

(1) Steps Being ...

with the president and demanded creation of chamber of industry to resolve their challenges. The statement added that the president thanked them for their investments in Afghanistan. "I assure you the government will do everything it can for the improvement of investment sectors in the country," Ghani said. The president also assured the chamber of industry would be established based on the industrialists' suggestions after the minister for commerce won trust vote. Ghani stressed improvement in quality of domestic products and said that clothes, shoes and all food items should be produced inside the country. He added all contracts being signed with companies would be transparent and shared with the people. The president said he directed the ministry of finance to reform the custom tariff annually to encourage investment in the country. (Pajhwok)

(2) No Decision...

[OIC] was asked [in the meeting] to take urgent steps for a peaceful solution," Mohaqiq said in an exclusive interview with TOLONews.

His remarks came after the Presidential Palace issued a statement that supported Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen crises, something that has sparked criticisms by the civil society activists.

Furthermore, Mohaqiq noted that threats of attacks on Haramain Sharifain, Saudi Arabia's sacred cities of Mecca and Medina, had no links to Yemen war. "Haramain Sharifain is sacred to all Muslims and attack on them is not acceptable at all," Mohaqiq said. "[But] it has no links to the war in Yemen."

Mohaqiq called Saudi Arabia's strikes on Yemen a violation of international laws, and asked for immediate stop of these attacks.

"Innocent people are being killed and injured in these bombardments, and this is unacceptable to us," Mohaqiq declared. A number of activists, meanwhile, criticized the government's support of Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen and called it against the national interests of Afghanistan.

"It brings us to have a role in deterioration of Yemen's situations, and it will be recorded as an unforgivable mistake in the history," female activist Munira Yousufzada criticized.

The violence has been spreading across Yemen as the alleged Iran-backed Houthi fighters have seized control of parts of the country which caused the President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to take shelter in Saudi Arabia.

A coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia has been targeting the Houthi fighters over the past week.

According to the analysts, the crisis in Yemen is a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. (Tolonews)

(3) Stabilization of ...

documents on Afghan issue adopted by the CSTO and the work plan of the Working Group on Afghanistan under the CSTO Foreign Ministers' Council for the second half of 2015 were discussed.

Following the meeting, a corresponding protocol was signed. 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. (Agencies)

(4) Mullah Omar...

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah and Taliban representatives, the other main factors of the peace talks are Pakistan's Army Chief of Staff General Raheel Sharif, China and The United States.

NBC News adds that General Raheel Sharif has convinced Americans, Afghans and skeptics at home that Pakistan - long

blamed for supporting militant groups in Afghanistan - is now serious in eradicating insurgency.

NBC News also writes that if a peace deal is reached with Taliban, parties within the militant group who are opposing the current peace process may pledge allegiance to Islamic State. (KP)

(5) Mismanagement by ...

provinces were being administered by acting governors. Bashir Ahmad Tah Yanj, a lawmaker from northwestern Faryab, expressed concerns by saying that security situation went deteriorated and management by acting governors had led to massive corruption in provinces. Another Wolesi Jirga member Ghulam Hussain Nasari also voiced same concerns over the prolonged governance of administrative officials. He said some armed men with the support of acting governors had caused law and order situation. He urged members of the house to give trust vote to introduce ministers as soon as possible in order to put an end to the governance of acting officials. Currently, 17 ministries were being administered by the acting ministers.

A lawmaker from Kapisa province said armed men who had the support of governor had killed and wounded six of a family close to the police headquarters.

Iqbal Safi said due to poor performance of provincial government insecurity was spreading by each passing day. The issue, he said had been discussed with the president but to no avail. Ibrahim said the work of acting governors for more than two months was against established. He said Afghans wanted bolstered security and order. He urged the president to name responsible officials to replace the acting governors. (Pajhwok)

(6) \$2 mln Worth...

the event.

The products at the trade show represented a variety of different sectors and sub-sectors of the economy, presenting a wide spectrum of Afghan-made alternatives to the foreign products that currently dominate the market. The products being showcased at the event include, but are not limited to, construction materials, food items, home appliances, home decorations, medical equipment, carpets and detergents.

Members of the business community, independent economic analysts and government officials all agree that boosting domestic production and industrial growth is key to sustainable economic development in Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(7) Islamic State...

they were still alive.

