

(1) UNAMA Records ...

to the conflict to take all necessary measures to protect civilians," said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA. Haysom said: "The parties in particular should refrain from using mortars and rockets in any areas populated by civilians."

In the first three months of 2015, civilian casualties from ground engagements rose by eight per cent compared to the same period in 2014. Ground fighting between pro-government forces and anti-government elements caused 521 civilian casualties, with 136 civilians killed and 385 injured. Haysom said UNAMA was particularly concerned about the impact on civilians of further conflict-related operations by the Afghan National Security Forces and anti-government elements in the coming months.

Total civilian deaths and injuries in the first quarter of 2015 followed the record high levels of 2014. Between 1 January and 31 March, UNAMA documented 1,810 civilian casualties (655 deaths and 1,155 injured), a two per cent decrease from the same period in 2014.

The latest figures further demonstrated a continued rise in women casualties with an increase of 15 per cent on the same period last year. Conflict-related violence killed 55 women and injured 117. Child casualties surpassed the unprecedented levels recorded last year with 430 child civilian casualties (123 deaths and 307 injured). In line with increased ground fighting in civilian populated areas, ground engagements remained the leading cause of women and children civilian casualties, the statement added. Targeted killings were the third leading cause of civilian deaths and injuries. In the first three months of 2015, civilian casualties from targeted killings increased by 34 per cent, with UNAMA documenting 309 civilian casualties (217 killed and 92 injured) in 192 separate incidents.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for 48 incidents of targeted killings, including deliberate killings of tribal elders, judges, prosecutors and civilian government workers. Under international humanitarian law, a civilian is any person who is not taking a direct part in hostilities. "The United Nations calls on the Taliban to cease all attacks against persons who are not taking a direct part in hostilities," said Georgette Gagnon, Director of Human Rights for UNAMA. (Pajhwok)

(2) MPs Blast ...

irresponsible statements of the government's leaders are more dangerous for Afghanistan than the Taliban and Daesh (Islamic State)," he remarked. He urged the unity government's leaders to intensify their efforts at reversing the tide of insecurity so that the bloodshed of Afghans could be stopped.

His colleague from southeastern Paktika province, Mohammad Osman Rahmani, said the Afghans had braved threats to their lives to vote for the two leaders, who had been unable to provide them security.

"The nation is drowned in blood and government officials are inattentive to their responsibilities. If they fail to improve the country's security, they are answerable to the nation and the God."

Lawmaker Rahmatullah Khan Achakzai said the unity government leaders had differences over matters of personal interests, not national. "They are after their personal benefits, why would they provide us security. The chief executive officer's home is in India and whereabouts of the president's home are unknown."

CEO Abdullah's home is in Kartai-Parwan area of Kabul and President Ashraf Ghani is living with the first lady at the Presidential Palace. Achakzai said if the government did not fulfill its responsibilities, it would soon witness a widespread uprising against it nationwide.

The Senate's first deputy chairman, Mohammad Alam Ezediyar, said the national unity government seemed to have no political will to improve security in the country and resolve problems facing the nation. He said if the government wanted peace to prevail in the country, it should hold talks with countries supporting terrorism. Chairman Fazl Hadi Muslimyar also expressed his concern over the growing insecurity and asked the government to fulfill its responsibility in this regard.

He asked senators to hold talks with the president and the CEO over the recent wave of insecurity

and the proposed peace talks with the Taliban.

After his inauguration in late September, President Ghani visited Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China and the United States to muster support for reviving the stalled peace talks with the insurgents, raising hopes for peace.

But the hopes later started dying as no progress could be seen in the effort to bring the rebels to the negotiating table.

Lawmakers raised their hands to approve Muslimyar's call for meeting the president and the CEO over the deteriorating security situation and the peace process. Muslimyar said time for meeting the two leaders would be sought through letters.

Attempts at seeking comments from the presidential spokesman could not succeed, but the spokesman had recently denied any differences between the president and the CEO, saying the two leaders were trying to streamline the government's affairs. (Pajhwok)

(3) No Room for...

insurgents to create mayhem in the country.

He said the insurgents did not have the capability to face security forces on the battle ground. "There are people who call themselves members of Daesh but they cannot enjoy safe havens in Afghanistan," he remarked.

The spring offensive by militants has gained momentum in Kabul, Balkh, Khost, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Badakhshan and other provinces. Sediqi said insurgents had more than 85% of casualties as security forces were already on offensive against insurgents. Police would also pay special attention to secure key highways.

Currently, at least 12 clearing operations were underway across the country, he said, adding that a major anti-militants offensive code-named Zulfiqar in southern Helmand province resulted in killing of nearly 500 insurgents and seizing huge caches of ammunitions. (Pajhwok)

(4) Govt. Urged...

lives so far, according to Attaullah Khogyani, the governor's spokesman.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News the issue was thoroughly discussed the joint meeting. He quoted Jafari as saying that the source of contention between the two tribes a grazing land in Behsud district as both the parties claimed its ownership.

