need to do elections differently so that trust can be rebuilt in the electoral process. Tonight we reaffirmed our common vision of elections as a crucial step forward in the consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan, and the future stability of the country."

"At the meeting, partners expressed willingness to consider new technologies as a way to strengthen the credibility of future elections and enhance public trust in the process. They highlighted the importance of a thorough and inclusive process to assess the potential risks, benefits and costs as the country decides which approach to take to reach that goal," the statement read.

"All participants expressed their strong support for the electoral institutions of Afghanistan, and underlined the principles of independence and integrity in the work of the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission," the statement concluded. (Tolnews)

## (12) MoCI Partners

of core officers working for MoCI, as well as other trade-related ministries and implementing agencies.

The program will cover topics such as trade analysis, trade diplomacy, trade litigation and professional monitoring of compliance and effects of trade agreements.

In-class training will be followed up by 'on-the-job' coaching, providing targeted support to participating officers. By the end of the program, participants will be expected to have advanced their understanding of the professional skills in these areas.

Importantly, CWS and MoCI will work together to ensure that local ownership of the training program is secured, allowing for the program to be implemented locally following the involvement of CWS. This will contribute to the efforts by MoCI for establishing a Kabul-based trade and investment institute, ensuring the sustainability of the contribution made by the EU project.

Minister Haqio said: "The CWS trade related short and long-term trainings will enhance the knowledge and understanding of Ministry of Commerce and Industries staff and policy makers in areas such as: trade policy formulation, trade statistics, WTO agreements and related issues, export promo-

tion, trade facilitation, transit issues and investment.'

Abhijit Das, Head and Professor, CWS, said: "We eagerly look forward to working closely with MoCI Afghanistan in this unique initiative for enhancing trade-related capacities in Afghanistan. We hope to follow an extremely structured approach, with real-life problem solving orientation, in the training programs."

A central component of the Advancing Afghan Trade project is to build local capacity on trade policy that stakeholders (in particular MoCI) are better placed to formulate trade policies, ultimately enhancing export competitiveness. The building of technical capacities will be further augmented by stakeholder consultations on key trade policy and negotiation issues.

The Advancing Afghan Trade project is a project funded by the European Union and is being implemented by ITC under the leadership of the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI).

The intervention is recognition of ongoing efforts by the Afghan government to use trade as a driver of economic growth, regional cooperation and stability. Afghanistan acceded to the WTO in July 2016 and has placed trade and regional economic cooperation at the heart of its development strategy. Its first action after acceding to the WTO was to ratify the body's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

To ensure sustainability, local ownership and long-term impact of the project, ITC will be working with a range of partners from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, academia and civil-society organizations based in Afghanistan. ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Global Goals for Sustainable Development. (Wadsam)

## (13) Former

in Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant-General Tim Keating conceding this week that civilians might have died.

Mapp wrote in a blog Thursday that he had been in Afghanistan at the time of the raid, which was led by New Zealand's Special Air Service (SAS) and involved Afghan forces and U.S. air support.

The raid was targeting insurgents in Baghlan province, who were believed to be responsible for attacking New Zealand troops and killing an officer.

"I had been fully briefed on the plan on the morning before it took place. Based on the briefing, and on the advice of the military professionals, I recommended that it proceed," wrote Mapp.

He said he had no doubt that New Zealand soldiers acted to the highest ethical standards, but he knew that "the operation had not achieved its stated aims of arresting or otherwise dealing with the people who had been identified as leading and organizing Taliban operations."

"I knew this because I was formally briefed on that fact at the time. I also knew that other people had been killed," wrote Mapp.

"But it became clear later that it was also possible there were other casualties. In particular, the death of a 3-year-old girl."

While the law of armed conflict accepted that civilian casualties might occur in military operations, Mapp asked, "but for New Zealand, is that the end of the matter? Do we hold ourselves to a higher standard?"

