

(1) Kerry Aims...

political, ethnic and geographic factions to put away those factional divisions and work together for the common good," Kerry said at the start of the U.S.-Afghanistan bilateral commission with Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani.

Kerry met Nicholson and spoke to a small number of U.S. troops at the heavily guarded NATO headquarters in Kabul. DISPUTED ELECTION

He was also scheduled to meet Ghani, the victor of Afghanistan's disputed 2014 election, and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, the runner-up. The pair share power under the 2014 National Unity Government agreement.

The political deal that Kerry brokered suggested that their power-sharing arrangement would end in September 2016, which has fueled political manoeuvring in Kabul. An opposition movement close to former president Hamid Karzai is pushing to have a say on the way forward.

The legal decree that enacted the deal, however, provided no clearly binding time limit, leaving open the possibility that the National Unity government, in one form or another, could continue for the rest of Ghani's five-year mandate.

Kerry is expected to make that point while in Afghanistan, a stance that U.S. officials hope may help quell some of the infighting.

"Though the political agreement calls for this to be a two-year agreement, the decree doesn't spell out an end date," said a senior U.S. official on condition of anonymity. "We ourselves here don't view that there is going to be an end ... in September."

U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olsen made a similar point more obliquely with reporters in Washington on Monday.

"The Secretary wants to signal continuing U.S. support for the national unity government," he said. "It's at the 18-month mark in a five-year term."

In Warsaw in July, the NATO Western security alliance is expected to decide how to fund Afghanistan's security forces in the coming years and donor nations will gather in Brussels in October to make civilian aid pledges to Afghanistan.

Kerry said U.S. and Afghan officials needed "to make certain that we use the time between now and the meeting in Warsaw and the meeting in Brussels to make sure that we are putting Afghanistan's best foot forward".

Noting the dates, Andrew Wilder, an Afghanistan expert at the United States Institute for Peace think tank, said "the last thing we need is a big political crisis calling into question the legitimacy of the national unity government in September". (Reuters)

(2) WJ Approves...

Ashraf Ghani's unity government has been heavily criticized for its inability to fill key posts due to political infighting. The Defense Ministry and the intelligence agency are among the institutions being run by caretakers. Critics say the failure to fill the two important security slots has hampered the Afghan security forces' counter-insurgency operations.

Reconstruction efforts The United States has spent some \$68 billion to build and train the Afghan army as well as the police force. But the reconstruction effort is in a "perilous state," according to U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko.

"Afghanistan has had the lead responsibility for its own security for more than a year now, and is struggling with a four-season insurgency, high attrition, and capability challenges," said Sopko while delivering a speech at Harvard University Thursday.

He has also described corruption in Afghanistan as "an existential threat" to U.S. reconstruction efforts.

"Corruption undermined the legitimacy and viability of the Afghan state, fueled grievances that strengthened the growing insurgency, and sapped resources

from the reconstruction effort," noted Sopko. (VoA)

(3) Foreign Help...

analysts doubt talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban will occur at all.

"There is no peace process," said Matthew Chris Mason, a national security affairs professor at the Strategic Studies Institute, part of the U.S. Army War College.

"The Taliban has said emphatically they are going to have no part of it," Mason said via SKYPE.

Saturday's session is the third meeting of the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission. Kerry said the group would discuss security and cooperation, good governance and electoral reforms and cooperation and development.

The meeting comes ahead of the July NATO summit in Warsaw, in which the multi-national group will assess its assistance to Afghan security forces.

Another goal for Kerry during his visit is to show continued U.S. support for Afghanistan's national unity government.

The United States helped broker the deal that produced the power-sharing arrangement between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah that was agreed to after the disputed results of the country's election two years ago. National unity has been an elusive goal, however, and Afghanistan's people appear to be deeply dissatisfied with their government. (VoA)

(4) NATO-Russia...

decided to suspend all practical cooperation with Russia in April 2014 in response to what it called "Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine."

"This decision stands. At the same time, NATO kept channels of political dialogue and military communication open," the NATO chief said.

Moscow has repeatedly denied support for pro-Russian rebels in the conflict in Ukraine. (Monitoring Desk)

(5) Dozens Rally ..

confirmed problems in the passport department at the police headquarters.

"In order to address people's problems, the local administration has asked the Ministry of Interior to dispatch some of the passport printing machines to Herat," he said.