Armed clashes that had erupted time and again between the two sides had left many dead and wounded.

In addition, the conflict caused financial losses to both the sides. The government should interfere and find a durable solution to the lingering problem, the public representative added.

Merwais Ameri, another provincial council member, said some elements were out to keep the dispute alive for their own interests. Humayun Aziz, an elder from Kuchi tribe, said a large number of nomads had arrived in the province, raising concerns of afresh violence between the tribes.

Aziz demanded the government find a lasting solution to the problem to avoid further losses.

Acting Governor Abdul Majeed Khogyani assured the provincial council members that he had urged the central government to help resolve the problem.

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, he said, had the plan to task a grand Jirga to mediate between the two tribes soon. (Pajhwok)

(5) Sikhs Celebrate ...

for their children. "Our children currently study up to sixth class in our religious places which are not suitable for learning."

He said the government should build separate schools for them so that their children could study in a safe environment.

Mohammad Asif Shinwari, the education department spokesman, said a school had been established at the community's religious place in Jalalabad, where 150 students were enrolled.

He said students could study in the school up to class eight and the current batch had reached class four. He said the provincial government would upgrade the education facility to a high school in future.

Meanwhile, Kabir Haqmal, the Education Ministry's spokesman, said Sikhs like other Afghans could send their children to government-run schools.

Foolproof security arrangements were put place as Sikhs celebrated

the Vaisakhi festival. Around 250 Skih families are living in Nangarhar. (Pajhwok)

(6) Women and....

developed to prevent brick producing plants from using child labor. Families from Sorkh Rod district are forced into slave labor in return for loans made to them by the owners of brick manufacturing plants.

Often entire families, including children, are forced to work to pay off these loans. As a result the children are taken out of school.

"We are poor and we owe money, that is why we have to come to work from early morning to night. This work is hard but we need to study to become police or doctors in the future," says Laila, one of the child laborers.

"We come from morning to evening and work as laborers to pay our debts" says Khadija, another child laborer.

One father told how he owed 100,000 AFN and was forced to put his children to work to help pay back the loan.

"I owe 100,000 AFN and my children along with female family members are working together to repay our loan and finish it off," says Ahmadullah.

A number of Nangarhar provincial council members confirm the harsh working conditions imposed on some residents of Sorkh Rod district and have asked for government intervention.

"Many families are captives, we want government to save the families from captivity," says Obaidullah Shinwari, member of Nangarhar provincial council.

Directorate of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled of Nangarhar has said that they have presented a possible solution to Kabul in regards to this. "We have programs this year to help the poor families," says Fazel Hady Fazelzai, Director of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled.

Meanwhile, the Independent Human Rights Commission in eastern Afghanistan has shown concern over child labor. "Children have the right to play and get education, and the government of Afghanistan must ensure the rights of children," says Abdul Hakeem Naseri, Regional Office at the Independent Human Right Commission of Afghanistan.

In addition to Sorkh Rod district, child labor practices can also be found in parts of Jalalabad city. Residents here have also asked government to intervene. (Tolnews)

(7) More Than 20 ...

soldiers fought off the insurgents for more than six hours - without air support.

Sources said that the absence of a plan for the military forces to prevent such an attack resulted in the deaths of the ANA soldiers and in others being taken hostage.

There has however been speculation around the numbers killed and taken hostage.

Jawid Kohistani, a military analyst said that "about 70 were killed, taken captive or beheaded by the insurgents". He also said that the insurgents seized large amounts of military equipment. "The National Directorate of Security (NDS) was told about this a few days ago, but unfortunately they didn't pay attention to it", he said.

Badakhshan representatives in the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the Parliament), said that they informed leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) about the attack but no officials have been sent to the province to assess the situation.

They also said: "We visited President [Ashraf Ghani] and told him hundreds of foreign and local terrorists had gathered there. But on that night there was no security officials," Safiullah Muslim, an MP, said. But the Ministry of Defence (MoD) officials said the situation is now under control in Jurm and ANA soldiers have returned to their posts.

Deputy MoD spokesman Dawlat Waziri confirmed the attack but rejected claims that far more soldiers were killed and taken hostage than officially reported.

He said the Special Forces had since launched an operation in the area. As yet, the military forces have launched 21 operations in 12 provinces and have already been involved in clashes with the insurgents.

The Meshrano Jirga (the Upper House) has however criticized the NUG for negligence over the management of the Badakhshan attack. They have said: "It's enough! For how long should we read the

Fatiha (memorial ceremony)?" (Tolnews)

(8) ANSF Capable...

