

(1) NATO-Led ...

carried out some 460 strikes in support of the Afghan National Security Forces Salvin noted, adding that in March, 79 strikes killed more than 200 fighters.

Since 2015, the territory controlled by Daesh-Khorasan in Afghanistan has been reduced by 67 percent, while the number of fighters for the group dropped by 75 percent, according to mission Resolute Support. (Sputnik)

(2) Trump, Merkel ...

from White House said. They pledged close cooperation and coordination on these and other issues.

The United States currently has more than 8,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan and the White House as part of its review is exploring the possibilities of increasing the troop level in Afghanistan.

Of late, top US Commanders in Afghanistan have described the situation in the country as a stalemate, where the Taliban are believed to have gained ground.

Trump and Merkel also discussed the Afghan situation at their White House meeting last month. Trump had praised Germany's role in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(3) Corrupt...

for corruption.

Corrupt officials need to be disciplined and their cases filed for further investigation and prosecution.

Today corruption cases in the judiciary are dealt with by the judiciary itself. However independent monitoring can be introduced to make sure that corruption cases are handled in accordance with the law.

All key posts in the justice sector must be filled based on merits. Professionals must prove a track record of integrity and leadership qualities.

More transparency into the work of the courts. The Afghan people, civil society organisations and the media need to be able to hold the judiciary accountable.

Continued support for the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre ensuring it remains an independent and capable anti-corruption body that allows the Government to signal that the time for corruption in Afghanistan is over and that all Afghans are equal to the law. (Pajhwok)

(4) War Snatched...

of the region and the world and the twin menace required a joint fight.

The Singaporean leader said his country wanted friendship with Afghanistan based on mutual interest.

He said regional countries besides fighting terrorism and extremism together should also increase trade and social cooperation.

His said his country would cooperate with Afghanistan in areas of education, good governance and capacity building. (Pajhwok)

(5) Kabul Wants...

Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai said he would go to Moscow with an open heart and mind.

"We would also like to make sure that we explain to them that any kind of peace process has to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and, if any peace process is pushed without the Afghan leadership, it will fail," he said.

This comes as concerns in Afghanistan grow about Russia's alleged support for the Taliban – which is bent upon forcing Kabul's foreign backers out of the country.

Zamir Kabulov, the Russian president's special envoy for Afghanistan, said earlier this week the Taliban's demand for foreign forces' withdrawal was "legitimate".

Russia's purported support for the Taliban is seen as a counter-weight to an emerging Daesh in Afghanistan, which Moscow believes could spill over into Central Asia and subsequently Russia itself.

"The philosophy of supporting one non-state actor [the Taliban] against the other [Daesh] is wrong. We will not accept it," Hekmat Khalil Karzai told Anadolu Agency.

The Afghan minister – who lost his elder brother to a Taliban attack in 2014 – is set to lead the Kabul government's delegation to the conference in Moscow on April 14.

Pakistan, India, China, Iran and a number of Central Asian states have also been invited. (AA)

(6) Uzbekistan ...

regional security and the international situation. We agreed on concrete measures to further expand our multi-faceted practical cooperation," he said. He said Putin and him gave a special attention to the situation in Afghanistan during their bilateral talks.

"We are convinced that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem. The only way is through peaceful political talks under the aegis of the United Nations. Uzbekistan supports

Russia's efforts to find ways of resolving the Afghan conflict and will attend an extended meeting in Moscow on April 14," he said. (AKIPRESS)

(7) Deash Seeks ...

said at an inter-American anti-terror summit.

"Following the substantial destruction of ISIL's energy infrastructure it is critical to remain vigilant against its efforts to increase previously minor income streams, or to cultivate new ones. One of the new sources is drugs trafficking in Afghanistan, especially in the northern provinces, which ISIL is trying to get under control," Feoktistov stated at the summit in Washington on Thursday.

The foreign ministry official made the comments at the 17th regular session of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE).

Feoktistov noted that drugs production in Afghanistan saw an uptick in 2016, with its end value reaching some \$110 billion.

