

(1) Smugglers Earn ...

dealers. We - as the people of Afghanistan - would welcome these acts. We are not smugglers. We are not involved in that trade."

Ghani highlighted, Afghanistan is rich in mineral resources, but because of the lack of capacity to utilize them, people suffer of poverty. He also mentioned Afghanistan would try to use the vast experiences of countries like Australia in mining, irrigation and water management sectors. (Agencies)

(2) Top Political ...

President Ashraf Ghani, has decided to support the incumbent leader in the 2019 presidential election. An official close to the president confirmed Ghani's candidacy.

However, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah, who was one of the leading candidates in previous elections, has said nothing about the 2019 presidential fray.

Abdullah, a member of the Jamiat-Islami Afghanistan (JIA), was the second leading candidate after Ghani in the 2014 election. But the JIA may announce a new face for the upcoming election as relations between Atta Mohammad Noor and Abdullah have deteriorated.

Ahmad Munir Farhad, spokesman for Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor, confirmed the strongman had decided to contest as an independent candidate for the president or first vice-president. Noor has talked to his colleagues about preparations for the next presidential ballot.

Omar Daudzai, former interior minister and a close figure to former president, Hamid Karzai, is also a probable candidate for the upcoming presidential election. He has already started his meetings with different national and international figures.

Syed Maisam Ehsani, who has close relations with Daudzai, said that the former interior minister would definitely contest the next presidential vote. "He is preparing for the coming election and will be one of the candidates."

Erstwhile president Hamid Karzai said he had repeatedly explained that he did not have any active role in the current government. However, he is closely watching the situation and has many things to say, but no plan to take the government leadership again.

"My tenure has ended. I have been president for 14 years. I love this country and want it to have younger leaders with different views," the ex-president commented.

Gulbadin Hekmatyar, leader of Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) and a prominent political figure, recently signed a peace agreement with the government. He promised playing an active role in the future presidential election.

Naqibullah Hashemi, a spokesman to HIA, said the party would have an active role in the coming presidential election. However, he hastened to add that no one had so far announced his candidacy.

Anwarul Haq Ahadi, Afghanistan's New National Front (ANNF) head may also run for the president, said: "I want to be an independent candidate in the coming election, but it is too early to speak of political alignments." Concerned about possible fraud, he recalled anomalies in the 2014 election had thrown up the incumbent national unity government. The current dispensation might pave the ground for rigging in the next election too, he feared.

But the government has repeatedly promised holding the 2019 election in a more transparent and better-managed manner. (Pajhwok)

(3) Iran Named ...

of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) said currently countries in the region and around the world are looking to expand their economic and trade cooperation with Afghanistan - except Pakistan.

Afghanistan trade volumes declined by 50 percent since 2013. But despite this Iran and Afghanistan's trade volume has increased significantly.

Based on the ACCI's statistics, trade volumes between Afghanistan and Iran is estimated to total almost \$2 billion USD, with Pakistan at \$1.3 billion USD, China at \$1 billion USD, Turkmenistan at \$700 million USD and with Kazakhstan at \$500 million USD. "Currently there are several countries who are willing to provide our needs, even they are prepared to give us subsidies on food items and export them to Afghanistan," said ACCI CEO Atiqullah Nusrat.

The Afghan ministry of commerce and industries has said that trade volume between Afghanistan and Pakistan dropped over Pakistan's moves to shut trade routes and strained relations between the two countries.

"We always tried to keep a balance while managing our needs of prod-

ucts so that we are not dependent on one or two countries," said Musafir Qoqandi, spokesman for the ministry of commerce and industries.

Back in February, Pakistan closed its key crossings with Afghanistan. Fresh border restrictions by Pakistan apparently opened new doors of trade and commerce opportunities for Afghanistan and during this period. Afghanistan's trade and commercial ties were expanded with Iran, Turkey, India and central Asian countries. (Tolnews)

(4) Afghanistan ...

Afghanistan, rejecting the misunderstanding of Islamabad claiming that the country is fuelling anti-Pakistan feelings with its presence in Afghanistan.

