

(1) CEO Stresses ...

The United Nation Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), poppy had been cultivated on 224,000 hectares of land in Afghanistan showing seven percent increase comparing to the previous years.

The CEO also expressed concerns over the growing suicide attacks and insecurity in parts of the country.

He said that acting defence minister has recently arrived from Badakhshan and he would brief the cabinet about ongoing situation there.

At least 33 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers have been killed, wounded or went missing during clashes with anti-state elements in the Juram district of northeastern Badakhshan province, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) said.

(2) MoD Contract ...

Companies Organization said that based on the documents that they have received, the level of corruption is over \$200 million USD. The union has compared the fuel contract of the Ministry of Defense with that of the Ministry of Interior and said the difference in value of contracts that were signed at the same time is over \$370 million USD - meaning that the Ministry of Interior had purchased the same amount of fuel for \$370 million USD less.

Officials at the Fuel Importing Companies Organization said that there is a chance of further corruption in other major government contracts. Azrakhs Hafizi chairman of the organization said that the difference between the contract that government signed and the price that was proposed by one of the volunteer companies was \$215 million USD, meaning that government accepted a contract of \$215 million USD more. Meanwhile, officials from one of the companies that imports fuel said that on the day of tendering, they were stopped by police. They claim the "economic mafia" organized the move.

As a result they were unable tender. They claim their proposed price was \$215 million USD less than the current contract.

The Economic Commission at the House of Representatives has asked government to identify all individuals involved and to legally pursue them.

"The National Unity Government (NUG) promised to closely investigate cases of corruption in government institutions and we know that at the moment corruption has expanded to government administrations including the Ministry of Defense and others," says Freshta Amini, member of the Economic Commission at the House of Representatives.

"Corruption in the Ministry of Defense cannot be blamed on only a few people, but all individuals who are involved must be held accountable. These contracts are just a sample, there are many other contracts that might have issues," says Habeeba Danesh, a member of the Economic Commission at the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, during the National Procurement Commission meeting President Ashraf Ghani spoke of the need to tighten procurement measures for fuel contracts and for reform in the system.

Extensive corruption pertaining to the MoD's fuel contracts has seen people, including Hazrat Omer Zakhailwal come under suspicion as well as the current economic adviser to the president, senior MoD and other government officials. Ghazanfar Oil, Abdul Wase Faqiri, North One Logistics Services and General Logistics are all suspected of bribing their way through the process.

Office of Reconstruction and Development Services of Afghanistan has rejected the accusations, while the rest have not reacted. (ToloneWS)

(3) President to...

community was leaving Afghanistan some months ago, provoking thoughts that some provinces would fall into the hands of militants. "But the situation has changed and we are now out of the crisis," the president noted.

Ghani said he had been working since the unity government was formed about seven months ago on improving the country's law and order situation and monitoring the performance of security institutions in person.

He said his government was also fo-

cus on economy and good governance to improve the lifestyle of ordinary citizens. (Pajhwok)

(4) 5 More Cabinet ...

portfolio. Abdul Sattar Murad, a cabinet pick for the Ministry of Economy, said he would work in tandem to remove hurdles in the way of economic development and increased domestic production.

He promised to encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and seek support of private sector to strengthen the vital sector.

He said if elected as minister he would strive hard to build close coordination among ministries and monitor projects of national importance.

Murad pledged to provide all required facilities to the ministry's departments in the provinces and take tangible steps for eradication of corruption.

Abdul Razaq Wahidi, cabinet nominee for the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), said previous government did not work for the development of communication and technology, adding that seven percent of the national treasury was supported by revenue generated by the MCIT. He pledged to launch distribution of electronic Identity Cards if elected as minister. Wahidi recalled, currently 25 million Afghans had access to mobile and 12 million to internet services in the country.

Expansion of Noori Electronic Network, improvement of internet and mobile services with low prices, develop a sense of competition among telecommunication companies, registration of SIM cards and provision of internet facility in state-run universities would be his priorities if elected as minister.

Asadullah Zamir, minister-designate for Agriculture and Livestock, said he would work out a strategy to increase agriculture products and build facilities for its storage.

Addressing the lawmaker, Zamir said exploration of markets for agriculture goods, water management, introduction of better irrigation system, construction of dams, expansion of orchards, provision of quality seeds with low price, protection of forests and better relations with private sector would be his priorities.

In addition, he said he would protect green belt areas of capital Kabul, create poultry farms and agriculture parks.