On March 8, a US defense official said oil and gas extraction remains the main source of revenue for Daesh. The official has also explained that the Islamic State is still able to finance its operations since it has significant cash reserves seized on controlled territories. (Sputnik)

(8) Afghanistan ...

which direction it will go – toward beefing up the American role, drawing it down further or something else entirely. There are around 8,400 U.S. troops in the country, involved in training Afghan forces and in counter-terrorism operations.

Kabul clearly hopes the promise of mineral wealth will entice Trump into making a greater commitment.

"Afghanistan can be an appropriate place for U.S. industry, and specifically the mining sector, to look at opportunities for investment" because so few potential deposits have been mined, said Mohammad Humayon Qayoumi, chief adviser to Afghan president on infrastructure, human capital and technology.

"Afghanistan has always been interested in the U.S. investing in many areas, specifically the mining area. Within mining, there are some areas that are strategic materials such as lithium," Qayoumi told The Associated Press.

President Ashraf Ghani spoke with Trump in December, and they discussed the mineral wealth.

"There was a quite good matter of interest from President Trump's administration," Qayoumi said. The two leaders spoke again in February for the first time since the inauguration in talks that focused on the security situation.

A White House official said the U.S. sees sustainable economic development as essential to Afghanistan's stability, including in the mining sector. He said the U.S. will work with Afghan businessmen and officials on reforms that "enhance private sector development" and contribute to development. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Transformative resources
Mineral resources have been touted as potentially transformative for Afghanistan, a key to lifting it out of poverty and bringing major wealth for development.

Interest was particularly spiked by a 2007 report by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Afghan government that found the country's deposits of a wide variety of minerals were much larger than had been known from surveys decades earlier by the Soviets.

The mountainous, land-locked nation has huge, largely untouched reserves of copper, iron ore, chromite, mercury, zinc, gems, including rubies and emeralds, as well as gold and silver. Particularly alluring is its lithium, crucial to laptop and cellphone batteries.

But getting those minerals out of the ground – and doing it in a way that benefits the country as a whole – has been elusive.

Lapis fuels the war
The war has scared away investors. Also, corruption is rife, and many of the mines that do exist are controlled by local warlords who reap the profits. The Taliban are believed to earn millions from illegal mining.

In 2016, anti-corruption watchdog Global Witness warned that the mining sector was fueling the war. It pointed to lapis lazuli – a blue stone found almost exclusively in Afghanistan – saying local strongmen, lawmakers and Taliban insurgents were all in a violent competition over control of the mines, earning \$20 million a year from illegal mining and in the process destabilizing northeastern Badakhshan province.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan said in a 2015 report that the great majority of more than 300 mining contracts awarded so far "may have been exploited by local strongmen under the

protection of warlords." It examined five mines and estimated the government was losing tens of millions of dollars from those mines alone because of corruption that means taxes, rents and royalties are not collected. (VoA)

(9) E-Voting ...

head of Transparent and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the former head of the Independent Election Commission, Fazl Ahmad Manawi, said the experiences countries which have used the e-voting system should be reviewed.

"The company should shoulder this responsibility which has experience of working in countries like Afghanistan. Others should compete with this company in order to select one of them for the process," he said.

Although security is considered as one of the main hurdles for elections, the CEO's office said government is committed to providing a safe environment for the process.

"No doubt, insecurity is a big challenge; but it is not as big a hurdle as it will be for elections," Abdullah's spokesman Mujib Rahman Rahimi said.

This comes after the delegation recently said the e-voting system would help with transparency in the upcoming elections if used properly. (Tolnews)

(10) 50% of all ...

Ferozuddin Feroz on Thursday.

The laboratory will also help to ensure the quality of drugs coming into the country.

"More than 50 percent of the drugs are coming to the country through illicit trade; open borders with some neighboring countries is one of the key reasons for that; secondly the law in this respect has been implemented in a manner which has paved the way for corruption," said Feroz.

Meanwhile, the CEO said that the importation of low quality drugs is of concern especially as it could be detrimental to the health of people.

