

### (1) Danish Introduces...

the Minister of Higher Education; Nasrin Oryakhail as the Minister of Labors and Social Affairs and Ali Ahmad Osmani as the Minister of Water and Energy. While introducing the ministerial nominees, Danish emphasized that the government respected the decision of the House of Representatives.

Touching on the issue of 31 Zabul abductees, Danish stressed that such an act would not divide the people of Afghanistan.

"We are taking every steps for the release of Zabul hostages," Danish assured.

He also strongly condemned killing of Farkhunda, and promised to bring the perpetrators to justice. "Whoever neglected Farkhunda's murder or neglect her case will be prosecuted and removed from their positions," Danish warned. (Tolonews)

### (2) Govt. Income...

billion Afghanis have come to the treasury in the first quarter of this year which shows 9.9 percent increase to that of the first quarter of last year.

Officials said the first quarter shows an increase by four percent in the government financial income and the target of 120.4 billion Afghanis that is set for this year can be easily accomplished.

According to the Ministry of Finance if the trend continues to maintain the government financial income will cross the limit set for this year. (KP)

### (3) Pentagon Failed ...

involved in Afghanistan's affairs. "This [report] shows that powerful internal and external hands are involved in growing narcotics in the country," said Chaman Shah Etemadi, member of counter-narcotics commission of the House of Representatives.

"About 50 countries are, somehow, present in Afghanistan but the drugs production is still growing. Even these drugs are being smuggled to these countries. Why don't they take any serious step?" another lawmaker Massoud Karokhi criticized.

According to SIGAR report, the Congress since 2002 has set aside \$104 billion specifically for Afghanistan's reconstruction, of which, \$66 billion went to Pentagon. (Tolonews)

### (4) Kandahar ...

meeting with fruit traders of Kandahar province in the capital Kabul on Wednesday.

On behalf of traders, Haji Sardar Mohammad discussed the problems being faced by traders of Kandahar.

The traders vehemently criticized an agreement inked between specific businessmen and Kandahar officials. The businesspersons demanded the president to compensate their losses and bring reforms to Kandahar local governance.

After hearing traders' complaints, the president said that fruit markets were vital for the development of business affairs of Afghanistan. The government would try to provide needed facilities to Kandahar businessmen, he pledged.

Ghani said that a delegation would be assigned the task to visit Kandahar in the near future and investigate the problems the traders were facing with. (Pajhwok)

### (5) CSTO Working ...

Nalbaldyan, national coordinators on Afghanistan, plenipotentiary representatives and experts from the CSTO member nations will deliver statement at the meeting.

The Working Group on Afghanistan under the CSTO Foreign Ministers' Council was created to coordinate efforts to strengthen border security in Central Asia. The Working Group holds regular meetings to compare notes on the development of the situation.

On the same day, the CSTO delegation will visit the Russian military base headquarters in Dushanbe.

The Russian military base deployed in Tajikistan is Russia's largest non-naval military facility outside the country. It was officially opened in Tajikistan in 2004 under a previous agreement, which was signed in 1993, and hosts Russia's largest military contingent deployed abroad.

A total of some 7,000 Russian troops are stationed at three military facilities collectively known as the 201st military base - in Dushanbe, Qurghon Teppa, some 100 kilometers from Dushanbe, and Kulob, about 200 kilometers southwest of Dushanbe. (Asia-Plus)

### (6) Afghanistan among ...

was ranked fifth and Pakistan was listed as the world's eighth most dangerous country.

Ukraine was listed as the world's ninth most dangerous country. (RF/ERL)

### (7) Mourning Relatives...

the release of the hostages. With well over a month gone by since the 31 travelers were abducted by masked men along the Kabul-Kandahar highway, the Afghan government continues to stall amid assurances that it is doing everything in its power to ensure their release. Yet even just the general location of where the hostages are being held has proven elusive.

The family of the two brothers who were kidnapped arrived in Kabul this week after trekking on foot from Waras district, one of the remotest districts of central Bamiyan province.

"We have hiked for three days and come to Kabul so that someone can address our concerns and rescue us from this tragedy," the two boys' uncle Sarwar told TOLONews.

Syed Reza and Ali Gawhar's mother, Masooma, has struggled to cope with the crisis facing her family. "I am now a dead body, and don't recognize day or night; I don't have any other option except to cry and scream," she said on Wednesday.

Adding further to their troubles, the family of the two abducted boys lacks the ability to support themselves in the absence of two crucial breadwinners. "We don't have a place to stay here and spend our nights inside the mosques and shops and do not have enough money to stay in a hotel," another uncle of the hostages Syed Jawad said.