He said if elected as minister he would provide facilities for Kochi tribe and bring necessary reforms to the ministry to eradicate growing corruption and misuse of resources. Humayun Rasa, minister designate for the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, said if Wolesi Jirga trusted him, he would remove existing problems at the ministry.

He pledged to reorganize the commerce policies, strengthen trade institutions, improve quality of goods and improve employees' capacity building.

He said investment was key for the development of economy and he would strive hard to encourage foreign and domestic investment.

Rasa pledged to pay special heed to bolster domestic products and provide facilities to exporters if he was given a trust vote. "My top priority is to make the ministry more vibrant," he added.

Ali Ahmad Osmani, minister-designate for water and energy, said bringing tangible reforms to the ministry's administrative system would be his first job to do if he won as minister.

He noted his priorities would fight corruption, attract foreign technical assistance, building power dams across the country. He would also try to get membership for Afghanistan in international organizations related to water and power.

He pledged to promote journalism in the country, but did not mention what relations journalism has to the ministry of water and energy.

On Wednesday, nominees for the ministries of public works, women's affairs, education and transport are scheduled to present their future plans to the lower house.

Wolesi Jirga secretary Abul Rauf Inami told Pajhwok Afghan News the minister-designate information and culture has a US nationality. The Wolesi Jirga, he said, had sent letters to the ministry of foreign affairs and the US Embassy in Kabul but still has not received any official reply regarding termination of his second nationality.

He added if his second nationality is terminated then Jahani would also be allowed to present his plans to the parliament.

It is pertinent to mention that the Ministry of Defence still does not

have any nominee. (Pajhwok)

(5) Wolesi Jirga...

and went missing after the attacks. The Wolesi Jirga, lower house of parliament, discussed the attack in Badakhshan. Abdul Rauf Inami, a lawmaker from Badakhshan and the national assembly's secretary, said "wrong figures" had been given about ANA casualties from the assault.

He said he had contacted local health clinics in Badakhshan and he was told that 28 ANA personnel had been beheaded alone, 30 were missing and 14 injured. However, he did not say how many were killed in total.

He said the attackers had taken with them three tanks, seven ranger pick-up vehicles, 79 weapons and torched three pick-up vehicles.

"Some bodies were found without heads and some heads were found without bodies. Local officials are hiding this, but I want to tell it. We always discuss sorrows here, but there is no impact of the discussion. I just want to speak out my heart and relieve the pain in it."

Inami said had security forces focused their attention on Badakhshan security before, the province would not have faced with such grave insecurity today.

He suspected insider's involvement in the attack and asked the government to question the officials concerned.

Another lawmaker from Badakhshan, Fauzia Kofi, said the security forces had run out of fuel, otherwise they could have left the area and avoided such huge casualties.

She said the government should either provide security to people or let them maintain their own security. "The people are no longer able to endure such a situation." Kofi urged the assembly to enter talks with the president and the chief executive officer over the fast deteriorating security situation in the country.

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim informed that a joint delegation of both the houses had summoned the national security advisor, the interior minister, the acting defence minister and the spymaster tomorrow on the subject.

He said the joint commission, after being briefed by the summoned people, would share the details with the house for a decision. (Pajhwok)

(6) Pakistan Commerce...

Economic Advisor, Dr. Omar Zakhilwal, Finance Minister, Ekil Ahmad Hakimi, Acting Commerce Minister, Muzammil Shinwari, and office bearers of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries. The visit of the commerce minister, the statement said would help cement economic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(7) Afghan Missions ...

India, they point out, with 1.2 billion population--- the second highest in the world--- has only 930 diplomats. Countries like Iran and Pakistan comparatively more populous than Afghanistan has less than 1,000 diplomats.

The MoFA is overstaffed and the qualifications of a number of its employees are irrelevant to the positions they are working on.

According to human resources document of the MoFA, except contract-based employees and locally employed staff, other employees are considered Career Diplomats (CD). They need to go through proper administrative procedure, pass entrance examinations and should not be political appointees.

A diplomat should at least have a bachelor's degree or above in a related field. Based on the document, when a political appointee term gets over and if he/she is interested to continue as a CD he/she should have the required educational qualification and not be above 60 years of age.

Based on the document, political appointees such as ambassadors, consular, directors and other officials should not be more than 20% at the MoFA.

Afghanistan's diplomatic relations in the last 14 years:

Sources within the ministry of foreign affairs say that majority of the diplomats appointed at the ministry are relatives and cronies of top governmental officials that have been appointed against established rules and regulations.

Some of them are aged diplomats that do not have the ability to work properly or establish good diplomatic relations with the host countries.