The Hazaras were abducted from two vehicles on a major road in Zabul province by men said by officials at the time to be wearing black clothing and black masks. The armed kidnappers separated the men and boys from women, children and non-Hazaras in the vehicles.

Hazara people, who account for as much as 25 percent of Afghanistan's population, are mainly Shiite. The group has been targeted by the Taliban and other Sunni extremists, who view Shites as apostates. The predominantly ethnic Pashtun and Sunni Taliban persecuted the Hazara minority during their 1996-2001 rule, when they imposed a harsh version of Islamic law on the country.

The presence in Afghanistan of the Islamic State group, which controls about a third of Iraq and Syria and is known for its extreme violence, is widely acknowledged but officials have been reluctant to confirm the involvement of the group in the Hazara kidnappings. (AP)

(8) 'High-Powered ...

Addressing a press conference, Kamal Nasar Asoli, Khost representative in Wolesi Jirga, said: "Naeemi is not only involved in administrative corruption but also has links with terrorists." He warned they would launch series of protests until Naeemi

was removed from his post as governor.

Condemning the blast in strongest possible words, a statement from the governor office said that it was a "national tragedy which left a number of persons dead and wounded.

The statement categorically rejected involvement of the acting governor in the tragic incident. It said that such kind of unfounded allegations would only benefit anti-state elements. It suggested that a delegation should be sent to Khost to probe the tragedy and make public those involved in the blast. The governor office, it said in advance shared intelligence report regarding a looming threat of blast.

Intelligence agencies and other government officials already informed leaders of the protest before launching the demonstration and they totally ignored the alert. (Pajhwok)

(9) Nangarhar...

Akbar Zada, a literature student at the Nangarhar University, said that the students would get Dr. Taher Inayat, director in Nangarhar University, a few teachers had a meeting and did not represent the majority of lecturers. He said he would not permit anyone to boycott during official timing of the university. (Pajhwok)

(10) Farkhanda's ...

killing. Police officials were also fired for not dealing with protesters with an iron hand that led to the murder of Farkhanda. A huge demonstration attended by male and female was organized by Afghanistan Unity Party (AUP) and demanded a thorough probe into her killing. Aashiq Ullah Gharzai, the AUP chief in eastern zone, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "More than one hundred males and females participated in the protest and sought justice for Farkhanda. Weda, a female protester, said: "We demand the government

to launch serious efforts in Farkhanda's case. The perpetrators should be given exemplary punishment."

Earlier, President Ashraf Ghani met family members of Farkhanda and ensured complete support to bring the culprits to justice. (Pajhwok)

(11) Sherpao Reaffirms...

mark a major departure from previous policy stances in the neighboring country. Meanwhile, Afghan Senate leader Fazel Hadi Muslimyar has continuously maintained that the Pakistani government is disingenuous in its verbal commitments to peace. Pointing to a long history of hopeful words not backed by action, Muslimyar, along with many others, has continued to cast doubt on the optimism that initially emerged when national unity government showed signs of progress in the peace process.

However, Sherpao, who also serves as the head of a key Pakistani political party (Qomi Watan Party), told TOLONews that Afghan leaders should present evidence of duplicity on the part of Pakistani before they continue with their allegations. "Pakistan is very serious and there is no doubt in that, we want peace in the region and for that the reconciliation process has to start, these talks have to start, and that is what Pakistan is trying to do," Sherpao said. "You cant give deadlines in this, that they are going to start in this or that date," he added.

Some Afghan political commentators have expressed hope regarding the renewed peace process. They have indicated the discourse and actions surrounding the new initiative are markedly different from those that took place under Hamid Karzai. That said, all agree that the success or failure of talks largely hinges on Pakistan's intentions. "As I compare to the past, yes, but the important point is that Pakistan's actions should reflect their words," political analyst Mohammad Dawood Rawosh said. (Tolonews)

(12) AIPA Receives ...

Access for Investing in the De-

velopment of Afghanistan (FAIDA) seeks to build a sustainable, diverse, and inclusive Afghan financial sector that can generate and sustain quality employment, and meet the needs of businesses of all sizes. The \$108 million program began in February 2011 and ends in February 2016.

