

### (1) Abdullah Pledges ...

has already raised the issue with President Ashraf Ghani and pointed out that there is the need for a presidential decree in order to implement the program.

Despite 13 cabinet meetings already having been held under the chairmanship of CEO Abdullah Abdullah since the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG), most meetings have been attended by acting ministers.

During last week's cabinet meeting Minister of Petroleum and Mines Daoud Shah Saba raised concerns over the limited powers given to minister and called on the CEO to assess the situation.

Following the formation of the NUG, Ghani issued a decree to allow former deputy minister to act as ministers. This also included the appointment of 34 acting governors for provinces. However, this decree prevents acting ministers from signing contracts and appointments. Eight acting ministers were however recently approved by parliament.

On this issue, Abdullah said that the eight ministers now have full authority in their positions. He said: "I have already discussed the topic with the President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. A presidential decree will be issued if needed. All institutions in Afghanistan particularly the Independent Administrative Affairs and Civil Service Commission will have complete authority and will be allowed to undertake appointments, selection and deal with financial affairs," Abdullah said.

Meanwhile a number of analysts have said that the continued situation of acting ministers, and acting governors, with limited authority has led to a state of uncertainty in the country.

"The prevailing situation indicates the extent of corruption in the country and the current situation has led to a state of anarchy and lawlessness. In most of the government ministries, services are provided to the people in exchange for money," head of the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee MEC Mohammad Yasin Osmani said on Monday.

In addition, Abdullah has confirmed that the job of acting governors and acting ministers has exposed problems in the country. But analysts have warned that the continuation of the issue could topple the government.

"Initially, the government made a number of commitments to the people, but it has failed to form its cabinet within six months. I believe that many of the promises made by NUG leaders weren't more than slogans," Ghazni MP Mohammad Ali Ekhlaiqi said.

"Provinces and the ministries are administered by the acting chiefs, if the same situation continues, we will not recognize this government as legitimate," Kabul MP Abdul Qadir Zazai said.

Meanwhile economic commentators say the recession has been particularly bad over the past four months. Analysts also say that the controversy around the presidential elections has raised a number of concerns and shown that government clearly needs to focus on national issues. (Tolonews)

### (2) New Governors ...

governors, lack of salaries and mismanagement in provinces had led to increased insecurity.

She said 56 district chiefs, who were appointed during former president Hamid Karzai's government, had been without salaries over the past few months.

"The government itself is causing insecurity and criminal activities. The lack of attention on the part of acting officials has created concerns," Jinda said, asking the government to replace acting officials with new ones.

Her colleague from Farah province, Mohammad Sarwar Osmani, also said managing departments by acting officials had created problems.

"The so-called Islamic State (IS), which receives strong financial and military support, is a clear example of official negligence in Farah," Osmani said.

He said the presence of the IS group in Farah also threatened western Herat province and neighbouring Iran.

Haji Zahir Qadir, the first deputy speaker and a lawmaker from eastern Nangarhar province, held similar views and said, "Nangarhar was a peaceful province, but now if an official wants to visit its districts, he/she needs a hundred security guards or must travel by air."

He added the recent wave of insecurity was intolerable for the Afghans. However, Qadir said President

Ashraf Ghani had assured him he would introduce new governors to replace acting ones within the next 15 days.

He urged lawmakers to work for serving the national interest and strengthening national unity. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Hostage Families...

"These kids and family members are waiting for their friends to come. Government must release them otherwise we will continue our protest," said Masooma, the mother of one of the hostages.

"If government had done something, they would have been released by now, government has not done anything, they must be released," says Ghulam Hassan, the uncle of one of the hostages.

Civil society members have said that the lack of government efforts to release the hostages has concerned them, forcing them to pitch tents near the palace.

"The lack of government attention in addressing the (rising) incidents of kidnapping has resulted in further kidnappings and increasing insecurity on the highways of Afghanistan," says Rahim Jami, a civil society member.

