

(1) US is Not Walking...

"I was heartened by the press comments by General Bajwa where he said things like the 'state must have the monopoly on violence', and there is 'no role for non-state actors'.... Those are extremely positive statements and now I think the challenge is to see them implemented. We are certainly in a very good faith conversation with Pakistan," Wells told The Hindu in an interview during her visit to Delhi.

Her comment comes after, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Friday announced the Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) committing to closer engagement on fighting terror.

The Hindu reported that when asked Wells denied any US-hand in the Afghan-Pakistan talks, but her ongoing visit to the region, including travels to Tashkent, Islamabad, Delhi and Kabul, dealt with the US's South Asia policy for Afghanistan.

"I would say, bear with us, this isn't the end of our diplomatic game. We are continuously engaging in Pakistan because we do see the need for change," she said when asked about further steps against Pakistan if it fails to act against terror groups.

Wells also touched on Afghanistan's trade efforts and said "the fact that this region has no regional trade is noteworthy and until we resolve that core conflict and open up the east and west, the potential for South Asia is not going to be achieved. We are deeply appreciative of the Indian efforts to use Chabahar to provide alternatives to Afghanistan to open up a channel to Central Asia. And we need to be creative in the absence of peace to ensure that Afghanistan can stabilize and grow".

When asked if the US approved of the Chabahar route, in terms of it being owned by Iran, Wells said: "The standard set for Chabahar is that the deals should not benefit IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guard) members, that's for sanctions not to be imposed, and for business deals to go through. "The legislation originally passed (JCPOA) has a specific carve-out for Chabahar and that's an acknowledgment of the necessary role of giving land-locked Afghanistan access and alternatives as it seeks to build its economy.

"We have seen with the shipments of wheat that India has really helped to open up trade with Afghanistan including air corridors. It's been striking that Afghanistan-Pakistan trade has declined 50 percent in the last year. India has provided options, and Afghanistan now needs the support of India and Central Asia," she said. (Tolo news)

(2) Pakistan's Military...

said first deputy speaker of the senate Mohammad Alam Ezediyar.

"We hope that our national interests are not violated in these talks," senator Anarkali Honaryar said.

Another senator Afzal Shamil said: "There is no doubt about it that Pakistan wants to play another game, whenever it comes under pressure, Pakistan shows flexibility."

"Holding talks with the Pakistani officials especially with their civilian officials look like a drama (production)," said senator Lotfullah Baba.

"I don't understand why the countries which are present in Afghanistan as friends keep silent," said senator Najiba Hussain.

This comes two days after President Ashraf Ghani and Abbasi held talks in Kabul where they agreed to seven key principles to finalize Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS).

The two leaders agreed to the following:

* Pakistan to support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation,

* The two countries to undertake effective action against fugitives and irreconcilable elements posing security threats to either of the two countries,

* Both countries commit to deny use of their respective territories by any country, network, group or individuals for anti-state activities against either country,

* To put in place a joint supervision, coordination and confirmation mechanism through Liaison Officers (LOs) for the realization of the agreed actions.

* The two countries commit to avoid territorial and aerial violations

of each other's territory,

* The two countries to avoid public blame games and instead use APAPPS cooperation mechanisms to respond to mutual issues of contention and concerns, and

* Establish Working Groups and necessary cooperation mechanisms as per APAPPS for full implementation of the APAPPS and the above, mutually reinforcing principles.

Ghani and Abbasi reaffirmed their resolve to build trust and confidence between the two countries by working closely for peace, prosperity and stability in their countries. The two leaders agreed to continue the exchange of high level visits.

Abbasi also extended invitations to Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah to visit Islamabad at their earliest convenience.