"We should handle this in a way to prevent corruption, including at borders; I expect the minister of health to pay attention to all sectors particularly when it comes to this issue; the level of tolerance in this respect must be zero," said the CEO.

The public health ministry has said that \$2 million USD has been allocated for the laboratory. Another \$2.5 million USD is expected to be spent on equipment for the lab and capacity building programs. (Tolnews)

(11) Insecurity...

the upcoming elections.

"If the IEC announces a date for the elections, the government is ready to support it," he said.

Linking the delay in announcing the election schedule to electoral reform, he said the reform process was still ongoing.

Rahimi rejected differences between the unity government leaders over the electoral affairs and said the government never interfered in IEC's affairs and only provided cooperation.

He called the use of technology in elections as important because it would help prevent fraud and violations.

A day earlier, CEO Abdullah Abdullah, Second Vice-President Sarwar Danish and election commissioners discussed preparations for holding the parliamentary polls.

Abdullah said the government had strong will to hold elections to the lower house of parliament and district councils this solar year. (Pajhwok)

(12) Shortage ...

ACCI believes that the lack of systematic accounting systems in the country is one of the main challenges which has held back the growth of the private sector.

"Surveys conducted by the chamber of commerce and industries show that one of the key reasons behind the lack of access to loans for the private sector is their unfamiliarity with accounting and financial systems," said ACCI CEO Atiqullah Nusrat.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has said that the lack of interest in systems has forced companies to hire foreign workers. The ministry said currently up to 1,300 Afghans have been sent abroad to learn accountancy.

"There is interest to get specialization in accountancy, it has not found its place among our people, therefore mainly foreign workers are hired in this field and it costs much for government and the private sector," said Mustafa Mastoor, deputy minister of finance.

"We will initiate another process within a month, all those accountants who have scientific knowledge of the field can consult our department to get licenses and then they can work as professional accountants," said Abdul Wali Noori, head of policy and planning at the ministry of finance. (Tolnews)

(13) President ...

the available investment and trade opportunities in Afghanistan.

Following his speech, the Indonesian investors expressed their willingness to go to Afghanistan and explore business opportunities.

They said they were ready to benefit from the investment opportunities in Afghanistan if their security was ensured.

Ghani said providing security to the people, particularly to investors, was his government's top most priority. He said his government was encouraging local and foreign traders to invest in the country.

Before heading for neighbouring Singapore, Ghani met Indonesian Islamic scholars and urged them to play their role in enlightening people's minds and inviting them to lead a peaceful life.

The president said it was the responsibility of all the Muslims, particularly religious scholars, to prevent the minority that was committing inhumane acts in the name of Islam.

The president also met Indonesian women who plan to conduct an Islamic conference of women in Jakarta.

In Singapore, President Ghani will hold separate meetings with his counterpart Dr. Tony Tan, prime minister Lee Hsien Loong, traders, investors and others. (Pajhwok)

(14) Indonesia ...

official visit to Australia, Ghani arrived in Jakarta on Wednesday. Senior government officials received the president at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. (Pajhwok)

(15) No Military ...

Aziz agreed to develop a framework for interaction at military, intelligence, security and political levels.

The process was to take off with a meeting of local field commanders, which would investigate recent border incidents.

In a tentative step towards that arrangement, Lt Gen Aamir Riaz and Afghan National Army's 205th Corps Commander Lt Gen Daud Shah Wadadar spoke over the hotline.

While supporting all major peace initiatives in Afghanistan, Aziz said the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) was still alive and efforts were being made to make it more effective.

Involving the US, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the group has been inactive since Taliban leader Mullah Mansoor Akhtar was killed in a US drone attack on Pakistani soil last year.

A statement from the Foreign Office quoted the advisor as calling for sustained focus on enhancing people-to-people exchanges. He said the visa system and facilities at border crossings were being modernised.

He added Pakistan had announced 3,000 additional scholarships for Afghan students in the field of higher education after utilisation of the existing 3000 scholarships.

The advisor asked the Afghan government to convene the next meeting of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority at the earliest. (Pajhwok)

(16) Electoral ...

have not been able to properly manage their activities," said Farzam, a resident of Badakhshan.