Abdul Qader Zazai, member of the international affairs committee of the Wolesi Jirga, said the committee

has gathered documents proving over 200 employees of the MoFA were appointed on nepotism basis and were not qualified for the jobs.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News that they have divided these 200 employees into four sections. The categories include those who have been appointed without keeping in view their field of studies, those who do not have higher education, those who have spent more than three years in embassies and those who are above the retirement age.

Zazai added the attaches that were sent to the embassies from other ministries were also considered as diplomats. He said there were no need for many attaches in an embassy and despite their suggestions against it some ministries send their officials as attaches.

"The government has repeatedly assured us to strictly adopt criteria people with links to high-ups continue to be appointed on top posts," he added.

He said the current structure of the MoFA employees was in contravention to established law and the officials should work to devise new structure based on international standards.

Spec of a diplomat: A diplomat is a government official who should protect his/her national interests in all circumstances including war, economic deals, cultural issues and other regional and global activities. He or she should have enough knowledge about justice and politics.

A diplomat has five key jobs and to serve as a representative for his home country in a host country, negotiate with the government of the host country, support home country's interests in host state, collect legal information and promote friendly relations with the host country.

However, lack of professionalism among young ambassadors in the past 14 years is main problems being faced by the Afghan embassies abroad.

Experts believe that absence of professional and dedicated diplomats is the main obstacle to promote the country's interests globally.

In addition, the culture of nepotism in Afghan government was yet another problem that virtually paralyzed the embassies of the country to function in a vibrant way.

Sharafuddin Sharafy, a university lecturer and an expert of international affairs, said that Afghanistan had achieved some progress to build ties with world states but lack of professional envoys was a stumbling block for the country to build durable ties with other states.

Azizullah Karzai, uncle of former president Hamid Karzai, is an example who have 92 years of age but had served several times as Afghan ambassador to Moscow," he said, adding other Afghan ambassadors were aged also that could not work properly.

Sayed Massoud Ahmadi, another international affairs expert, voiced same concerns by saying that there was a strong monopoly over Afghanistan embassies by some officials who used their influence to transfer their relatives from one embassy to another.

"Foreign embassies are good choices for elderly Afghan ambassadors. Time rip for the government to take decisive action against them and send them on retirement. Young envoys should be given a chance to serve the country with zeal," he added.

According to a policy letter of the human rights department of MoFA, each diplomat after completing his job in host countries should serve as political representative for three years.

A lawmaker Ali Kazimi said that Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani was invited to Wolesi Jirga to brief the house about the issue of Afghan diplomats. He added that Rabbani assured the august house some elderly diplomats were retired and reforms would be introduced within the MoFA.

MoFA was forced to take action against all irregularities after an investigative report published by Pajhwok Afghan News that revealed that the ministry was overstaffed with the relatives of some government officials. (Pajhwok)

(8) Torkham Scale's ...

Gardiwal said the delegation had good achievements in its work so far and the delegates were keen on making their task permanent.

Gardiwal said the provincial council had the right to monitor the performance of government entities and take active part in anti-corruption efforts.

Public Works Director Rassoul Gul

Faqir told Pajhwok Afghan News problems in revenue collections at the Torkham scale had been addressed now.

The scale is located two kilometers from the Torkham border crossing and trucks and other vehicles carrying goods from and to Pakistan are checked for weight.

Former Nangarhar governor Attaullah Lodin, who resigned last month, had admitted he could not prevent corruption at the scale and some provincial departments.

Earlier, he had claimed 150 million afghanis were lost to corruption each month at the scale, but the governor's house could not prevent it. (Pajhwok)

(9) Insecurity in ...

on only 12,000 AFN salary a month," said one prosecutor Ahmad Jan Aziz.

Meanwhile, Zekria Barezai, the chairman of the parliamentary complaints commission, said that advisers do not have executive powers and must not issue orders.

"Advisers can only advise - how can an adviser have executive powers. This legal adviser of the president is acting against the law," says Barezai.

When called for comment, Abdul Ali Muhammadi, the president's adviser in legal affairs, was unavailable but Muhammadi's secretary denied claims that the advisor had ordered prosecutors to visit the provinces.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Interior spokesperson Sediq Sediqqi has said that government is ready to provide security. (ToloneWS)

(10) Mother Dies...

this camp and I will burn myself," Qamar Gul said.

Families of the hostages and a number of civil society activists have set up protest camps in Zarnigar Park in Kabul, demanding the government rescue their loved ones.