"The passport department has adopted a new strategy under which problems in issuing passports would be removed," he said. (Pajhwok)

(6) Karzai ...

by Afghans of the foreign occupiers that carried out those actions.

In Paktika, the presence of armed resistance against the Government is obvious, because there are several groups, including the Taliban movement, which maintain operability and attack local and foreign troops.

Irregular groups use several methods, including placing explosive devices in places where military vehicles are suppose to transit, although they often also cause civilian casualties. (Agencies)

(7) Several Kapisa ...

of corruption in logistic and fuel related issues and have been sent to Kabul for further interrogation, he said.

But Kapisa police chief Brig. Gen. Abdul Karim Faiq said he had not signed any papers in which the detainees were accused of corruption.

However, another police source said 20 employees, including the logistics manager, the security department head and some other officers had been sent to Kabul for interrogation in connection with embezzlement in 25,000 litres of fuel.

According to the source, the team has also been interrogating Faiq, who denied commenting on the issue. (Pajhwok)

(8) TAPI

will provide a sustainable source of energy for Afghanistan, help catalyze investment and create local job opportunities," said Mir Ahmed Jawid Sadat, Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Mines and Petroleum. "Critically it also provides a mechanism for renew-

ing partnerships with our 'Silk Road' neighbors, and shows the desire of the region for peace, stability and security through economic development."

TPCL will build, own, and operate the TAPI pipeline, which once completed, will transport up to 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from Turkmenistan for the next 30 years. The pipeline stretches about 1,600 kilometers from the Afghan/Turkmen border to the Pakistan/Indian border.

"TAPI exemplifies ADB's key role in promoting regional cooperation and integration over the past 20 years. It will unlock economic opportunities, transform infrastructure, diversify the energy market for Turkmenistan, and enhance energy security for the region," said Sean O'Sullivan, Director General of ADB's Central and West Asia Department.

Acting as TAPI secretariat since 2003 and as transaction advisor since 2013, ADB has been instrumental in the progress of the TAPI pipeline to date. In the latter role, ADB helped establish TPCL, select Turkengaz as consortium leader, and finalize the Shareholders and Investment Agreements. (Tolonews)

(9) Hashish Addiction ...

If government leaders and Ashraf Ghani hear my voice, I want to call on them to concentrate on youths," another resident Murtaza said.

But, the question is why addiction to hashish is becoming a common trend among the Afghan youths? "The youths need to feel happy and be optimistic over the future. They must feel that they are respected and honored. Taking the situation in our country into consideration, the youth need to go toward forming social groups, cultural groups, sports and other social benefit associations," said Afghan psychologist Sayed Rohullah Rizwani.

Meanwhile, a number of doctors have also warned of the increase in addiction to hashish. "In the preliminary stage, the use of hashish impacts the nervous system. Gradually the nervous system becomes weaker. For instance, memory and intellect become weaker and even there is no appetite for food," an Afghan physician Mohammad Younas Haidari said.

According to psychologists, often people in the traditional Afghan society are reluctant to show an interest in entertainment. But they say that cinema, arts, theater, dance, music concerts and sports events could be good alternatives to overcome the issue of drug addiction. (Tolonews)

(10) Herat Cycling ...

central Asian countries as well with the message of peace and friendship.

Abdul Ghafor said: "I consider spreading the peace message as my moral duty". While stressing the importance of security, Ghafor said all civilians should take part in achieving peace across Afghanistan.

He asked the unity government to accept reasonable demands of the Taliban for the sake of bringing to a halt the fighting.

He said they had conducted a similar journey four years ago and the 12-member cyclist team covered 13 kilometers from Herat City to Tehran in 16 days. (Pajhwok)

(11) Inside a ... regularly visited women and children's centre in Calais and was often alone. He is in the care of social services. (Pajhwok)

(12) 10 Groups... group in the Mata Khan district, the governor's spokesman said. Nabiullah Pirkhel told Pajhwok Afghan News the group was busted on Saturday morning. He said the three-member gang had been involved in stealing cars and they were arrested along with the stolen vehicles.

He said the detainees had been referred to the attorney's office. Handing over the stolen cars to their actual owners, Governor Aminullah Shariq said security forces were day and night working to maintain security across the country.

