

(1) Saudi Arabia...

The officials said they believe the kingdom can succeed where others have failed due to its religious clout as the birthplace of Islam—and historical ties with the powerful insurgent group. But even Saudi Arabia will have significant obstacles to overcome.

The U.S. National Security Council is spearheading this new four-nation effort, a NSC spokesperson said this week. The group also includes the United Arab Emirates, a close Saudi ally that previously deployed troops to Afghanistan as part of the U.S.-led coalition fighting there.

"On peace and reconciliation, Saudi Arabia is best placed to help Afghanistan," Afghan national security adviser Hanif Atmar said during a visit to Washington last week. "We are extremely optimistic that this level of cooperation will actually lead to concrete results for peace and reconciliation."

President Donald Trump's outgoing national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, hosted the first, hour-long meeting between the four countries on March 23. Mr. Atmar, Saudi and Emirati officials also attended. Mr. Atmar said he also met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is in the US on an official visit.

An NSC spokesperson confirmed the details of the meeting and said the four countries discussed ways to "cooperate to support the Afghan government" and "work together to promote a peaceful settlement."

During the meeting, the four nations agreed to create a working group that would meet regularly to decide on a road map to peace in Afghanistan, officials said.

The new initiative could at a later stage be widened to include other countries, the official said. Officials who participated said the U.A.E. or Saudi Arabia could host future talks.

Saudi Arabia has a long history of involvement in Afghanistan. In the 1980s, it backed an American effort against the Soviet occupation of the country by supplying fighters, weapons and training to insurgent Mujahideen rebels.

Saudi Arabia was also among few to recognize the Taliban government as legitimate, though it later withdrew its support after al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden — a Saudi citizen—directed the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks from Afghan soil.

And the kingdom has acted as an interlocutor between the Afghan government and rebels fighting against it before—playing a role in the 2016 reconciliation between Hizb-E-Islami with the Western-backed Kabul government—according to a person close to the negotiations.

Mr. Atmar said he believes the Taliban are open to Saudi Arabia's mediation. He also said Saudi Arabia could help by applying pressure on the Taliban's longtime patron, Pakistan, where many senior members of the militant groups are based.

But major obstacles to a comprehensive peace settlement remain, notably regional rivalries and major divisions within the Taliban insurgency.

Powerful elements of the Taliban have in recent years grown close to two of the kingdom's biggest rivals: Iran and Qatar. (Pajhwok)

(2) Ghani's Offer...

recognized that the terror threat, particularly from Daesh, was not yet over and concerted efforts were required to eradicate the menace from the volatile region. (Pajhwok)

(3) President Assures ...

their support for government mega uplift projects and their plans.

Presidential Advisor Asadullah Wafa shared latest information about Ghazni incident and hailed cooperation of common people.

President directed the rural rehabilitation and development ministry official to chalk out plan which ensure the equal distribution of water and take steps for its implementation.

The president assured the visiting delegation from Ghazni to resolve their problems. He said: "Brotherhood, cooperation and assistance embodied in your views, Afghanistan is the share home of all of us."

The president tasked authorities to evaluate the Afghan Local Police force in Ghazni province and identify every local armed person. He said if misuse from state resources was proved the perpetrators should be dealt according to the law.

"I got your message regarding administrative change in Ghazni, give some time and I will implement your suggestion in proper time."

Regarding the hiring of qualified people from Ghazni, the president ordered the formation of a proper plan in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(4) Can't Take...

and international organizations are part of the process for framing the policy.

The Islamic State (IS), also known as Daesh, posed a real threat to Pakistan, the NACTA coordinator said, claiming the militant outfit had a significant presence in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(5) In Uruzgan...

in Tirinkot but she could not go to their homes as they may inform her family members. Abdul Ahad Bahai, head of the Afghanistan

Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) for Uruzgan, said they were aware that Balanastihad had no place to live.