"For me, a single hair of a passenger is worth more than the lives of hundreds of Daesh and other militants," a protestor said, in reference to the insurgents demands for a prisoner swap.

Meanwhile, members from Meshrano Jirga (Upper House of Parliament) visited the protest camps Sunday and promised to put pressure on security agencies to accelerate their efforts to secure the release of abductees. (ToloneWS)

(11) Minister-Designate...

Affairs and the US Embassy in Kabul to confirm if Jehani's American nationality had been cancelled, but there was no response as yet.

He said if Jehani's dual nationality was cancelled, he would be given time to share his future plans with lawmakers before being granted the trust vote.

The Wolesi Jirga has decided not to vote for dual citizen cabinet nominees. So far eleven of the 16 nominees have explained their future plans to lawmakers.

So far no one is nominated to head the Ministry of Defence. (Pajhwok)

(12) Protest Held ...

The protesters urged the government to explore every option to ensure their safe release.

Ramazan Ali Sultan, student of law faculty, said: "We want the unity government to take action for early release of the kidnapped men." (Pajhwok)

(13) Taliban Reject...

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. (Pajhwok)

(14) Soldiers' ...

wounded and went missing after a lull in the fighting.

Some media outlets have quoted Gen. Afzal Aman, Mod head of operations, saying that 15 soldiers had been killed in Jurm district.

But Ahmad Nawid Frotan, gover-

nor spokesperson, told journalists 18 soldiers had been killed in the fighting and the insurgents had beheaded eight of them.

These figures were released by the local officials after the beheaded photos of some soldiers appeared on social networks. (Pajhwok)

(15) Regional Nations...

this. We support this and trust the cooperation of regional countries," HPC member Mohammad Amin Weqad said.

Peace talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban were due to start in early March. So far however this has not transpired. (ToloneWS)

(16) 30 Feared ...

with security forces since last two years.

The militants could not fight face to face with the security forces. Sniper rifle is a Russian made weapon that could hit a target from a distance. (Pajhwok)

(17) Two Civilians ..

by eight percent compared to the same period in 2014. Ground fighting between Pro-Government Forces and Anti-Government Elements caused 521 civilian casualties (136 civilians killed and 385 injured), according to the report.

Between 1 January and 31 March, UNAMA documented 266 civilian casualties (62 deaths and 204 injured) from mortars and rockets, up 43 percent from the same period last year and accounting for half of civilian casualties from ground engagements, the statement read. According to UNAMA, they documented overall 1,810 civilian casualties (655 deaths and 1,155 injured), a two per cent decrease from the same period in 2014. The report states that the latest figures show a continued rise in women casualties with an increase of 15 percent in the same period last year. (ToloneWS)

(18) 12 Taliban...

enemies of Afghanistan for destructive purposes in Laghman, Takhar, Balkh, Kandahar, Zabul and Farah provinces," the statement noted. The MoI, however, did not comment on whether any security force members were injured in the operations. (ToloneWS)

(19) Traders Vow...

the institutes stand on their own feet. "I appeal to all Paktia residents to assist the university during the week because their assistance is crucial to preserving the national interest and making the university self-reliant." (Pajhwok)

(20) DS Detain 3...

established in 2007. Officials from ministries of finance, information and cultural affairs, rehabilitation and rural development, water and energy, urban development affairs and women affairs are members of the commission.

Huge preparations have been finalized to mark the day in Ghazni City, the capital of the province, today. Officials from other provinces such as Logar, Paktia and members of Wolesi Jirga, local elders and people are gathered to attend the gathering. (Pajhwok)

(21) 2 Policemen ...

Maidan Wardak province, two militants were killed in Narkh district when the bomb they were planting went-off prematurely, the governor's spokesman said.

Attaullah Khogyani said the incident took place late Monday night in Karimdad locality of the district. It merits mention that Taliban and members of Hizb-e-Islami were planting roadside bombs to target each other. (Pajhwok)

(22) Unschool'd Afghan...

blood-soaked days from April 9 to 12, 1917. Growing up in war-torn Afghanistan, understandably, she didn't know much about the First World War, much less Canada's role in it before a Grade 11 social studies class. Amiri told The Huffington Post Canada about departing for France "I knew about other wars, like the Soviets, mujaheddin and Taliban, those kind of wars mostly in my area. But not much about World War One or Two." (KP)

(23) Grizzly Start to ...

to be "killed, wounded or become missing." The ministry said it was conducting an investigation into the attack, which it said came from unspecified "neglect" by an army officer there. It said the fighters looted military equipment and set fire to vehicles it couldn't take. (AP)