FAIDA activities are helping Afghan state and financial institutions develop a legal framework to foster economic growth and generate employment opportunities. The project also is providing business development training to female entrepreneurs to access financing to grow their businesses. (Wadsam)

(13) MD-530 ...

Fighting Season 2015 as compared to last fighting season, which only employed five Mi-35s.

Pentagon awarded MD Helicopters Inc. a maximum \$44.2 million firm-fixed-price contract last year to develop and provide an armament package for the MD-530F helicopters that were already supplied to the Afghan Air Force.

Around 17 of the Afghan Air Force's MD-530F helicopter will be upgraded under the contract which is expected to be completed early next year.

MD-530F helicopters are designed for high altitude and/or hot weather operations, where thinner air costs helicopters some of their lift. (KP)

(14) Kunduz Blast...

in critical condition.

Separately, 20 passengers suffered casualties in an accident in Maidan Wardak province.

Governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani said the accident took place when a mini bus veered off the road in Oni Kotal area of Jalrez district around 5:00 am this morning.

He said nine passengers including four women and two children died and 11 others injured in the accident.

The wounded were shifted to Kabul hospitals but two of them were in critical condition, he added. Road accidents usually happen as a result of reckless driving and uneven road condition of Kabul-Kandahar Highway. (Pajhwok)

(15) EU to Benefit ...

in which the sides said they had reached understanding over solutions to move ahead toward drafting a comprehensive nuclear agreement before 30 June. A key point of Lausanne statement was a promise to lift a series of economic sanctions on Iran approved by the Security Council. Only a day after the developments in Lausanne, signs emerged in western media that companies the world would soon see an influx of companies to Iran whose market had been shut down to global businesses as the result of years of US-engineered sanctions.

The Guardian quoted analysts and industrialists as saying that the most eager to set foot in Iran are oil and gas companies followed by auto majors and other enterprises.

The return of oil and gas companies to Iran could mean that a country which has long been a heavyweight in global oil markets would soon increase supplies thus triggering fears that prices could plunge further in an already saturated market.

The prices of oil have plunged by some 60 percent from the rates in June 2014. Many believe that several factors are to blame the most important of which are excessive supplies caused by production from US shale oil projects as well as sluggish market demand. (Press TV)

(16) Obama Seeks...

past UN Security Council sanction resolutions.

Iran and the six powers are set to work even harder over the next three months to flesh out the framework deal with details to make for a final and comprehensive accord by the end of June.

"This is a long-term deal, with strict limits on Iran's program for more than a decade and unprecedented transparency measures that will last for 20 years

or more," Obama said.

With the U.S. and Cuba put on track to a normalized relationship in December, Obama is setting his sights on a nuclear deal with Iran as another foreign policy legacy as he is to leave office in January 2017.

He is facing critics at home and abroad, who say a deal will not prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb without dismantling its nuclear program altogether, a goal the Obama administration terms impossible.

Some U.S. lawmakers are working on bills that ask for a congressional review of any deal with Iran and threaten more sanctions against the Islamic republic should talks fail to produce a final deal at the end of June.

Obama and his top aides are reaching out to congressional leaders as well as those of Israel and Gulf countries, who are wary of a deal with Iran.

"Here in the United States, I expect a robust debate," Obama said in his weekly address. "We'll keep Congress and the American people fully briefed on the substance of the deal."

He reiterated, however, a negotiated "comprehensive, long-term deal" is the best option for addressing the disputes over Iran's nuclear program.

The other two options available now -- bombing Iran's nuclear facilities or abandoning negotiations and imposing tougher sanctions -- will only start another war in the Middle East and allow Iran to make more progress in its nuclear program, Obama stressed. (Xinhua)

(17) Saudi-Led...

advanced toward the city's airport.

Hadamawt, which had been mostly peaceful as the crisis in Sanaa and Aden was building up, has a long stretch of the border with Saudi Arabia on one side and lies on the Arabian Sea on the other, making it strategically significant. It also houses key oil companies and close to the Mukalla port are fuel tanks that feed three major provinces.

Hadamawt's governor, Adel Ba-hamed, described the fall of Mukalla as part of a "scenario aimed at dragging the province and its residents" into the chaos across Yemen.

"The changes are terrifying," said activist Mohammed al-Sharafi, adding he worries al-Qaida's presence will bring the Houthis to fight the militants, which in turn could invite Saudi-led airstrikes.