Due to the non-existence of safe homes in the city, he argued, Balanastihad no shelter. "She stayed two nights at my house as well," the AIHRC official said, adding the issue had been discussed with government officials.

She said the problem, which had been repeatedly shared with Provincial Council members, remained unresolved. District Prosecutor Qazi Abdul Razzaq confirmed a woman named Balnastihad filed a petition some days back. He added security officials had been tasked with summoning the accused, who were yet to be presented.

The case is currently under investigation, but worried that she may be harmed until the issue is settled.

Women Affairs Director Najiba Mehrzad called the non-existence of safe homes a major issue. She said women fleeing their homes due to violence had no place to live in.

She said the problem had been discussed with the authorities concerned at a string of meetings. The ministry has also been informed.

Governor Asadullah Saeed acknowledged there was no safe home in Uruzgan and women facing violence lived in public residences.

He said the subject had been discussed with different officials and a strategy would be evolved soon to resolve the problem. (Pajhwok)

(6) Mafia Groups...

a policeman before his age reaches 18 years.

On the same day, he was sent to a battle in southern Ghazni province where he lost his life to Taliban bullets on the first night.

Conditions for recruitment in police ranks

Article 5 of police law says a person should be above 18 years of age when recruited as an officer or corporal. The article says a person being recruited should be strong morally and physically.

According to Mol's recruitment rules, persons graduated from high school could be recruited as an officer or a corporal.

The rules say applicants should be recruited through an entry exam and should be committed to a long term police job and be obedient of all the country's laws.

Guarantor Police recruitment rules require a new officer to be guaranteed by at least two other persons already in police.

The documents show Baloch was guaranteed by two police officials named Bahadur son of Abdul Qayum and Quraishullah son of Mohammad Sadiq.

The guarantee letter shows 2nd Lt. Bahadur serves in Nawa district of southern Helmand province. However, local officials in Nawa district told Pajhwok Afghan News that no one by name Bahadur in that police rank had worked with them.

But they said a police constable Bahadur had worked with them but he was killed by Taliban two years back.

The second guarantor of Baloch is Quraishullah, but there is no information about his identity and job details in the guarantee letter. Quraishullah writes in the letter: "I guarantee 'Erfanullah son of Baloch' in the occupation," Erfanullah is not son of Baloch but his father and Quraishullah has guaranteed Erfanullah instead of his son.

Forgery in Tazkira (identity card) Those who recruited Baloch had altered his ID card as well as written his age two years older in his Tazkira.

Baloch reached 18 years of age in 1396 solar year but the year had been changed in his ID card from 1396 to 1394, making him 20 years old.

But Pajhwok has obtained Baloch's original ID card from the Population Office in Watapur district. The population office director of the district has signed Baloch's ID card that shows he turns 18 in 1396 solar year.

Baloch's one-day duty

The available documents show Baloch was recruited on January 28 and sent to a security checkpoint in Jamal Kala village of Andar district of Ghazni province the same day.

When it was night, the Taliban attacked their checkpoint and killed Baloch and several other policemen.

Baloch was recruited against 12,000 afghanis monthly salary. An official letter lists the policemen killed in Zankhan district of Ghazni within 72 hours of Baloch's killing in Taliban attacks.

They include Mahrudin, resident of Badakhshan, Idrees from Achin district of Nangarhar, brothers Mohammad Aslam and Mohammad Omar from Sar-i-Pul province and Mir Hamza from Logar province

Amanullah son of Mobin Shah from Achin district of Nangarhar was jointly sent to Andar district with Baloch and he too was killed. Erfanullah, father of Baloch seeks justice

Erfanullah told Pajhwok that his son had been missing from home for some days before he was found dead.

"I was on a travel, my son was missing for a few days, when I returned home, I started searching for him. Next day I received a call from a friend who told me my son's body is laying in the police hospital in Kabul," he said.

The father said two days had passed since his death but the government did not inform him until his body was found in hospital.