"When serious actions are not taken by government, it is obvious that insurgents will take advantage. We are afraid that kidnapping might turn into a culture," says Munera Yusufzada, a member of a justice seeking group for the release of hostages.

The CEO claims however that government has done a lot to secure their release and that it will continue its efforts.

"The reason we have not shared the details of our efforts with the public is for the sake of safety of the hostages. If we had shared details, or do so in future, it will have unwanted consequences," says Abdullah.

It has been over a month and half since the kidnapping of 31 bus passengers in Zabul province. In the last two weeks, a further four bus passengers from Sholgara district of Balkh province and nine other bus passengers from Balkhab district of Sarepol province have been kidnapped. There has been no news on their whereabouts to date.

However, Muhammad Mohaqeq, second deputy of the CEO, has said that Daesh is kidnapping passengers in order to foster disunity among ethnic groups. (Tolonews)

### (4) Trying to Get ...

passengers were kidnapped on Feb 24 by masked gunmen in the Shahjib district of Zabul province and their fate remains unknown despite a major operation to rescue them.

Presiding over a meeting of the Council of Ministers, Abdullah said the power utility had assured the restoration of power supply to Kabul until tomorrow.

Heavy snowfall and storm had damaged cables carrying electricity from neighbouring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through cables traversing the snow-bound Salang tunnel.

Some civil society groups have erected tents in Kabul and have been asking the government to rescue the 31 passengers.

Abdullah said that the government had taken strict measures to rescue the passengers but he could not share information with the public due to the issue's sensitivity.

"We assure that rescuing the passengers is our top priority, we are trying to get them freed unharmed. The government has not neglected the issue," he said, adding that people had the right to raise their voices because information about progress in rescuing the hostages had not been shared with them.

The CEO also said Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirkat (DABS) had assured it would restore power supply to Kabul until tomorrow if there was no snowfall in Salang pass.

The heavy snowfall and avalanches uprooted three pylons and damaged several others carrying 300 megawatts of electricity from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan about a month ago.

Abdullah also condemned the recent suicide attack on a protest rally in the capital of southeastern Khost province, in which 22 people were killed and 60 others wounded.

He said the Presidential Palace on Sunday appointed a powerful delegation to investigate the incident. (Pajhwok)

### (5) FEFA Survey ...

all the lawmakers underlined the need for tangible reforms in ballot system.

It explained reforms should help conducting transparent election, strengthening of political parties, explaining punishment for those committing rigging in the ballot, controlling of financial assistance of individuals and candidates, specification

of powers and responsibilities of election commission chiefs and secretary. In addition, the inclusion of two foreigners in Independent Electoral Complaint Commission (IECC) as an observers and identification of election commission employees' salaries and privileges in election law were other areas stressed upon in the survey for reforms of electoral system.

Around 69 percent of Wolesi Jirga members who were interviewed announced to take part in parliamentary election, but expressed their concern over irregularities in election commissions, influence of powerful individuals and lack of ballot papers on Election Day.

The survey urged for effective role of civil society, government, lawmakers and electoral bodies in the Wolesi Jirga election.

Some 42 percent people demanded flexibility in nomination conditions, while 54 percent others demanded the election commissions should announce final results of election in a joint press conference.

The survey showed that 64 percent of lawmakers demanded members of election commissions to get vote of confidence from Wolesi Jirga, while 50 percent had asked the Presidential Palace to sack members of electoral commissions and officials of greater credibility.

Mohammad Yousuf Rashid, FEFA executive director, said the survey said the interviewees favoured reforms the electoral system and early preparation for parliamentary polls. He said reforms of election commission were a gigantic task and the incumbent government had a good opportunity to rehabilitate the voting system in the country.

He said the government was not serious to tackle some issues including reforms in election commission.

Earlier, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani had issued a decree for constituting a long-awaited electoral reform commission that met a key condition in the power-sharing agreement.

The panel would suggest reforms in the electoral system, ways of improving democratic norms, restoring public trust in government institutions and respect for rule of law, the Presidential Palace had said.