Abbasi also met with other senior Afghan political leaders including Gulbadin Hekmatyar, Mohammad Mohaqiq, Mohammad Karim Khalili, and Sayed Hamed Gailani, to convey the support of the government and people of Pakistan to all ethnic groups in Afghanistan and to underscore Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan, Pakistan's statement read. (Tolo news)

(3) 60pc of Afghans...

age of five have also dropped from 257 to 55 per 1,000 live births," Feroz said about 60 percent of Afghan population had access to adequate health services, but his ministry was striving to increase access to health-care to 90 percent by the end of 2018. Earlier, the ministry inked contracts for 206 new health centres to be established in 13 provinces this year with financial support from the World Bank.

"Currently, five dollars are allocated annually for providing health services to each Afghan. Even in the poorest countries, like Africa, \$20 is allocated for a person," he explained. This amount is aimed to deal with communicable diseases, no money is allocated to diseases, including blood pressure, cancer, heart problems and sugar. He said 30 percent of deaths in the country happened as a result of these disease.

Dr. Mujeeb Rahman Chamkani, the Wolesi Jirga head for health affairs who also participated in the meeting, complained the quality of services remained low despite improvement in the sector.

"All local and foreign officials have a duty to address this problem. It is true that there are many health centres in Afghanistan, but people should have access to adequate services," he remarked.

Dr. Rik Peeporkorn, WHO Representative in Afghanistan, said over the past few years, there had been a lot of progress in the health sector in Afghanistan. The WHO has played a key role in this regard.

"We are striving to provide high-quality health services in remote parts of the country in the coming years in coordination with MoPH," he remarked. (Pajhwok)

(4) Khost Residents...

Taliban must know that they will not gain anything from the battle, because in the last forty years of battle in Afghanistan people did not achieve anything except make sacrifices, therefore we (started a) sit-in here in Khost," said Shah Wali another protestor.

In addition, athletes in Zabul province on Saturday started a 15-day volleyball tournament in support of Helmand's peace campaign.

The athletes have also called for peace.

Meanwhile residents and civil activists in Kunar and Nangarhar province also announced their support for Helmand protestors' peace campaign.

Nearly 200 people gathered at the Sherzai Stadium in Jalalabad city in Nangarhar province on Sunday where they also launched a sit-in protest in support of Helmand's peace campaign.

The protestors in Nangarhar said that both sides involved in the war must end the war and operations and air strikes that cause civilian casualties must be stopped. They also called for Pakistan to be black-listed.

This comes four days after some residents and tribal elders from Herat, Farah and Paktia provinces also established sit-in camps to support Helmand's peace campaign.

A new sit-in camp was also established in Gereshek district on Thursday.

The Lashkargah protestors, including women, have vowed to continue their demonstration until their demands for a ceasefire by both the Taliban and government have been met.

On Monday this week, a second group of activists embarked on a sit-in in Nawa district in support of the peace campaign.

The Lashkargah sit-in was sparked by the deadly car bombing, two weeks ago, outside a stadium in the city following a wrestling match. (Tolo news)

(5) Taliban Control...

remarked Syed.

In the past, drivers from Farah had monopolised the port, loading their truck as and when they wanted. But drivers from other provinces were not given a fair chance to load their vehicles.

Amanullah, another trucker, endorsed Syed's statement. "Now we are comfortable, take our turn once a week and there is no dispute or disorder."

Farah custom officials could not be reached for comments, but the governor's spokesman, Naser Mehri, rejected the drivers' claims that the Taliban were controlling the traffic system at the port.

He said the private sector managed truck traffic at the Abu Nasar Port. The company has been issued a licence by the Finance Minister in consultation with the provincial government. (Pajhwok)

(6) Fight against...

achieved a significant milestone that both sides have put peace offers on the table. The Afghan government and the Taliban. We have never achieved this point in the war before," he added.

Saturday's ceremony was held in honor of foreign soldiers who have been wounded in the Afghan war.

In the past 17 years, over 3,500 foreign soldiers have lost their lives and hundreds more have been wounded in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(7) Kandahar Polling...

and district council elections on the basis of old national identity cards (NIC).

There are 225 polling centres in Kandahar and 80 of them are located in the city -- 40 for men and as many for women.