Erfanullah added after the funeral prayer of son, he launched efforts to know how his son was entered police ranks and how he was killed.

"I don't know who for the first time encouraged Baloch, my son lived in Kunar and did not see Nangarhar, but he surfaced as policeman in Ghazni. I was surprised to the entire episode," he said.

Erfanullah said he went to Ghazni province with his brother to investigate the incident happened with Baloch.

"We talked to all security officials in Ghazni, but nobody responded to us in a positive manner. An individual wearing simple clothes in front of Police Headquarters told me that May Allah accept his martyrdom," he said.

"When I heard him saying this, I quickly understood that things gone wrong due to this person, I grabbed him tightly from neck told him you killed my son, I will not let you go," he added.

That person managed to free himself and on his way back said: "Yes, I killed your son, do whatever you can."

He said he applied to judicial organs in this regard but there was no feedback.

Erfanullah added: "Mafia groups had been settled within the Ministry of Interior (MoI), new youth entered police ranks without any military training and dispatched to the first line of fire and killed there, but salaries and other privileges were received by mafia groups."

Baloch father said: "He was in seventh class, he was 16-year-old, I am surprised how he was absorbed in police ranks.

He asked President Ghani to stop these mafia groups from the MoI otherwise more youth would lose their identity.

This not only Baloch who had become victim of such case many other youth had become victims such cases.

Another 15-year-old youth from Kabul's Gagdalah area in Sarobi district become the victim of similar case.

We forced to fight with empty stomach: Ahmad Fahim

Ahmad Fahim, not a real name, has provided information to Pajhwok Afghan News about the incident happened to him.

He said Khan Mohammad, not a real name, who is their villager and worked in Kandahar City, told him that here was need for 15 security guards in the Aino Mena Township.

"We were fed up with unemployment in the village an it looked good to have decent job. We rushed to the district headquarters in Sarobai and created Identity Cards (ID) and came to Kabul on the next morning," he said. He added in the morning they traveled to Kandahar where they faced with Rahimullah, not a real name, one of the police commanders.

He said Rahimullah said that all the formalities would be completed in two days then you can serve as security guards in Aino Mena.

Rahimullah took them to Shahra Kandak and kept them there in a container type room.

"We doubted our being in container and telephoned Khan Mohammad." He came talked to Rahimullah who assured him to finish the formalities.

He added they spent 10-days there and were even not allowed to go out and buy a telephone card.

"On 11th day they talked about going to Arghandab where to check a check-post. We moved at around 1:00pm and reached late. We were 15 people and handed over six old weapons with a magazine of bullets. The Taliban attacked army check-point and we were told to fight. We told them we never fought they warned us to death and pressed over launching the firefight."

"We had no option but to fight, after an hour went to Chanatour district of Uruzgan where we were handed over the charge of a check-post," he said.

In order to escape from this situation, five people manage to flee the area who later caught in Kandahar and were beaten badly and dispatched them back to Uruzgan.

Fahim said: "Noorullah, not a real name, was commanding the fight who said: 'All of you have to die no one will be left alive.'"

"We had some Salaam Network connections and managed to call our families we asked them to release us from this situation," he added.

Fahim said on the next night The Taliban attacked them Commander Norullah and his friends injured in the attack and dispatched to the hospital in Kandahar.

"See the sign of bullet in my back neck; it is from the bullet which hit me in Chinartuo check-post.

He said: "I don't know who contacted our elders, but they came after me at Kandahar hospital and transfer me to Kabul."

From their group, he said Noorullah kept six people and said they had to go to the battle and should die there.

Tribal elder of Sarobi district: A tribal elder from Jagdalak locality who wished to go unnamed said, 15 men from their locality had been deceived and transferred to the battle field.

"The telephoned me yield and said they had been plunged in such crisis to I contacted other elders," he said.