A resident of Argun district, Mu-

hiduddin, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the detained persons stole his car on Wednesday in Sharan, the provincial capital.

He said he was happy that the car-liters had been arrested and he was handed over his car.

He said car-lifting incidents had increased in the province and security forces should intensify their efforts at arresting the thieves. (Pajhwok)

(13) 2 Killed,...

the RubatPai area of Zinda Jan district on Friday.

The men had gone to the area for sightseeing when kidnapped. But all of them were rescued safely after an armed clash between security forces and kidnapers, Ahmadi added. (Pajhwok)

(14) 33 Militant...

The update further added that 4 militants were killed and 8 others were wounded during a separate operation in Kunduz.

The Afghan forces also killed militants during separate operations conducted in Kandahar, Helmand and Khost provinces, MoD added.

According to MoD, at least 9 Afghan soldiers also lost their lives during the operations conducted to suppress the insurgency activities of the internal and external terror groups. (KP)

(15) Explosives...

Kunduzi praised the security forces for thwarting the terror plot that could have caused heavy casualties.

No militant group has so far commented on the incident. Taliban and Islamic State (IS) fighters are active in the province, bordering Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(16) Injured ...

Mohammad, who has just been promoted to the sixth grade, used his handcart for shifting people's luggage from one place to another to eke out a living.

Faced with dire financial woes, the man grumbled no one bothered reaching out to his family. He is impatiently awaiting his son's recuperation. Cash-strapped as he is, Qayyum had to borrow 280,000 afghanis for his son's treatment.

Advised by doctor to shift Mohammad to Pakistan or any other country for better medical care, a palpably helpless Qayyum said with a tinge of irony in his voice he could not afford taking Mohammad to Kabul, but they wanted him to go abroad.

The Afghanistan Natural Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) has provided them with wheat, oil and rice, according to the man, who has received no further assistance from any source.

This anguished father asked the government and charitable organisations to help treat his son. During the interview, a man named Saadatullah paid 20,000 in cash assistance to Mohammad, who has already received 50,000 afis in aid.

Aziza Jalis, a lawmaker from Sar-i-Pul, wrote on her Facebook page the victims of war had been ignored callously.

Statistics from the Red Crescent Society (RCS) say 3,500 civilians were killed and 7,500 wounded in the Afghanistan conflict in 2015. On average scale, 10 civilians were killed and 20 others wounded as a result of clashes on a daily basis. (Pajhwok)

(17) German Migrant ...

allow Afghans from areas of the country considered safe to be sent home, but negotiations have been ongoing for months and are not yet concluded. (AP)

(18) 19 Yemeni

Abdu-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, is 45 km away from the port city of Aden, the country's temporary capital.

Yemen, an impoverished Arab country, has been gripped by one of the most active regional al-Qaida insurgencies in the Middle East. (Xinhua)

(19) DPRK

tip its intercontinental ballistic rockets with nuclear warheads and put the U.S. mainland within their striking range, he said.

Kim called the test "an eye-catching event" that demonstrated the DPRK's national defense poten-

tial and a victory that "glorifies the 7th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea," which is slated for early May and considered the biggest event of the year for the country.

On March 24, state media reported that Kim guided a ground test for a heavy-lift solid-fuel rocket engine and its separation, adding that the test was successful. He said his country is well on its way to achieving its national defense goals for this year. (Xinhua)

(20) Five Refugees...

from Greek islands, under the EU-Turkey deal to cope with the refugee crisis.

The flow of refugees and migrants into Greece from the Turkish coasts continues in reduced numbers. According to UNHCR, 483 people arrived at Greece this week, comparing to 2,618 arrivals last week.

More than 1 million people crossed the Aegean Sea to Greece from Turkey since the start of 2015 and continued their journey to central and northern European countries. (Xinhua)

(21) Hundreds ...

the city of Homs told Xinhua.

Saturday's batch is the second to enter Palmyra, as nearly 400 civilians returned last Thursday, the source said on condition of anonymity.

"Today's number is higher than that of Thursday. We have got hundreds of people heading back to their homes in Palmyra," the source added.

Palmyra, which contains 2000-year-old monuments and UNESCO world heritage, constitutes of the ancient part of the city and a residential one.

Following the Syrian army's recapture of the city late last month, the residential city was empty, except from the IS booby-traps and roadside bombs.