The registration process for the elections would begin on April 14, Durran said, seeking full cooperation from governors, religious scholars and teachers to ensure transparent polls.

Speaking at the meeting, Governor Weesa said the IEC had set up fewer polling centres in Kandahar -- an issue shared with President Ashraf Ghani.

He claimed Kandahar was a stable province, where all the people, including district residents, would cast their votes in the elections.

Weesa assured the people the Afghan forces were fully prepared to make sure the elections were conducted in a secure environment and a transparent manner.

Governors of Zabul, Uruzgan and Kunduz also addressed the meeting and spoke about their preparations for elections.

The 40th Maiwand Military Corps commander, the police chief and Brig. Gen Lathrop of Resolute Support Mission said elaborate security measures had been taken for the smooth conduct of the elections.

The commission has announced October 22 as a fresh date for holding the long due elections to the Wolesi Jirga and district councils. (Pajhwok)

(8) Paktia Climate...

year we will distribute 245 tons of saffron bulbs to farmers to promote saffron cultivation and expand it in the country," Rustami said.

A number of economic analysts meanwhile said currently some farmers cultivate drugs in the province and that saffron could be a good alternative.

"Zurmat is one of the insecure districts. When farmers in this district cultivate saffron instead of drugs, then government should support them," economic analyst Ehsanullah Zadrani said.

Last year 10,6 tons of saffron was harvested in the country. A number of saffron cultivators and traders said government should seek good markets for Afghanistan saffron in the region, especially in China. (Tolo news)

(9) U.S., Afghan...

quickly rebuilt.

Calling strikes on drug labs "the the-

atre of counter-narcotics," Mansfield said the risk of civilian deaths may be greater than potential benefits of curbing Taliban revenues.

"There has been little account of the number of casualties attributed to the bombing of drugs labs," he said in an email to Reuters. "And in contrast to the narrative of USFOR-A, those that work in labs are not seen as Taliban but as civilians" by rural Afghans.

U.S. Forces-Afghanistan could not be immediately reached for response to Mansfield's critique.

Efforts to reach a Taliban spokesman on Sunday were not successful. In November, the Taliban said there were no drug labs in the area and U.S. forces were launching attacks based on false information and to spread propaganda. (Reuters)

(10) Polio Vaccination...

time. One new polio case has been confirmed last week in Ghazi Abad district of Kunar province - the second case in the district in the past month, bringing the total number of confirmed polio cases in Afghanistan to seven in 2018.

The paralyzed child is an 11-month-old girl in an area difficult to access by vaccination teams. The child had never been vaccinated against polio, as the child's family repeatedly refused vaccination.

"This case is yet another important reminder to all parents that polio is a very real and serious health risk. Polio paralyzes for life and cannot be cured, but it can be prevented by safe and effective vaccines," said the Minister of Public Health H.E. Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz.

It is critical that all parents and caregivers across Afghanistan ensure they immunize all children under five in every polio campaign.

The polio vaccine is extremely safe and very effective and has been endorsed by leading religious scholars in Afghanistan and throughout the Islamic world. Only Afghanistan and Pakistan have recorded any cases of polio in 2017 and 2018 and while any child anywhere carries the poliovirus, all children around the world remain at risk of this crippling disease.

The oral polio vaccine administered in Afghanistan immunization campaigns builds immunity gradually, and several doses are needed for children to be fully protected against paralysis. To eradicate polio in Afghanistan, it is crucial to vaccinate all children in every polio campaign until they reach age of five.

A team at the national level has been deployed to conduct a detailed investigation and risk assessment of the case and the surrounding area to determine the immediate risk of further spread of the virus.

The Polio Eradication Initiative is a global public health intervention that aims to end the transmission of poliovirus worldwide and provide all future generations of children a world free from polio paralysis. Since the initiative began, 123 countries worldwide have stopped transmission of polio.