He said India is only providing training and study opportunities to the Afghan army cadets and that New Delhi has military presence in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif, on Thursday, said that the state was serious about improving relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Speaking to a private news channel, the minister claimed the strained relations between the two countries was due to Indian influence on Afghanistan's side, according to The Express Tribune newspaper.

India has played a major role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime and has invested over \$2 billion in various reconstruction and infrastructure projects.

The construction of the major Salma Dam, the new Afghan parliament building, Zaranj-Delaram highway, and some other projects are among the key investments India has done so far in the country. (KP)

(5) EU Stresses ...

by the government of Afghanistan," said Najia Karimi, the executive director of humanitarian assistance for the women and children.

"Ignoring the law has provided a space of irresponsibility for paying enough attention to women," Naem Nazari, the executive director of civil society network said.

The EU campaign for promoting women role in political affairs is a one year nationwide struggle to eradicate obstacles women face toward their active participation. (Agencies)

(6) Azizi Bank ...

Chairman of the Europe Business Assembly and addressed the august gathering. The event was held at the Institute of Directors, London in the presence of more than 200 distinguished guests from more than 60 countries from Asia, Africa, Europe & the Americas.

In addition to the above recognition, Mohammad Salem Omaid, CEO, Azizi Bank also received the membership badge & certificate of the International Club of Leaders, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce. Azizi Bank's & CEO's profile will be published in the Leaders Time Magazine which will be sent to more than 50,000 professional subscribers including world's leading companies, CEOs, City Mayors, Scientists & Media.

Azizi Bank received the award for the Best Retail Bank in Afghanistan from the Wealth & Finance International Magazine, London for its outstanding contribution towards the banking growth in Afghanistan. The Trophy & the Certificate was collected by Mohammad Osman Nowrozi, Vice President & Deputy CEO, Azizi Bank from the Editor in Chief & Head of Wealth & Finance International Magazine in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, United Kingdom on 29th March 2017.

The financial magazine will publish a cover page advertorial of Mohammad Salem Omaid, President & CEO, Azizi Bank which will broadcast the initiatives and achievements of Azizi Bank over the last one decade and its future endeavors in Afghanistan and will reach to more than 130,000 subscribers across the globe. Speaking on the course of the interview with Nowrozi, the organizers have praised the efforts of Azizi Bank towards women empowerment and corporate social responsibility initiatives. (PR)

(7) Kazakhstan ...

fortified flour. We had also requested the same from Pakistan, but they never accepted it," Khan Jan Alokozay, deputy head of ACCI said.

A number of food importers meanwhile welcomed the move and said using fortified foods will decrease health issues among Afghans.

"If fortified foods are imported into the country, it will be to the benefit of our people," said Abdulwahid, a flour importer.

"Currently, a lot of Kazakhstan food has replaced that of Pakistan at markets. We will import more Kazakh products if its quality is better,"

said Zahir, a food seller.

According to statistics, Afghanistan needs six million tons of flour a year, and 50 percent of this is imported.

Owners of flour processing plants said however that instead of importing flour, government should invest in the industry and fortify its own flour.

Food fortification is the addition of key vitamin and minerals, such as iron, folic acid, iodine, vitamin A, and zinc, to staple foods to improve their nutritional content and address a nutritional gap in a population.

A safe and effective means of improving public health that has been used around the world since the 1920s, it provides a nutritional benefit without requiring consumers to change eating habits or purchase patterns. In the developing world, commonly fortified foods include staple products such as salt, maize flour, wheat flour, sugar, vegetable oil, and rice. (Tolnews)

(8) Afghanistan's Key...

system in a bid to expedite the services provision.

Following the signing of the agreement, Minister Naderi said the housing enterprises was facing massive cash crisis during the past years but the recent activities including the restoration of the Dar-ul-Aman Palace reflects the growing prominence of the enterprises which are remarkable.

Syed Sadat Naderi, the Minister of Urban Development and Housing assumed charge of the ministry earlier in 2015 and since then has been emphasizing on the greater importance of the fight against corruption and implementation of reforms.

He took major steps during the first few weeks since he assumed the charge of the office and launched a widespread campaign against corruption, a step which was in contrast to the other ministers and politicians who are normally sidelining their commitments after achieving votes of confidence from the lawmakers, a move which is common in countries like Afghanistan.