Despite it all, government officials have maintained the same - increasingly dubious - line that efforts are underway to release the hostages. "We will use all options and available resources to ensure the release of our countrymen who have been taken hostage," President Ashraf Ghani's Second VP Sarwar Danish said on Wednesday. (Tolonews)

### (8) Afghan Students

praised the efforts of their parents as well as the instructors of Afghan-Turk High School in Kandahar

Murad Taseen, principle of Afghan-Turk High School in Kandahar said that he is planning to organize an academic competition among the students of Oruzgan, Zabul, Helmand and Kandahar province.

He added that the outstanding students will then go to Kabul and take part in the mass academic competition where intelligent students from all provinces will attend.

A specific date for the mass academic competition is not yet given. (KP)

### (9) Parliamentary

new house should take place one or two month before the end of June 21.

The second voice president said the reformation of election commission would take one year time and therefore conducting parliamentary election was not possible before electoral reforms.

After a long delay, President Ashraf Ghani issued a decree on March 21 regarding formation of a commission which would put forward reforms to the electoral system.

The Chief Executive Office has said the nomination of Shukria Barakzai as head of election reform commission was not acceptable to them and urged the government to consider another person to head the commission. (Pajhwok)

### (10) Electoral Reform...

President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah to form the unity government after the almost six-month lengthy presidential election which was allegedly marred by huge fraud.

The 15-member commission chaired by female lawmaker Shukria Barakzai was announced only hours before the departure of Ghani and Abdullah to the United States; however, the commission is yet to hold their maiden meeting, something the commentators link to the odds between the Afghan leaders.

According to the analysts, the government has set up a symbolic commission, and there is no strong will to reform the election system and the electoral bodies.

The government officials, however, still emphasize on their commitments, saying electoral reform was the main responsibility of the National Unity Government (NUG).

"Electoral reform is the main job and the national and legal responsibility of the government," second Vice President Sarwar Danish said while introducing the remaining 16 cabinet nominees to the parliament. "We hope to have transparent and fraud-free elections in the future."

But Mohammad Abdoh, the head of legal and judicial commission of the House of Representatives, told the Monday's session that the Independent Election Commission (IEC) officials have made secret dealings with some MPs in order to avoid amendments to election law, which they fear, could remove them from their positions.

In returns, the IEC officials have promised the lawmakers to ensure their victory in the coming parliamentary elections, according to Abdoh. (Tolonews)

### (11) Student from ...

has chosen Kabul Medical University and said with this field he could better serve the people.

Mohammdi has one brother and four sisters. His father is a street vendor where he sells plastic sandals. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Ghazni Elders...

the road between Kabul and western Herat province in the Shahjoy district of southern Zabul province.

The kidnapers are believed to be members of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group. However, so far no group has come forward to claim responsibility for the kidnapping.

A 25-member group of tribal elders from Ghazni travelled to Zabul province on March 14 to hold talks with the kidnapers, but they returned without achieving anything.

Jami, who led the delegation to Zabul, said they had many times held talks with gunmen aligned to the IS group and tribal elders had repeatedly visited Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's Balochistan province, to hold talks with the Taliban's Quetta Council.

"But it remains unclear what the kidnapers want in return for releasing the hostages," said Jami.

A tribal elder, who was part of the delegation to Zabul, told Pajhwok Afghan News on condition of anonymity that the kidnapers were not independent in their decisions. "They told us to go and hold talks with the Quetta council, we did so, but the council members told us that the government should first release their 12 men detained in Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz and other provinces."

The elder said they were told the 12 detainees were Chechen and Uzbek nationals and leaders of their groups.

He said the Quetta Council members told the elders that first their demands should be met, but they did not fully explain their demands.

Meanwhile, Ghazni provincial council chief Khaliqdad Akbari accused the Pakistan Army and intelligence of kidnapping the passengers in order to fuel sectarian strife in Afghanistan.

However, Ghazni deputy governor Mohammad Ali Ahmadi said no talks had taken place with the kidnapers. "All reports about talks with the kidnapers are wrong and all efforts by tribal elders to secure their release have borne no fruits."

The official said it remained unknown who had kidnapped the passengers and what they demanded in return to free them.

Taliban's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid once again rejected the group's involvement in the kid-

napping. He told Pajhwok Afghan News their comrades had launched an investigation into the abduction. Mujahid also rejected if the Taliban had any council in Quetta.