"For me, it is not enough to say there might have been civilian casualties. As a nation we owe it to ourselves to find out, to the extent reasonably possible, if civilian casualties did occur, and if they did, to properly acknowledge that." (Xinhua)

## (14) 'Deal' Helps

said the incompetency of the three officials was evident and they should not have been granted the trust vote.

Another lawmaker Mohammad Arif Rahmani said the MPs who had reposed confidence in the security leaders would be equally responsible under the law and Shariah for the bloodshed of Afghans.

Rahmani warned of moving the court against the trio if they failed to reform themselves.

"Whenever we go for a vote of no confidence, we confront problems. Why people are not happy with the parliament? Why a lawmaker feels

shame to introduce self, why we don't display the MP card on our vehicles? Because people hold a negative view about us," remarked Naheed Farid, a female MP from western Heart province. (Pajhwok)

## (15) Islamabad

and Afghanistan remained an effective forum. But the Quadrilateral Coordination Group members have not met for a year.

He hastened to stress the importance of bilateral contacts between Pakistan and Afghanistan, recalling a recent meeting in London that helped reopen border crossings earlier in the month.

The spokesman said: "The London meeting between Foreign Affairs Advisor Sartaj Aziz and National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar underscored the importance of a bilateral cooperation mechanism to address counterterrorism and border management issues in an amicable manner." (Pajhwok)

## (16) EU to

Representative Tomio Shichiri said in addition to farmers the program will also benefit MAIL's employees as it would help enhance their capacity.

According to reports, the EU has till date injected USD 3bn in the past decade, of which USD 500mn has been spent in the agriculture sector.

The agriculture sector of Afghanistan accounts for 40% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Majority of Afghans are engaged in farming. Agriculture is critical to Afghanistan's food security and is a driver of economic growth. (Wadsam)

## (17) 48 Khost

with hostel facility in Khost city and they returned to home towns from the two-year program," he said.

Mangal said the graduates would help reduce the shortage of midwives and nurses at district health-care centers.

Khadija Safi, midwifery and nursing program director at NCA, said they planned to extend the program to other parts of the country.

"These midwives and nurses not only work in hospitals, but they work in the society, they will be appointed in clinics that provide primary healthcare services," she said.

Hanifa, who graduated from midwifery course, said they might not face problems if they were provided proper work environment in their own districts. (Pajhwok)

## (18) Afghan Return

(our certificates) have not been recognized in the Afghanistan government system. We cannot receive education certificates that other Afghans can. I do not know what the reason is," said one teacher.

According to the ministry of refugees and repatriation, currently 130,000 registered and between 400,000 and 500,000 unregistered Afghan refugees are living in Pakistan.

Last year more than 600,000 refugees returned from Pakistan, but forced expulsion was the most serious problem they faced. (Tolnews)

## (19) District Attorneys

Safi said the attorneys were vulnerable to illegal commanders in the absence of proper work places.

A three-member delegation has visited all 27 districts of Badakhshan to identify land for construction of offices for prosecutors, according to Safi.

"Currently we have land plots in 14 districts for such buildings and we have sent documents of the land to the Attorney General Office who promised action," he said/ Khalil Rahman Khalili, a prosecutor from Yawan district, said he used buildings of other government departments to do his job.

"We don't have an office in Yawan district, we carry documents of cases wherever we go despite security threats," he said. (Pajhwok)

## (20) Poppy-Eradication

Maiwand district's administrative head Haji Obaidullah said he would implement the poppy eradication strategy based on the resources at his disposal. The district borders several parts of Helmand province.

Helmand is known as the drug capital of Afghanistan, producing the largest part of the world's total opium yield. Obaidullah acknowledged proceeds from poppy cultivation in far-flung areas of Maiwand went to Taliban and other insurgent groups, as well as drug smugglers.

Asked why poppies were cultivated in government-controlled areas, the district chief replied that most people grew the illegal plants because of high opium prices. He urged the government to give people alternative livelihood opportunities and resolve the irrigation problems to wean them away from poppy cultivation to other cash crops. (Pajhwok)