2014 Fighting Season - preventing the Taliban from disrupting national elections and providing the time and space for the formation of the Afghan Unity Government."

He said that ANSDF have proven to be resilient and capable, and the country's forces have largely been able to defend against direct insurgent attacks.

When asked about NATO's new mission, he said the Resolute Support is participating in a train, advise, and assist role. In this capacity, "we are committed to continue pressuring insurgent networks until they are rendered incapable of conducting significant operations against Afghan government and the Afghan population."

He went on to say that "advising and assistance is taking place at the headquarters level, advisers and Afghan counterparts meet routinely to discuss important security issues and offer their experience when appropriate. This close cooperation with ANSDF will ensure Afghanistan is never a safe haven for international terrorism again.

As Gen. John F. Campbell, Resolute Support commander has said: "We'll continue to train, advise, and assist the ANSDF and ASI at the operational and strategic levels so that they can sustain their hard-fought gains and win the war."

Referring to Helmand operation code-named "Zulfaqar," he said that the ANSDF was conducting joint operations in north Helmand to clear the area of insurgents and disrupt their preparations for fighting season 2015.

"These are complex operations that were planned and are being led by the Afghan National Army's (ANA) 215 Corps. The operations also involve several ANSDF units to include the Afghan Air Force (AAF), Afghan special operations forces, and elements of the Afghan National Police (ANP)."

ANSDF elements in adjacent districts/provinces are conducting supporting operations as well and these operations demonstrate the resolve of Afghan government and reach of the ANSDF as they continue to project a significant presence into this contested region.

More specifically, they demonstrate the emerging capabilities of the ANSDF to plan and execute complex joint operations to include artillery with the D-30 122mm howitzer and mortar fires while coordinating with the Afghan Air Force (AAF) to incorporate Mi-17s, Mi35s and PC 12s to support mobility, aerial resupply, aerial fires and Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), he added.

On President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah's recent US visit, he said that by almost all metrics, progress in Afghanistan has been significant in the last 13 years; the ANSDF and Coalition provided the necessary security to enable these improvements.

According to Gen. John F. Campbell, Resolute Support commander, "2015 really is a critical year for Afghanistan to demonstrate transparency and accountability. I talk to President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah all the time on this topic. What I tell them is if they get the right leadership and hold people accountable it will solve 70% of their issues."

He said it was also essential that they demonstrate to the international community that they were doing the right things in order to maintain support for funding - because they could not do it on their own. "I think we have a huge opportunity for a little bit of continued investment with the international community to really make Afghanistan a win here," he remarked.

President Ghani knows he must demonstrate this to maintain support from the international community. The president has embraced his role as Commander-in-Chief and taken decisive action with political and military leaders to address issues affecting administrative structures and military operations.

Ghani has also taken significant strides to improve relations with regional neighbors and worked to provide timely responses to allegations of corruption, which demonstrates a commitment to eliminating corruption and maintaining transparency.

"Continued progress in Afghanistan is only possible through a commitment from all levels within the government of Afghanistan along with the support and encouragement from NATO Allies,

partner countries and the wider international community," he reiterated.

A core component of Coalition Forces support to Afghan Security Institutions was sustainment, he said, adding that meant ensuring today's gains were lasting and that troops were properly equipped to meet challenges.

"We do expect to see significant improvement in the AAF's operational capability for this fighting season as their capacity has increased from five armed Mi-35 helicopters to 29 helicopters that now include Mi-35, Mi-17 and MD-530F. Additionally, 240 Afghan Tactical Air Coordinators have completed initial training requirements and will be equipped in the spring with follow-on training to support effective air-ground integration. It is of notable interest that the AAF gains have enabled remarkable progress in ANSDF casualty evacuation (CAEVAC) since 2012," he stated.

Since the ANSDF assumed the lead for security operations during the 2013 fighting season, they experienced an increased operational tempo by a factor of four in a single year, he said, adding that there was a corresponding increase in ANSDF casualties.

However, he said despite the increased casualties in 2014 from leading security operations, no ANSDF unit has been defeated or declared non-effective. Casualties and attrition rates are challenges, and President Ghani along with ANSDF leaders are actively taking measures to address them, he noted.

When asked what steps were being taken to decrease casualties' ratio among ANSF, he said that Afghans have worked hard to reduce casualties. "They've done this through medical training and increasing their medical evacuation capability." (Pajhwok)

(9) Ghazni Rally ...

Herat-Kabul highway.

No group, including the Taliban, has so far asserted responsibility for the abduction that has turned into a serious issue for the people and the government.

Ali Reza, another protester, urged the government not to spare any effort at securing the release of the hostages. "Sometimes Taliban kill us and sometimes Daesh. But the people of Ghazni are united."

Days after the abduction, a major operation to rescue the men was carried out in Arghandab and Khak-i-Afghan districts of Zabul province.