The Syrian army with the help of Russian sappers managed to dismantle hundreds of bombs to pave the way for the return of the civilians.

Those who are now being taken back to their homes are residents who had managed to flee the city ahead of the IS attack last May, as the rest were taken by the IS when the Syrian army approached to reclaim the city on March 27. (Xinhua)

(22) Taiwan Leader...

its own claims, even though it has been locked in a decades-long standoff with Beijing, which considers Taiwan a breakaway province.

Pengia, considered the northernmost part of Taiwan's territory, is not contested and is home to about 40 residents, a weather station and coast guard facilities. It lies some 75 miles (120 kilometers) west of the Japanese-controlled Senkakus, which are hotly disputed by China, in particular.

Taiwan also claims the islands, although its conflict with Japan has been considerably less heated, with the two sides reaching fishing agreements in 2013. (AP)

(23) Nigeria...

you to sustain the tempo," he added.

The president said one of the top priorities of his administration was to enhance the capacity of the armed forces to enable them discharge their duties effectively. "We will continue to provide the needed support for the armed forces for efficient service delivery," he told his audience.

He also commended the zeal of the armed forces in tackling other security issues across the country.

Also speaking, Lt-Gen. Tukur Buratai, Chief of Army Staff, urged Nigerian Army personnel to remain professionally responsive and loyal to the constitution of the country.

Buratai lauded the government for its continuous support for the armed forces in tackling insecurity in the North-East. (Xinhua)

(24) G7 Should

China appreciates the British side's remarks of dismissing calls for "Hong Kong independence," said Wang.

On China-UK relations, the minister called on the two sides to continue close high-level exchanges and enhance mutual

understanding and trust so as to ensure a good beginning of the "golden era" of bilateral ties.

Chinese President Xi Jinping made a state visit to Britain in October. The two countries are implementing the results of the visit and expanding cooperation in various fields, according to Wang.

Wang and Hammond also exchanged views on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue and the political settlement process in Syria. (Xinhua)

(25) Pakistan ...

the missile's successful test as an addition into PN's strategic power against the enemy and said that Pakistan Navy will continue its efforts to modernise itself to meet defence and security challenges of present day maritime world. (Agencies)

Eastern Ukraine Sees Increase in Fighting, 2 Deaths Reported

MOSCOW - Ukraine has reported a sharp increase in attacks by Russia-backed separatists around the government-held town of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine, resulting in at least one civilian death.

The rebels Saturday also reported increased shelling from government forces and the death of one of their fighters.

The fighting that broke out in eastern Ukraine two years ago has killed more than 9,100 people and left territory under rebel control. A cease-fire agreement signed last year has significantly reduced the violence, but it is regularly violated by both sides and the political settlement has not been implemented.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe says in its most recent report that its observers recorded a slightly higher number of cease-fire violations on Thursday compared with the previous day, including in Avdiivka. (AP)

Austrian Interior Minister Behind Tough Migrant Policy to Change Jobs

ZURICH - Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner, the face of Austria's increasingly tough policy on migrants, is to become deputy governor of Lower Austria province, switching roles with fellow conservative Wolfgang Sobotka, Austrian media said on Saturday.

Mikl-Leitner, a member of the People's Party in its broad ruling coalition with the Social Democrats, cracked down on an uncontrolled influx of migrants last year as an initial public outpouring of sympathy for those fleeing war and poverty faded.

She and fellow conservatives led the push for tighter border restrictions, and she coordinated a cascade of similar measures introduced by Balkan countries to the south that effectively shut down the main migrant route into Europe from Greece.

Mikl-Leitner was especially critical of Germany, Austria's neighbor to the north, after it restricted the flow of migrants onto its territory at the end of last year, triggering a backlog in the small Alpine republic. (Reuters)

Belgium Charges 4 with Participating in Terrorism; Frees 2

BRUSSELS - Belgian prosecutors have charged four more suspects with "participating in terrorist acts" linked to the deadly suicide bombings in Brussels.

The Belgium's Federal Prosecution Office says Saturday that Mohamed Abrini, Osama K., Herve B. M. and Bilal E. M. were all charged with participating in "terrorist murders" and the "activities of a terrorist group" in relation to the March 22 bombings in Brussels' airport and subway. The attacks killed 32 people and wounded 270 others.

The statement says two other suspects arrested in the last few days have been released. (AP)