In a statement the palace said, commission would be led by Wolesi Jirga member Shukria Barakzai while Sadiquallah Tawhidi has been appointed as deputy head of the commission.

Ali Amiri, Abdul Qadir Qaryab, Bashir Farooq, Dr. Mohammad Amin Ahmadi, Faizullah Zaki, Karwan Kakar, Sabrina Saqib, Gul Ahmad Madadzai and Azizullah Rafiye, Justice Ministry representative Abdul Majid Ghanizada, UN official Tadamichi Yamoto are its members. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Japan to Help ...

sources, Japan will provide 468 million yen (\$3.88 million) in aid to Tajikistan, which shares a long border with Afghanistan, during fiscal 2015, which started on April 1, through the United Nations Development Program.

The aid money will be used primarily to help Tajikistan build or refurbish immigration facilities and procure X-ray inspection equipment to prevent arms from being smuggled into the country.

Japan plans to provide similar aid to other Central Asian countries, including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Islamic State group is gaining influence in Afghanistan, while al-Qaida, an international terrorist organization, remains a serious threat there. (Agencies)

### (7) 2 of the Abducted ...

The kidnappers 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. It is said that these abducted passengers were being held in Khak-e-Jabar and Arghandab districts.

Atta Jaan Haq bayan, Zabul provincial council head, told Pajhwok Afghan News the Khak-e-Jabar residents have informed him that one of the abducted passengers has died a natural death, while another one has been shot dead by his captors. He did not give more details.

Zabul police chief, however, said they were not aware of any such developments regarding the status of the kidnapped persons.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah also said on Monday that efforts were ongoing to secure the safe release of the passengers. (Pajhwok)

### (8) No Difference...

Afghanistan has the same stance," he continued, adding his country wanted the crisis to be settled through peaceful channels.

A 10 countries Saudi Arabia-led co-

alition launched airstrikes a week ago targeting positions of Iran-backed Houthis rebels in Yemen.

The Presidential Palace last Wednesday issued a statement saying the government of Afghanistan had announced backing Saudi Arabia on Yemen dispute.

Saudi Arabia foreign ministry has announced airstrikes would not stop until Mansoor Hadi returns back to his presidency. After the Houthis rebels took control of the capital Sana'a, Hadi fled to Riyadh. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Over 3,800..

the police raids.

According to the officials the raids were conducted following a deadly attack on an army-run school which left over 150 people dead which included mostly school children.

This comes as authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir are set to expel at least 11,000 Afghan refugees under a national anti-terror plan announced in the wake of the country's worst ever militant attack, the officials said last week.

Over 30,000 Afghan refugees were forced to leave Pakistan and return to Afghanistan amid fears of persecution by Pakistani authorities following a deadly attack on a school in Peshawar city last year.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) more than 22,000 undocumented Afghans flocked across the border at Torkham only in the month of January.

Following a deadly attack on an army-run school in Peshawar city of Pakistan, the federal government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa set a deadline for the expulsion of Afghan refugees on 20th December last year. (KP)

### (10) Shopkeepers..

increased the new tax by over 300 percent as compared to the previous tax level and criticized the government for remaining incapable to provide basic facilities.

The protesters also demanded the government to create job opportunities and concentrate on bringing stability in the country.

A local shopkeeper in Mandawi said the shopkeepers will continue to their protest if the government did not consider its new tax policy. (KP)

### (11) Yemen Crisis...

But the leaders have said that they are eager for a peaceful solution for the crisis.

Saudi Arabia is trying to gain support for its coalition formed to strike Huthis in Yemen. Saudi Arabia started bombing Huthi positions in Yemen on March 25.

Hezb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar says he is ready to extend any possible support to Saudi Arabia to take part in the crisis in Yemen.

Hezb-e-Islami is held responsible for several deadly terrorist attacks in Afghanistan including one that left 15 people killed and dozens others wounded in capital Kabul in May 2013.