Currently, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria are the only three remaining polio-endemic countries in the world. Nigeria has not recorded any cases since August 2016. Afghanistan has recorded seven cases of polio this year and this week Pakistan announced its first case in 2018. (Pajhwok)

(11) Families of...

the act will become a historical shame. "In Afghanistan government's history, no citizens of any country have been handed to its enemy. If the Afghan government hands the two Turkish teachers to the Turkish government, it will commit a historical shame," Sediqullah Tawhidi, a member of the Afghan-Turk parents committee said.

Yildirim however said on Sunday Turkey appreciated the Afghan government for handing over the management of the schools to his government and said new teachers have come to Afghanistan and will soon start teaching at the schools.

"We appreciate Afghanistan government for handing the responsibility of the schools to the (Moaref Waqf Institution) which is currently is under our control," Yildirim said.

At the end of February, the Afghan government officially handed over the management of the Afghan-Turk Schools to Turkey's education ministry. Government then announced that around 120 new Turkish teachers have arrived in Afghanistan to replace the previous teachers.

Officials from the Afghan-Turk Schools however said the original teachers are still teaching at the schools.

"Schools are still under our control. So far we do not know anything about the new teachers, but we continue our work," Ahmad Fawad Haidari, deputy head of the Afghan-Turk Schools said.

Afghan-Turk Schools were established 23 years ago in Afghanistan and currently around 8,000 students attend 12 schools around the country. (Tolo news)

(12) Kabul-Islamabad...

mechanism will be put in place through Liaison Officers (LOs) for realization of the agreed actions.

The two countries commit to avoid territorial and aerial violations of each other's territory.

Both sides to avoid public blame game and instead use APAPPS cooperation mechanisms to respond to mutual issues of contention and concerns, it added.

Establish Working Groups and necessary cooperation mechanism as per APAPPS for full implementation of the APAPPS and the above mutually reinforcing principles. (Pajhwok)

(13) Dozens of Illegal...

after concerns about the increasing presence of irresponsible gunmen increased.

Governor Abdul Latif Brahimi denied Taliban's influence in Samangan but said problems had been created by unauthorized armed groups.

Hajji Raz Mohammad, the provincial council chief, said the number of illegal armed groups was increasing with each passing day.

He said the government should disarm the illegal gunmen or recruit them as uprising group members in order to keep security for their own areas. (Pajhwok)

(14) 6 Security...

assailants captured the two check-posts in the area, torched them and took military equipment with them and fled the area.

Some residents of locality agreed with cherk's comments and termed the situation dangerous. According to reports nearly 30 security personnel have been killed in militants' attacks on check-posts recently. (Pajhwok)

(15) Campaign...

estimated \$200 million in revenue for the Taliban through production and taxation.

Since November 2017, the campaign has conducted 75 strikes against narcotics production facilities in Afghanistan and continues to remove revenue from the Taliban.

"We will continue to help the Afghan security forces to send a clear message to the Taliban: they will not win on the battlefield," Hecker said. "The only way they can have a peaceful solution is to sit down and reconcile with the National Unity Government." (Pajhwok)

(16) Daikundi Civil...

interested in the security and welfare of the common people, she maintained.

Hamidullah Rastgar, a resident of the provincial capital, said: "HPC hasn't brought any positive change to reconciliation process compare to their consumption and therefore we ask the government to close the departments' doors."

The stringent criticism of HPC comes amid a strong militant presence in border areas of the province, including Ishtirili, Miramor, Khadir and Sang-i-Takht districts.

Meanwhile, deputy head of HPC in Daikundi Boman Ali Sherband rejected the allegations from civil society and touted the peace process as a success. He referred to the surrender of gunmen and dozens of insurgents. The peace body had provided facilities for those militants who joined the peace drive, he said, hoping the reconciliation effort would lead to a marked improvement in the security environment.

But Rahmatullah Shariati, a political analyst, listed lack of oversight and HPC being independent of the provincial administration were the main reasons for its failure.

He proposed the appointment of talented and sincere individuals to reinvigorate the committee. Strong oversight by civil society was also necessary to meet the current challenges being faced by HPC, he suggested. (Pajhwok)