His initial major step was to dismiss 6 top officials of the ministry of urban development affairs for the misuse of authority, embezzlement, and bribery.

According to the officials, almost 90% of the individuals involved in the corruption have been dismissed from the ministry, either they have been arrested or they have been sacked from the ministry through the reform program. (KP)

(9) Ministry ...

counter-narcotics drive.

Laal Jan, 44, from Baghlan province, said he first started taking drugs in Pakistan ten years ago. Laal Jan underwent a two-year treatment program at Omid drug rehabilitation center where he was taught a skill.

"I started using drugs in Pakistan, now I regret my action, my children said they would not go to school unless I stop taking drugs, then I was forced to give them up," said recovered addict Laal Jan.

Mir Hassan is another recovered addict who is from Bamian province. Meanwhile, Salamat Azimi, Minister of Counter Narcotics said government was committed to its counter-narcotics campaign.

In addition, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has said that drug smuggling and production are posing serious harm to the security and stability of the country.

"We are committed to combating drug smuggling, supply and production, this would help decrease the number of addicts and to eliminate the trend in the country," said minister of counter narcotics Salamat Azimi. "Drug addicts have easy access to drugs in Kabul and the provinces, they are supplied drugs easily, this is a reason for the rise of the trend," said recovered addict Mir Hassan.

Currently thousands of Afghan youths are coping with the hazards of addiction and living under bridges in Kabul. (Tolnews)

(10) Iran Expels...

last solar year, Iran deported more than 100,000 Afghan refugees including 50 women and 2,800 orphan children. Besides that, 15,000 Afghan refugees voluntarily returned to their country from Iran last year, Naadem said.

"Iran in the past would charge 50,000 Iranian rials from each Afghan refugee family leaving the country but the amount is now increased to 500,000 rials which is unaffordable for majority of the families," he said.

He said shortage of resources, troubled route, security threats and high costs were main challenges the returning Afghan refugees faced, particularly children and women.

Ali Aqa Alizada, a resident who sold all his belongings to live with his family in Iran, said he traveled to Iran for work, but he was forcibly deported by

Iranian police last week. He traveled to Iran with his wife and four children about a year ago.

"After being arrested, Iranian forces tortured and beat us and also took all our money," he said.

"They beat us badly and snatched everything we had, they even thrown us into a pool of water and tortured us under fire-emitting sun," he said.

Shafiq, another Afghan refugee who was recently deported from Iran said: "We sold all our belongings but police took all the money from us, we now want the government to help us."

Meanwhile, Independent Human Rights Commission head for western zone, Abdul Qadir Rahimi, said evidence showed Iranians harshly treated Afghan refugees.

He said the Afghan government was responsible to resolve refugees' problems. "A special investigation about Afghan refugees is required to look into cases of refugees who are forcibly expelled from Iran," he said.

A number of civil society activists link Afghans' immigration to foreign countries to uncertain political future of Afghanistan, security threats, poverty and increasing joblessness in the country.

Abdul Qadir Kamil, a political expert, said: "Iran and Pakistan use Afghan refugees as a pressure tool against the Afghan government,"

The Iranian Consulate in Herat did not respond to Pajhwok's phone contact.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation says donor aid for returning Afghan refugees has been decreased by 30 percent. (Pajhwok)

(11) Ghani Accused ...

TOLnews reporter Sharif Amiri about rule of law.

Ghani swiftly cut Amiri off when he asked the question and said that any questions had to be in the context of his trip.

But later, Ghani responded to several questions which were not within the framework of his trip.

"The first question is whether rule of law in the National Unity Government is facing questions," asked TOLnews' reporter Amiri.

"Questions must be limited to the trip, we will respond to other questions at another time," Ghani said to Amiri.

NAI (Organization Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan) has accused Ghani of censoring the media.

"The president proved that neither he believes in the constitution on the access to information law which he himself approved, he does not believe in any of the values," said NAI chief executive Mujib Khelwatgar.

This comes after Ghani has consistently tried to portray himself as a staunch supporter of freedom of the press. (Tolnews)

(12) Court Orders ...

Bank-i-Millie Afghan Millie bank officials said the Gulzad trade centre had not paid the interest and other levies for nine months since signing the protocol.