Afghan security forces had carried out operations in Zabul's Khaki-Afghan and Arghandab districts, killing a number of foreign militants, but could not find any clue to the whereabouts of the hostages. Earlier, some officials and residents of Ghazni had said some of the kidnapped persons had been brought to Nawa, Gilan and Ab Band districts of the province from Zabul.

The kidnapped individuals, hailing from Ghazni, belong to the minority Hazara tribe and they were returning from Iran when kidnapped in Zabul. (Pajhwok)

### (13) US Embassy

selection process, according to the statement, is transparent, entirely merit based, and managed by American staff at the US Embassy. (Pajhwok)

### (14) First Digital ...

in the digital standard DVB-T2, allowing for the broadcast of many more TV channels than the previous analogue standard. Additionally, DVB-T2 allows for the reception of full high-definition (HD) quality signals.

With a multi-million dollar investment in infrastructure and personnel, ABS has launched the service initially in Kabul, to be followed shortly by subsequent service launches in 20 provincial capitals within the next three years.

In order to access the service, TV viewers need only buy a low-cost, light-weight Oqaab DVB-T2 receiver at designated retail outlets, and follow an easy installation process to set up the receiver in their homes. (Pajhwok)

### (15) Hajj Ministry...

TOLONews are as follows: Sharaf Baghlani, Mohammad Yaqoub, Rabiullah, Hizbullah, Mahmood, Ghulam Mohammad, Abdul Fatah, Mohammad Tahir, Sherzai, Ishaq, Naqibullah, Baharuddin, Mohammad Hakim, Abdul Khaliq, Shafiqullah, Mahmood, Ghulam Mohamad, Abdul Fatah, Mohammad Zahir, Sherzai, Ishaq, Naqibullah, Jan Aziz, Ikramuddin, Jawad and Abdul Baqi are said to be among the main perpetrators. The Shrine's custodian Gheyasuddin and the servant Zainuddin are also among the main suspects currently under police custody.

A number of women who had come to attend shrine's Wednesday's rituals strongly denounced Farkhunda's killing, and demanded the government to execute the killers in public.

"The mullah [who provoked the people to kill Farkhunda] should be executed in front of this shrine," a female Kabul resident Aziza said.

The second Vice President Sarwar Danish while introducing the remaining cabinet picks to the Parliament called Farkhunda's killing shameful to the government and people of Afghanistan.

He promised with a strong commitment to bring the perpetrators to justice. (Tolonews)

### (16) Afghan Mining ...

said at her opening speech at the gathering "You well-educated and enthusiastic students are the most valuable resource of this country. You are also the key to helping access what is perhaps the second most valuable resource of Afghanistan, its mineral riches. I call upon you to put your skills into the service of your country."

Ahmad Javid Sadaat, Deputy Minister of the MoMP said at the gathering "We are seriously lacking the skills needed in the mining sector associated with the economics of the industry, marketing, legal and regulatory issues, contract management, safety issues or good governance"

"Afghanistan needs to improve its human capital through post-graduate studies or short term training," said Osman Baburi the Acting Minister of MoHE.

The program is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office as part of Afghan-German Cooperation. There are currently 15 professors and lecturers from four provinces and staff from the MoMP pursuing a two-year master degree course in

Germany who will return to their previous posts after receiving degrees. (KP)

### (17) DCA Officers ...

heroin were found on the spot. The lab owner was engaged in smuggling drugs into Tajikistan and Pakistan.

Tajik counternarcotics agency has posted liaison officers in northern Afghanistan since 2004 and have been successfully conducted joint operations with the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). (Agencies)

### (18) School Teacher ...

succumbed to his wounds in hospital. He said the teacher came under attack in the district's Hafiz Koda area. (Pajhwok)

### (19) 2 Kidnapped ...

Tajik insurgents operated in Badakhshan. The existence of foreign militants posed a huge threat to the province's security, he said.

In the same district, a three-member group of insurgents, headed by its commander Pir Mohammad, joined the reconciliation process and surrendered weapons, Adeb said.

Earlier, local officials had said Qari Eidi, a Taliban's shadow governor and ten others, have joined the peace process in Tagab district of Badakhshan. (Pajhwok)

### (20) Militants Threaten ...

continuing their jobs, he added. On the other hand, Kapisa acting Governor Gen. Mehrabuddin Safi said that maybe some people had been threatened but added that it was not a serious problem.

He added that security forces were deployed to all unrest areas of Kapisa to deal with all challenges. Provincial police chief Brig. Gen. Khawaja Faqir Ahmad Sadiqi said they had plans to conduct fresh operations in insecure areas of the province to flush out foreign and local rebels. (Pajhwok)

### (21) Policemen among...

Faryabi said Ayatullah, the commander of the check post, was killed mysteriously last night. He said the reason of his killing was unclear.