He said he contacted Afghan Mellat Party Head Anwar-ul-Haq Ahadi, Former Kunduz Governor Anwar Jagdalak, Lawmaker Mo-

hammad Akbar Stanikzai, Kandahar officials at National Security Council and other officials in this case.

"We dispatched a group to Kandahar who talked to Police Chief Gen. Razeq and released these boys being kept by Shahra Commander Noorullah," he said.

These young men were recovered in bad situation some were beaten some got injured in firefight.

"This is a huge conspiracy hatched by mafia groups in order to get the salary, privileges and other financial profits themselves and fill their pockets," he added.

He asked to the president to prevent the mafia groups otherwise the country would face immense issues.

Cemetery for the unclaimed There is a graveyard in the Spin Boldak border town of Kandahar province for unclaimed bodies. Mostly young police officers are buried in this cemetery.

A security official, who did not want to be named, said the graveyard was called the cemetery of the dead without heir.

"A few years ago, when I came here, there were several old graves here. But now more than a thousand graves of young police personnel killed by Taliban insurgents can be seen in this cemetery.

"Some youth want to go to Iran or other countries through Pakistan. When arrested by Pakistan police, they are deported through Spin Boldak, where police officials fill out forms for them and recruit them into the police force," he added.

According to the official, the youngsters do not know how to fight against the enemy. More often than not, they are killed within a month of recruitment and laid to rest there.

On the other hand, residents, tribal leaders and security official in the district say the graveyard is known as the "Cemetery of Martyrs". Most of those buried are those who have lost their lives in explosions and fighting against the Taliban.

Haji Abdul Shakoor, an elderly person, told Pajhwok the Cemetery of Martyrs—located in the limits of district bazaar—had 800 to 900 graves. He said that residents laid to rest relatives killed in explosions and conflict.

Haji Niaz Mohammad Kakozai, a public representative and resident of Spin Boldak, called the graveyard a common cemetery.

But a border police official, speaking on condition of anonymity, scorned the claim that the plight of Afghan youth deported from Pakistan was exploited and recruited into police.

While scotching such speculation as wild and groundless, the official insisted the police recruitment process transparent and voluntary. Recruitment based on conditions

In response to the claims, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Sharif Amin, recruitment director, explained police personnel appointed after biometric screenings and intelligence clearance. He said each recruit was required to complete eight to 12 weeks of training. "We don't have police officers under the age of 18 years."

Reminded that many youth were induced into going to the frontline with higher salaries and other privileges, he said: "We give ikramia to relatives of the martyrs after endorsement from their unit, division or brigade."

Regarding Baloch's case, Amin said he had definitely undergone training before being appointed as a police officer. "We approved the guarantees after they were confirmed by relevant agencies."

But the agency which confirmed the presence of Baloch's guarantors is not mention in the documents.

"We had seen policemen embracing martyrdom within an hour of joining the force, it is not something new", replied MoI recruitment commander Brig. Gen. Amin when asked how Baloch was killed the same day he joined the force.

About tampering with Baloch's national identity card, Amin said such details about volunteers joining police came from the concerned population registration offices.

On the presence of a mafia group, Brig. Gen. Amin said no one could be picked from a street against one's wish and recruited in police because there were many legal formalities to be met.

"No one from his pocket can give salary, weapons and uniform," said the commander, who said the case of Baloch and the Jakkalak area would be investigated by relevant organizations and he would like to see the results. Cases like Baloch's are clear examples of human trafficking in person.

Recruiting child soldiers is crime: Saleemi Mohammad Hassan Saleemi, an official of the High Commission on Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, told Pajhwok Afghan News that President Ashraf Ghani last year appointed a high level delegation for investigating of the menace of trafficking in persons.

He said the delegation found a number of underage children who had been recruited in the National Directorate of security (NDS) and Afghan National Police and particularly local police.

He said militants also did not respect children's rights and minors could be seen in their ranks.