To the west of Mukalla, coalition airstrikes continued to target Shiite rebels advancing on the southern port city of Aden, Yemen's major hub and the embattled Hadi's last seat of power before he fled to Saudi Arabia.

Coalition planes airdropped weapons to fighters battling the Houthis in Aden early Friday, the first such airdrop since the strikes began nine days ago.

Saudi Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri, the coalition spokesman, told reporters in Riyadh that the fighters in Aden have managed to "change the situation on the ground." He said the coalition was giving them "logistical support."

Street battles intensified in several Aden districts Friday, including the vicinity of a major weapons depot, according to the military officials. They said that weapons were dropped above the city's port.

Local pro-Hadi fighters, who are poorly armed, have been trying to keep the Houthis from overrunning Aden and the surrounding province and have often complained of lack of weapons and leadership. Ali Hussein, one of the fighters, told The Associated Press over the phone that there is "near absence of leadership and coordination."

Overnight airstrikes focused on Aden's rebel-held airport, and at least 30 rebels and Saleh's forces were killed in the strikes, according to medical officials.

In the town of al-Mualla, also in Aden province, pro-Hadi fighters fought with the rebels on Friday, leaving at least eight dead on both sides, according to medical officials there. All officials

spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

To the north of Aden, the rebels and Saleh loyalists shelled the city of Dhale and its surroundings for more than two hours on Friday, according to activist Ahmed Harmal. They area is a gateway to Aden.

Coalition planes also bombed the rebel-held municipal council building in Sanaa, killing three guards and wounding 32 civilians, the Interior Ministry said Friday.

The U.N. under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs, Valerie Amos, said Thursday that the violence in Yemen has killed an estimated 519 people in the past two weeks, 90 of them children, and that tens of thousands are fleeing their homes.

According to Abdel-Nasser al-Wali, a top medical official in Aden, 150 civilians were killed in Aden alone since March 28. The official said two Red Crescent ambulance workers were also killed by the rebels, who seized their vehicles.

Late Friday, the Saudi Interior Ministry said two border guards on the kingdom's frontier with Yemen were killed in a cross-border shootout, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. It was the second reported fatal shooting along the border since the airstrikes started; a Saudi border guard was reported killed earlier this week in a similar incident.

The coalition also continued to strike an island in the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait, the southern entrance to the Red Sea, officials said. Rami Tawfiq, a relief worker, said the airstrikes forced some 250 of the islanders, mostly fishermen, to flee across the sea toward Djibouti. The Houthis captured the island early Thursday.

Saudi and Egyptian warships have been deployed to Bab al-Mandab, which provides the only access to Egypt's Suez Canal from the Arabian Sea and is a vital passage for shipping between Europe and Asia. (AP)

(18) Russia's Lavrov...

clashes between pro-Russia forces and the Ukrainian army since Kiev launched military operations in April last year to crush pro-Russia protests there.

According to the UN, more than 6,000 people have been killed since the conflict started in the region a year ago. (Press TV)

(19) Oxfam Assails...

Hoang Anh Gia Lai.

In another case, the IFC provided \$30 million in loans and equity to a company which finances infrastructure projects in Latin America, the Corporacion Interamericana para el Financiamiento de Infraestructura.

CIFI then financed a dam project in Guatemala of Spanish-controlled Hidro Santa Cruz which sparked strong opposition from local residents, escalating into violent confrontations, government mistreatment and ultimately, in 2012, an official state of emergency in the region.

Oxfam said it agreed that funding for the private sector by the IFC was important for development. But the IFC use of intermediaries was giving up the World Bank's key role of establishing social and environmental safeguards in projects.

"Even more worrying, because the IFC is increasing its exposure in fragile states by 50 percent, is the potential for calamitous results if done under this risky new model in its current form," Oxfam said.

In response, the IFC said via a spokesman that it was reviewing Oxfam's allegations and the specific cases cited and "take its findings very seriously."

It said it remains committed to working through financial intermediaries "to reach more entrepreneurs and small businesses than we can on our own, to reach the 2.5 billion people and 200 million businesses that don't have access to finance."

However, it said, "We know that we can always do better. These cases show we must continually improve our approach to supervision." (AFP)