But a provincial council member Abdul Manan said that Ayatullah's death was internal dispute among policemen.

He said Ayatullah was patrolling in the area when he was shot dead by his colleagues.

Faryab forensic director of public health department also confirmed the police commander had six gun shots on his body.

Elsewhere, a civilian was killed and two others wounded in a roadside bombing in Maqur district of Badghis province.

In another incident, a tribal elder was killed by unknown gunmen in Jawand district of Badghis early this morning. (Pajhwok)

### (22) Worldwide ...

people to death were Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Ohio and Oklahoma.

The overall number of global executions last year dropped almost 22 per cent from 2013.

"The numbers speak for themselves: The death penalty is becoming a thing of the past, Amnesty International' secretary-general, Salil Shetty, said.

But Shetty condemned the use of death sentences as a way to fight crime or "terrorism."

Nigeria announced 659 death sentences, mostly for murder and armed robbery, but a military court in December sentenced to death 54 soldiers who had been accused of refusing to join operations against the extremist group Boko Haram.

The soldiers testified that they had not been properly equipped to go after Boko Haram, which has since pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group.

Nigeria's higher number of death sentences, up from 141 the year before, was also a result of more complete data offered by authorities.

Egypt announced at least 509 death sentences last year, many of them in the mass trials that have been held since the ouster of elected President Mohammed Morsi in 2013.

The practice has brought international criticism. In one case in December, 188 people were sen-

tenced to death in the killing of 11 police officers.

In the United States, at least 72 death sentences were announced last year.

Amnesty International also expressed concern about countries that resumed the practice of executions, including Pakistan, which reinstated the death penalty in December after a Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attack on an army-run school killed 150 people, most of them children in Peshawar.

At least seven people were executed in Pakistan in 2014 while 231 were sentenced to death.

While the government of India scheduled several executions in 2014, none were carried out. At least 64 new death sentences were awarded in the country.

"An alarming number of countries that used the death penalty in 2014 did so in response to real or perceived threats to state security and public safety posed by terrorism, crime or internal stability," the new report said.

Other countries resuming executions in 2014 were Jordan, Singapore, Egypt, Belarus, the United Arab Emirates and Equatorial Guinea, the report said.

Indonesia said it would resume executions for drug-related crimes, straining ties in particular with Australia and Brazil, which both have citizens on death row there.

At the end of last year, more than 19,000 people around the world were estimated to be living under death sentences. (AP)

### (23) Iran Calls ...

Iran supports UN moves in Syria Elsewhere in his comments, the Iranian officials also touched upon the issue of Syria, saying that the UN must also play a more active role in stopping the continued supply of weapons to terrorist groups in the Arab country.

He also reaffirmed the Islamic Republic's support for a political solution to the four-year crisis in Syria.

The UN chief, in turn, appreciated Iran for playing a constructive role in the Middle East and called for Tehran's increased help to the political process in the region.

Ban also underscored the UN's role in helping the process of peace and stability in the region, saying that finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria and fighting terrorism tops the world body's agenda in the Middle East. (Press TV)

### (24) Nuclear Deal ...

Representatives from Iran and the P5+1 group of world powers - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany - along with senior officials of the European Union continue holding successive rounds of talks in the Swiss city of Lausanne to narrow the existing differences on Tehran's nuclear activities.

Araqchi's comments come as Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and US Secretary of State held fresh talks on Iran's nuclear file in Lausanne on Wednesday. According to Araqchi, a joint statement, declaring the progress the two sides have made over the past days in Lausanne, would be issued later on Wednesday.

The seasoned diplomat said Iran has no rush for reaching a flawed conclusion in the ongoing talks, saying, "Time is important to us, but the content of the negotiations and our demands are more important." The two sides have actually missed a March 31 deadline for reaching a mutual understanding on whether they could continue further talks on Tehran's nuclear program.

The potential agreement paves the way for a much broader deal by end of June which guarantees peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities in return for a promise by international powers to lift unfair sanctions on the country. (Press TV)

### (25) World Needs ...

tional media, Netanyahu said that Iran views Israel's destruction as non-negotiable, "but evidently giving Iran's murderous regime a clear path to the bomb is negotiable. This is unconscionable."

Netanyahu said a better deal would "significantly roll back Iran's nuclear infrastructure" and link a lifting of restrictions on its nuclear program to "a change in Iran's behavior." (AP)