A number of Kandahar and Helmand residents meanwhile said the new election commissioners have failed to regain the people's trust in the election process.

"New commissioners' efforts are not enough. The fate of the reforms process is unclear," said Gul Ahmad, a resident of Helmand province.

Herat province residents, however, said they are happy with the efforts made by the new commissioners.

"I think they have taken two fundamental steps; first, they have introduced a good mechanism to government and second, they have started preparations for the upcoming elections," said Samim, a resident of Herat. (Tolnews)

(17) Afghanistan ...

concerns and prevent illegal crossings as well as terrorist infiltration in both directions.

The border security project, however, has outraged Afghan political circles and media commentators. The turmoil-hit nation historically has disputed portions of the 1893 demarcation undertaken under then-British rulers of the Indian subcontinent.

Days of heated debate on the issue in the Afghan parliament prompted the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday to issue a formal government response.

"We have clearly stated that any type of unilateral actions taken along the Durand Line without the agreement of the government of Afghanistan [are] going to be ineffective, impractical and impossible," ministry spokesman Ahmed Shakib Mostaghani told a news conference in Kabul. Afghan-

istan has long referred to the border with Pakistan as an imaginary boundary.

Mostaghani again dismissed as "mere excuses" Islamabad's assertions that militants are entering Pakistan from the Afghan side to launch terrorist attacks in the neighboring country. Mostaghani added that his government has taken up the issue with Pakistani authorities to resolve it through diplomatic channels. (VoA)

(18) Deal Enforced...

no problem in implementation of the peace agreement with the government as both the sides had been honest in steps.

Four days ago, the Presidential Palace said a number of HIA prisoners would be released shortly and that the government had discharged its responsibility towards the peace agreement and now it awaited the announcement of a date from the HIA for the return of Hekmatyar to Kabul. The peace deal struck between the government and the HIA six months ago was touted as a breakthrough that could induce Taliban insurgents to follow suit. (Pajhwok)

(19) HEC Offers ...

Dr. Mukhtar urged both countries should shun negative propaganda against each other to come closer through education and development. He said Pakistani would further facilitate the visa process for Afghan students. (Pajhwok)

(20) Afghan Forces ...

1,500 precious stones.

Danish stressed that over 100 cases of corruption to the judiciary institutions were registered in 2016, with about 140 officials being under investigation on bribery.

This comes against the backdrop of Afghanistan's political, social and security instability, in particular, due to the activity of the Taliban militant group and emergence of local cells of the Daesh terrorist group, which are both banned in many countries, including Russia. (Sputnik)

(21) Durand Line...

A member of the provincial council, Zabihullah Kakar, said the Durand Line was not an issue of a particular Afghan tribe but it was a national issue.

Balkh university teacher Prof. Ghulam Farooq Khpalkwal said the Durand Line was a historic tragedy.

He urged the youth deeply study of their history and called the gathering a step forward towards intellectual awakening. (Pajhwok)

(22) 250 Acres...

are aware but reluctant to take action," he said.

Sayed Mahmud Danish, Kunduz governor's spokesman, rejected if the provincial government was doing nothing to prevent land grabbing.

He said the newly-appointed governor, Asadullah Omakhel, was serious in the fight against land grabbing. "The president's order is land grabbing issues should be decisively dealt with. Soon those involved in the crime will be introduced to judicial organs," he said.

Kunduz police chief Brig. Gen. Abdul Hamid Hamidi said police forces were helping all government organs in addressing the land-grab issue.

"We cooperate in prevention of land grabbing, but some officials justify their weakness by accusing security forces of noncooperation," he said. (Pajhwok)

(23) Foundations...

three hundred jobs for Afghans.

"Businessmen can invest in any part of the world, but those, who love their country and think about their country, are interested to benefit their countrymen from their investment and business," Abdullah said.

"Land grabbing is a big challenge for government, provincial and local offices," Parwan governor Mohammad Asim Asim said.

The factory will have the capacity to process almost 200 tons of raisins and grapes a day.