They said after their letters to the company went unanswered, they were left with no option but to move the court against the company.

Millie bank official Javed Wafa told Pajhwok Afghan New the company currently owed \$2.6 million in actual loan and \$1.7 million in interest on the loan to the bank.

Wafa said the primary and appeals courts and the apex court had handed down their verdicts against the company and had ordered auction of Gulzad's property to recover the loan. He said the Gulzad trader centre located in Baraki area of Kabul City had been sealed by the bank over the loan default.

Millie Bank legal advisor Gulam Farooq said they moved the court of appeals after the primary court's ruling did not satisfy them.

The appellate court had ordered auctioned properties of the company owner and deputy Mohammad Arif and his sons Mohammad Daud and Mohammad Ashraf to recover the loan.

The Supreme Court upheld the appellate court's decision in the case. Legal advisor to the company, Azzatullah Tariq during an interview with Pajhwok Afghan News claimed the company had paid the loan amounting \$3.8 million.

He confirmed the court had ordered auction of Gulzad property to repay the bank loan. He said the company could not be sold six years ago and they had to sell other properties to repay the bank loan.

But he said the bank continued to insist on selling of the company's property and claim the loan was not fully cleared.

He said the bank should file a new case in the court if it believed its loan had not been fully paid. (Pajhwok)

(13) AIHRC Calls ...

and Alizai supporters will accept the

task-team's decision," said Aminullah Yarzada, a protester.

"We will continue our demonstration until the court has canceled its decision," said Abdullah, another protester.

But Herat residents questioned why Alizai had not yet been imprisoned. Some said the Ministry of Interior was unable to arrest powerful figures.

"If Alizai is innocent, then he should prove it through legal channels not through using power and closing roads," said Anahita, a Herat resident.

"If the head of the provincial council is innocent, then why he did he refuse to go to the primary court of Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Center. Herat people are worried about armed men appearing in the streets," Shugufa, a Herat resident said.

"I ask the interior ministry - that despite 15 days having passed since the court decision - why has Alizai not been arrested and jailed? The answer is that the ministry does not have the ability to arrest powerful men," Ezharullah Waqar, Kabul resident said.

The Ministry of Interior and the Attorney General's Office however refused to comment on the issue.

Kamran Alizai was sentenced to two years and six months in prison about two weeks ago by the primary court of Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Center (ACCJ) over the misuse of authority.

Alizai himself was not present at court when the sentence was handed down. (Tolnews)

(14) Uprising Group...

Turkistani said that Zahir was helping an ALP commander, Hakim in fight against the militants when faced with the Taliban ambush.

He said that the air force was asked to carry out a clearing operation in Moghul village for elimination of the militants.

On the other hand, Darzab district administrative chief, Rahmatullah Hashar said that a total of four security posts were exist in Darzab but all of them had been fallen to militants.

He said 300 Taliban and Daesh or so called Islamic State (IS) rebels jointly stormed security posts in Darzab. The son of Tahir Yoldash, a notorious rebel commander was also seen fighting alongside the militants.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed two policemen were killed in Darzab and two others in Faizabad district during two separate clashes with Taliban militants.

An Afghan forces' vehicle was also captured and a policeman arrested by Taliban in Fazabad, he added.

However, Faizabad district chief, Sayera Shakib Sadat, rejected the Taliban claims and said an operation against the militants was underway in unstable areas around Faizabad district.

She said security situation in her district was stable and no any militants' movements were reported in the area so far. (Pajhwok)

(15) US Soldier...

details and said that more information could be released later.

This comes a day after the US announced it will deploy 1,500 soldiers from Alaska to Afghanistan later this year, the US Army announced Friday.

"These soldiers train rigorously in a wide range of climates and environments. I am fully confident in their ability to excel and overcome any challenges they will face during this deployment," said Maj. Gen. Bryan Owens, the commanding general of US Army Alaska, in an Army press release.

The deployment of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, is part of a regular rotation of forces in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

US troops in Afghanistan are split between two missions - NATO's Resolute Support mission to advise Afghan security forces and the separate Freedom's Sentinel, the US counter-terrorism operation against the remnants of al-Qaeda; an emerging offshoot of Daesh; and other terrorists groups.