The attack was carried out at a convoy of foreign forces but civilians suffered the most casualties. (KP)

### (12) Gen. Ludin ...

Ghani has announced Gen. Afzal Ludin as the minister of defense. They said that "he will soon be introduced to Parliament officially."

Gen. Ludin is a professional military cadre in the country and has held numerous posts within the Ministry of Defense. His last position was as military advisor in the National Security Council office.

This move comes after President Ashraf Ghani introduced 16 new cabinet nominees to Parliament for the confidence vote.

Three parliamentary commissions have begun assessing the nomination documents of the 16 cabinet nominees and they are expected to finish this week.

Once that has been done, the voting process will start, said Parliament officials. (Tolonews)

### (13) Graft-Tainted ...

council and the provincial administration visited the scale in Torkham border town. Before the visit, the scale officials had collected 900,000 afganis in revenue in five days, but they collected 8.5 million afgis during the same period in the presence of the delegation. It shows how brazenly corruption is committed in the scale."

Flanked by other members of the council, Ahmad Ali said: "We found eight officials of the scale to be involved in corruption and have demanded their arrest and introduction to the attorney in our official letter."

He said the tainted officials included four observers of the Ministry of Public Works, who had been sent to the scale to prevent corruption.

The council chief said millions of afghanis were stolen at the scale on

a daily basis and the government should appoint honest individuals at the facility for the sake of better management and transparency in its affairs.

Meanwhile, Deputy Governor Mohammad Hanif Gardiwal told Pajhwok Afghan News they had appointed a delegation about two weeks ago to investigate corruption at the scale. The investigation was ongoing, he said.

"I have myself appointed this delegation comprised of members and officials from the provincial council, police, the governor's house and the National Directorate of Security. Investigation shows widespread corruption is committed at the scale," he said.

The deputy governor said the exact amount of money lost to corruption was unknown as yet, but the five-day investigation showed the scale earned millions of afghanis on a daily basis.

"If the scale officials accept bribes from trucks carrying extra load or let them go uncharged, it is corruption. We will take serious action against such officials and will introduce them to the prosecutor's office."

Gardiwal said the provincial Public Works Department and the governor's house had no role in running the scale, which was controlled by the Public Works Ministry.

The Public Works Ministry has so far said nothing about the revelation made by high ranking Nangarhar officials.

Former Nangarhar governor Atullah Ludin, who resigned last month, had admitted he could not prevent corruption at the Torkham scale and some provincial departments.

He had claimed that 150 million afghanis were lost to corruption each month at the scale, but the governor's house could not prevent it. (Pajhwok)

### (14) 88 Percent...

472 militants (a 77 percent decrease), 168 security forces (a 40 percent decrease) and 158 civilians (an 88 percent increase).

A total of 1,045 people, most of them insurgents, were injured during March.

The five worst hit provinces were Southern Helmand, which witnessed 90 security incidents - the highest in the country - while Ghazni, Herat, Nangarhar and Kandahar were the other four provinces respectively with the highest number of security incidents.

The report identified central Bamiyan and northern Samangan as the safest provinces as neither recorded any incidents.

During March, the Afghan forces conducted about 400 anti-insurgent operations around the country, and seized a large quantity of arms and ammunitions.

In addition, 44 mine explosions and 57 armed attacks by insurgents were recorded in the country, while 23 abductions and other incidents also occurred.

The Afghan forces launched 11 air strikes in the same period, while insurgents carried out 11 suicide bombings.

Admitting to an increase in insurgent attacks on civilians, the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said efforts were underway to further protect civilians during the armed conflicts.

"One of the main objectives of the terrorists is to target civilians, but efforts are underway to prevent these attacks," Sediqqi said.

MPs, meanwhile, warn of a further increase in civilian casualties if the government doesn't take serious measures to thwart attacks.

"If comprehensive measures are not taken, Afghanistan will face more insecurity in the coming months," lawmaker Mohammad Iqbal Safi warned.