"This will increase the local products and besides that it will provide a better market for Afghanistan's agricultural products. It will also help improve the economy of farmers in Parwan," the deputy minister of agriculture, Abdul Qadir Jawad said. (Tolnews)

(24) Afghan Refugees...

where they can afford their daily needs," said Istiqlal Jalalzai, a migration official of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Affairs at Torkham crossing.

A number of return refugees meanwhile said after living for many years in Pakistan, they were forced to return to Afghanistan and start a new life here.

"Refugees were harassed, insulted and were told that when will you re-

turn back to your home," Rafiullah, a return refugee said. (Tolnews)

(25) Imran Criticizes ...

He said Pakistan was still battling militant outfits that were set up during Afghan war. The PTI chairman said Panama Papers case would prove to be a milestone in the history of the country which would force the ruling elite to mend its ways.

Responding to a question, he said imposing martial law has become difficult in Pakistan. When asked what he intends to do after coming into power, Khan said he wanted to strengthen institutions of the country after becoming prime minister. (The news)

(26) Concerns...

launch these operations and will clear the region of insurgents," Baghlan police chief, Ikramuddin Sare said.

The Taliban has controlled much of Dahan-e-Ghori district, dozens of villages in Pul-e-Khumri city, the capital city of Baghlan province, and a few other districts of Baghlan for the past 10 months. (Tolnews)

(27) MoD to Unveil...

officer (among others)," he said. Meanwhile, Fatima Aziz, an MP from Kunduz, said the fact-finding team has not yet prepared a comprehensive report.

"Officials vowed to find the facts within two weeks and prepare a good report for the people of Afghanistan; but unfortunately they have not done this yet," she said. (Tolnews)

(28) Herat Residents ...

We were concerned. Then I took him abroad for treatment. There, they found that he suffers from a simple disease and he recovered well," Ghulam Ali Habibi, another Herat residents said.

Meanwhile, the provincial director of public health, Abdul Hakim Tamanna, said they are not able to prevent the flow of low quality medicines in the local market.

"Unfortunately, a big part of pharmaceuticals is being smuggled into the country. Therefore, we cannot monitor the quality of smuggled medicines," he said.

"We have 65 private healthcare centers. It is not easy to assess all of them, because we face lack of personnel," he added. (Tolnews)

(29) U.S. Missile...

the central city of Homs, the source added, asked not to be named. Meanwhile, the state TV also confirmed the attack, saying it was an "American aggression."

The military source told Xinhua that the army general-command awaits the reports from Homs to precisely assess the damage. The attack marks the U.S. response to the alleged chemical attack on rebel-held town in north-western Syria this week. (Xinhua)

(30) Hollande, Merkel ...

said in a phone conversation that Paris and Berlin had been informed of the U.S. strikes on Syrian military positions in response to Damascus' suspected use of toxic gas in a rebel-held town in the country's northwestern province of Idlib. "Al-Assad bears full responsibility for this development. His continued use of chemical weapons and mass crimes can not remain unpunished," they said in a joint statement released by the French presidency. (Xinhua)

(31) US Strike in ...

Assad. Erdogan reaffirmed his past calls that international community needed to impose a safe zone in northern Syria – which Ankara has said should be backed by a no-fly zone – to ensure security in the area. "We again say how important it is for a terror-free safe zone to be created," he told thousands of supporters in the city. (AFP)

(32) European Parliament.

"Ukraine has achieved all the benchmarks, so the visa requirement should be lifted," said rapporteur for the proposal Mariya Gabriel, adding that the visa waiver would be "another very strong message that Ukraine is a key partner for the European Union in the Eastern Partnership." (Xinhua)

(33) UN Security ...

of the relevant Security Council resolutions and comply fully with its obligations under these resolutions. "The members of the Security Council emphasized the vital importance of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea showing sincere commitment to denuclearization and stressed the importance of working to reduce tensions in the Korean Peninsula and beyond," it added. (Xinhua)

(34) Pakistan Welcomes...

image of Pakistan across the world, the Pak-China project will make the country a manufacturing and commerce hub, hoped the minister. (Monitoring Desk)