Many insurgents, including foreign fighters, were killed during the rescue mission, but no clue to the whereabouts of the hostages could be ascertained.

A 25-member delegation of tribal elders from Ghazni travelled between Zabul and Pakistani city of Quetta for talks with Taliban leaders to get the hostages freed, but their efforts failed to bear fruits. Some officials and residents in Ghazni had said the kidnappers had shifted some of the hostages to Nawa, Gilan and Ab Band districts from Zabul, but their claim could not be verified.

On Friday, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah said all possible steps would be taken to ensure safe release of the abducted passengers. (Pajhwok)

(10) Islamic Banking ...

governmental and private banks in the country, seven of them have Islamic banking system," he informed. Hadewal quoted a survey, saying more than 95 per cent of the Afghan population was in favor of Islamic banking, forcing them to include the system in the banking law of the country.

Akhund Jan Rastaqi, an advisor at the central bank, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had sent a draft of the banking law to parliament, hoping the national assembly would pass it soon. (Pajhwok)

(11) India's BLK...

Ambassador of Afghanistan to India, HE Shaida Mohammad Abdali accompanied by the Embassy's Economic Counsellor Mr Sayed Mujtaba Ahmadi and Press Secretary Mr Zubair Juenda were also present at this event.

A delegation of four headed by Afghanistan's Public Health Minister Dr Ferozudin Feroz, while on a visit to India for a SAARC health conference, met the management team of BLK Super Speciality Hospital. In March a team from BLK Super Speciality Hospital led by Director Mr Naresh Kapoor and cardiac surgeon Dr Ajay Kaul had visited Afghanistan and met the

Health Minister and the process was initiated.

"We are pleased to get into this agreement with the Government of Afghanistan. We are certain that our state-of-the-art infrastructure coupled with pool of highly talented doctors shall be able to strengthen the Ministry of Public Health towards ensuring robust healthcare services for the people," said Dr Kaushik.

Dr Osmani said, "We look forward to a mutually rewarding and enduring relationship with BLK Super Speciality Hospital." He informed that three Kabul-based hospitals - Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital, Isteqal Hospital and, Khair Khana Hospital have been selected for where BLK Super Sepciality Hospital will provide consultation in different specialities through teleconferencing.

Additionally, BLK Super Speciality Hospital shall offer Residency Training Program for Afghan Medical Personnel in the areas of Cardiology, Oncology, Pathology, Brain Surgery, Surgical Gastroenterology and Liver Transplant at its premises in India subject to the rules and provisions prescribed by Medical Council of India and other authorities. The hospital shall explore possibilities for follow-up training and capacity building activities, where feasible, as part of technical cooperation. It shall also provide training to the managers, doctors and allied health staff working on different projects of MoPH in order to inculcate knowledge that is necessary to manage successfully the projects of MoPH. (PR)

(12) Kunduz Displaced ...

livelihood for our families. The government should secure our areas to ensure our early return," he added.

Last month, a contingent of 1,000 army personnel was deployed to Kunduz. Local officials hoped security would improve accordingly. (Pajhwok)

(13) Jawzjan Drinking...

dug deep wells, consumed clean water, but a majority of residents lacked access to safe drinking water.

Ghulam Sakhi, a resident of Mardyan district, said: "We have easy access to everything such as oil, fuel, food but no access to drinking water." He said water in wells in their areas tasted salty and people had to use water from natural streams, which was not available always. Mohammad Amin, a resident of Shiberghan, said the lack of drinking water had become a serious issue that needed attention to be addressed. He said the use of unsafe water caused different kinds of diseases among residents. (Pajhwok)

(14) 2,300 More...

Aminullah Patyani informed of 2,300 graduates, 700 of them were officers who completed their four months rigorous training.

The remaining soldiers had completed their three months training. He recalled the training tenure for ANA officers was three months.

Ghulam Qadir Mohammadi, one of the graduates, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "We are ready to defend our country even if it costs our lives." With the newly graduates, the number of armed forces reached to 200,000 security personnel. (Pajhwok)

(15) District Mayor...

about corruption in municipality to the provincial headquarters and finally the mayor has been detained after working for a year on the same position," he said. (Pajhwok)

(16) Taliban Bodyguard...

Helen Rimington, sitting in the Upper Tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber, ruled that if SAKA were deported the Taliban "might also be informed of his return". Rimington further added that he would also be at risk from the current Afghan government on the basis of his former membership of the Taliban, she said.

There was also evidence that he had suffered torture in the Sarpoza prison, she said, adding that "I find that the appellant would be ... at risk from the government on the basis of his perceived connection with the Taliban albeit that his account that he had left and was a bodyguard was accepted." SAKA was granted permission to remain in Britain on asylum grounds and under Article 3 of the Convention, which prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. (KP)