The US still has some 8,400 troops in Afghanistan. (Tolnews)

(16) Analysts ...

issues in the country

"Whenever the law is implemented equally on all, there is doubt, then the law will work equally on all regardless of their ethnic background," said university lecturer Hikmat Shahbaz.

Afghanistan has been grappling with security issues for the past 15 years and analysts say that ethnic issues in the country could further add to the country's problems. (Tolnews)

(17) Nabi Says ...

in the year's IPL. In his debut for SRH last week, Rashid stood out, taking two wickets for his IPL team. SRH went on to beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 35 runs. Nabi however

watched the match from the bench.

Following this match, Nabi told reporters: "We here to prove that there is talent in Afghanistan. Rashid's performance was important. It is a good start."

He did tell Hindustan Times after the match that Rashid had been "nervous, the stadium was packed and there were such big names around."

Both player meanwhile stood out during recent matches against Ireland in Noida in India but Nabi is excited to be part of this year's IPL.

"It is a fact that when my name came up for auction, I was nervous as some of the big names went unsold by then. But once Rashid and I were picked by SRH, we were delighted. It is a dream to play in the IPL," said Nabi.

Nabi said for the two to be playing in the IPL meant a lot for Afghanistan.

"The fan following is clearly growing," he added.

"I know it is very tough to get into the playing XI for SRH given the very good bench strength. But, whenever I get the chance, I am ready to prove myself," Nabi said.

"We don't feel the pressure of being the only Afghan cricketer in action. Good performances by us can help the sport in a big way and I wish many more from my country play in the next editions," he said.

"And I am eagerly awaiting to meet Muttiah Muralitharan (SRH mentor) to pick up a few tricks in the art of off-spin," he added.

Before this, Nabi's head coach in the national cricket team Lalchand Rajput believes the gradually-improving team from the war-torn nation will be ready to play Tests in another two-three years.

Spin sensation Rashid and Nabi were picked up by SRH in the IPL auction in February, a first for Afghanistan cricket, Rajput said: "These two guys playing in IPL is not just huge for them but for the entire country. It is hugely motivating for their national teammates as well."

He told the Hindustan Times that "both are world-class players who will learn a lot by sharing the dressing room with some of the biggest names in world cricket. Going forward, I think the number will only grow (Afghans in IPL)."

Afghanistan has come a long way since making their World T20 debut in 2010, having qualified for the last 50-over World Cup in Australia and recently beat Ireland across the three formats ODIs, T20 Internationals, First-Class in a series played at their adopted home ground in Greater Noida in India. (Tolnews)

(18) Rashid Scoops...

told them that I would bowl everywhere in whichever the situation the team wanted me to. They bowled me in the powerplay today and I knew that the batsmen weren't reading me well. "I had it in mind to bowl googlies and bowl leg-breaks towards the end," he said. Team captain, David Warner meanwhile called Rashid a "superstar in the making".

"Fantastic effort by the bowlers. It is one of those surfaces that is dry and the ball comes on nicely. Fantastic effort from Rash and well backed up by Bhuvni and Nehra. Credit to the curator, he is always fantastic with these surfaces. "Rashid is a superstar in the making, he adds great dynamic to our team. With Fizz out as well he helps us add balance to our side." (Tolnews)

(19) Moscow to ...

launched an investigation into the chemical attack, Zakharov said the U.S. strike on Syria is not in line with its attempts to discover truth about the incident. (Xinhua)

(20) U.S. Aircraft...

canceled a previously planned port visit to Australia and diverted to the Western Pacific.

The Strike Group, deployed from San Diego, California, to the Western Pacific since Jan. 5, participated in numerous bilateral exercises with the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force and South Korean Navy in the past three months. (Xinhua)

(21) Assad must...

was impossible with Assad in power. "There's not any sort of option where a political solution is going to happen with Assad at the head of the regime," she told the "State of the Union" programme. (AFP)

(22) Iranian President...

emission tomography (PET). The center in the meantime will produce a device namely "Germanium-Gallium Generator" which is used in extracting the positron-emitting isotopes.

Meanwhile, a project was inaugurated in Qazvin Province which includes an industrial exposure center. Under another project in Yazd Province, the processing of uranium ore will be carried out. (Trend)