Saleemi added security officials had promised no more recruitment of children in their ranks. Article 3 of the Human Trafficking and Immi-

grant Trafficking Law says "to recruit, transfer, transport, harbor or receive a person for the purpose of exploitation, using the means of deceit is human trafficking."

The article adds using children for illicit benefit by bringing under control is also human trafficking.

Article 10 of the Human Trafficking and Immigrant Trafficking Law says if the person trafficked is a boy or a girl the perpetrator should be sentenced to eight years in jail. (Pajhwok)

(7) Six Helmand...

strike until the Taliban accept their demands for a ceasefire.

"Our hunger strike will continue until our demands of a ceasefire are accepted by Taliban and government," said Najib, a protester. Some Kabul residents meanwhile announced their support to the peace rally in the province.

"We announce our support to the movement of protesters in Helmand. We ask the Taliban to accept the ceasefire call and let the Helmand youth break their hunger strike," said Edris Stanekzai, a resident of Kabul.

On Monday, the peace convoy drove through the city of Lashkargah, brandishing posters carrying messages of peace and later in the day embarked on a sit-in protest near the Ayub Khan Stadium — which was the scene of last weekend's bombing.

However, on Friday, Helmand officials said they would agree to a ceasefire with the Taliban. (Tolo news)

(8) Political Instability...

use television to further negativity about the initiative [CPEC] every day, the minister said, adding that "who knows whose agenda they are furthering."

Ahsan further said that people trusted PML-N and voted it to power in order to bring development in the country, and added that political stability was needed to achieve the real objectives of CPEC.

The interior minister went on to say that it was important to learn lessons from successes of China as it did not let anyone compromise its political stability.

He also said that the youth are the biggest asset of Pakistan and the government had put in place special arrangements to provide them employment. He added that millions of jobs would be created owing to CPEC project, which would enable them to exhibit their skills in their respective fields.

Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan had rapidly emerged as a top growing economy in the world in the recent years, and the world was admitting it.

He said that the coal deposits in Thar were equal to the oil stocks of Saudi Arabia and Iran. "We have wasted 70 years to tap coal but now because of CPEC, coal stocks are being exhausted to cater to the needs," he added.

"Gwadar Port would help achieve the target through trade with Central Asia Republics and other regions," the minister added.

Later, Ahsan distributed shields among the participants including University of Management and Technology (UMT) President Hassan Sohail Murad, DG Abid Sherwani, Dr Saleem Janjua, Dr Hasnain Javed, chief organiser Muzammil Zia, Sarfraz Ahmed and co-organiser Sania Rabbani from PITAC among others. (Agencies)

(9) Af-Pak Cultural...

food stalls have been arranged. At inaugural ceremony, speakers said programs like the cultural festival were the need of the hour.

Senior Pashto singer Haroon Bacha performed on the occasion and kept the audience spell-bound. PNCA Director General Syed Jamal Shah also attended the inaugural ceremony. (Pajhwok)

(10) Transport Ministry's ...

The 65 percent surge happens at time when some returns are said to be wasted due to the lack of an electronic revenue collection system in place.

However, the transport minister, Tahmasi, said the ministry was striving to resolve the issue by introducing short and long-term plans. (Pajhwok)

(11) MPs Blame ...

Ibrahimi, criticized the Independent Election Commission officials for not appearing in parliament.

"We see their (election commissions officials') absence from the house as a bid to delay the elections; it does not show their independence," Ibrahimi said.

"The president (Ashraf Ghani) and his team have ordered the election commission to make sure most incumbent MPs not be given the chance to be elected in the upcoming elections, except for a few people who are acceptable to them," deputy speaker of the house Humayun Humayun claimed. (Tolo news)

(12) 2 ANA Soldiers...

the casualties.

Khawaja Yahya Alawi, spokesman for the 205th Atal Military Corps, confirmed the incident. However, he gave no casualty figures.

But a credible source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said two ANA soldiers were killed and three others wounded. The injured were evacuated to a military hospital. (Pajhwok)