This year, the Afghan forces - left alone in combat - will face tough challenges in dealing with newly-emerged Daesh militants and overcoming the expected summer offensive. (Tolonews)

### (15) Kabul Police ....

activities, he said.

The police chief said another 212 suspected criminals had been arrested from different areas of Kabul on charges ranging from murder, kidnapping, carrying weapons to drug smuggling.

He said after investigations, dossiers detailing crimes of some of the detainees had been sent to the judicial department for further proceedings.

Rahimi also said around 180 people were taken into custody by police for "staring at women", but they were swiftly released after necessary advice. (Pajhwok)

### (16) 100 Trained...

Addressing at the graduation ceremony, deputy Governor Abdul Wali Sahi said the training provided opportunities to young learners to enhance their skills. He stressed that the organization was needed to organize such training programmes for government officials too.

Noor Ullah Saber, a graduate from the training, said he learnt more in short span of time. He demanded the government to give priority to graduate people in government jobs. (Pajhwok)

### (17) Nuristan to...

to construct a 20-bed rehabilitation centre for drug addicts in Nuristan, we have finally received a green signal from Kabul," he added.

Despite cold climate in the province, Shami admitted poppy crop was being cultivated in some districts, including Want-Waigal.

Dr. Mohammad Ismail, the provincial public health director, said the number of addicts was higher in districts lying close to northeastern Badakhshan province because they easily received drugs being smuggled from the province.

"The majority of addicts in Nuristan use heroin and hashish. That's why the public health ministry has agreed to building the 20-bed hospital here," he said.

He said there was a 16-bed rehabilitation centre for drug addicts in Nangarhar and 20-bed each in Kunar and Laghman. (Pajhwok)

### (18) Terrorist Arrested,...

jurisdiction Baghlan province. NDS statement adds that the depot was seized from the jurisdiction of Baghlan province which contained ammunition for heavy and light weapons and explosives.

NDS has also arrested a falsifier red hand in another action. The statement identifies the forger as Mubaris a resident of Baghlan-i-Markazi District red handed with five vehicle registration plates and other documents.

NDS statements usually do not contact the exact date of the achievement but their statements come after recent activities. (KP)

### (19) Former Taliban ...

insurgents managed to flee after a two-hour fire exchange with security forces.

The Taliban commanders who were killed in the attack belonged to the group led by commander Maulvi Niamatullah. The slain militants' leaders approached the High Peace Council (HPC) and joined the peace process, he said.

HPC gives 6,000 afghanis to militants who joined peace process and 13,000 afghanis to their commanders per month to feed their families. (Pajhwok)

### (20) Dismembered ...

of a course where she was studying. Provincial police spokesman Abdul Rauf Ahmadi said the body of the girl was found from a well of a residential house last night.

Ahmadi further added that the suspect involved in the murder case has been arrested is currently in the custody of the security forces.

He said preliminary investigations revealed that the girl was murdered after rejecting a marriage proposal from the lecturer.

According to Ahmadi the detained individual has confessed to his crime with the provincial emergency hospital officials saying that the dismembered body parts of the girl was placed inside a bag before throwing it to a well. (KP)

### (21) Analysts Paint...

the parliament.

The defence portfolio still could not be filled and the government had been severely criticized for giving a major chunk of responsibilities to acting ministers and governors.

Political analyst Ahmad Saedi said despite delay in formation of cabinet, leaders haven't taken serious steps to resolve pressing issues.

"Since last year's election on April 5, every day was a challenging day. People are virtually disappointed, he added. (Pajhwok)

### (22) 4 Police, 2 ...

claimed responsibility for the blast. This comes a day after TOLONews issued its monthly security report which found there was an 88 percent increase in civilian casualties across the country during the month of March - as compared to last month's report.

In March, 44 mine explosions and 57 armed attacks by insurgents were recorded in the country, while 23 abductions and other incidents also occurred, according to the report. (Tolonews)