

(1) District Governor...

claimed responsibility for the attack with the group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeting that a number of check posts had been overrun and over 20 security personnel killed. Confirming the attack, the administration in the provincial capital discarded the Taliban's claims of overrunning the Khwaja Umari district. The Afghan National Police (ANP) in Ghazni said in a statement that over 40 Taliban militants had been killed in this raid.

The Taliban stormed the district headquarters Thursday at around 2.00 a.m. (2130GMT Wednesday), and used long-range rocket launchers to target the highly guarded compound, local Azadi Radio reported. This comes as the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on Thursday renewed its call on all parties in the conflict to increase efforts to protect civilians. (AA)

(2) US Has Fully...

reasons that have impeded the Afghan troops win in the war so far. "I was just in Afghanistan... couple of challenges we have had. Number one, we have suffered significant Afghan casualties; number two, the cooperation across the Afghan police, Afghan army, intelligence organizations has not been what it needed to be; and number three, there were short capabilities, aviation capability, intelligence capability, surface fires capability. What we have done I believe is taking a look exactly what the Afghans need to gain momentum and retain momentum against the adversary," Dunford said.

He said US and Afghan officials hold talks with Pakistan military and political leaders and that a plan is under implementation to resolve Kabul-Islamabad tension.

At the same event, US Defense Secretary James Mattis said they will win the Afghan war by putting in place the US President Donald Trump's strategy for South Asia and Afghanistan.

"In South Asia and Afghanistan, uncertainty in the region has been replaced by certainty of President Trump's South Asia strategy," Mattis said.

Meanwhile, former chief of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and nominee for the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, said at the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States will remain in Afghanistan unless there is no threat from insurgents against Americans. "I think the course of action that President Trump is taking there is the right one. It is humble in its mission. It understands that we have been there a long time and has an objective of leaving but is not prepared to leave until such time as we can put that kind of position where we can greatly demolish the threat to our homeland from terrorism that may emanate from there," he said. (Tolo news)

(3) Up to 70 Madrassas...

government therefore we have assigned a team which will travel to all districts and visit religious scholars and owners of madrassas," he said. "The team will provide government's facilities to the madrassas and will put them in an official process." He said madrassas will be advised to adopt government's curriculum and that there is no ban on religious subjects to be thought in the schools. Provincial education directorate says only 16 madrassas are registered in the department.

According to the directorate, at least 9,000 students are studying in the registered religious schools in Paktia. "We have three types of religious schools in Paktia: the first two types are under control of the education department but the last type is not registered.

Government's curriculum is thought in official and registered madrassas," provincial education director Kochi Zazai said.

The remarks were made after Paktia governor and other senior officials from the province inaugurated work on construction of a new religious school in the province.

One member of Paktia Provincial Council said government should pay attention to madrassas in the country to prevent the Afghan youth from going out of the country for religious studies. "Government has registered madras-

sas in every district therefore youths are urged not to travel abroad for religious studies," said Abdul Malik Zazai, head of Paktia Provincial Council.

"We urge government to build more madrassas in our area in order to prevent the young generation from traveling to Pakistan for religious studies. Those who study in Pakistan are trained in a different way and are sent back to Afghanistan for destruction," said Zarkhkan, a tribal elder. Some residents of Paktia said the number of unregistered madrassas in the province might be higher than found by government. (Tolo news)

(4) Balkh Peace...

Afghan nation has awakened," said Afzal Hadid, head of Balkh provincial council.

"When I realized about the Helmand sit-in camp, I had a dream to go to Helmand and join the peace campaign. Now I am excited that a similar camp was established here (in Balkh). I promise as a women's rights activist to join and support this move along with other women in the province," said Nilofar, a women's rights activist in Balkh.

This move comes weeks after a number of Helmand residents established a sit-in camp in Lashkargah City in support of peace. The move later gained huge support from across the country.

The Balkh activists said they have established the camp to support peace and the protest in Helmand. (Tolo news)

(5) Returning Home...

hand in hand to ensure sustainable solutions are provided to returning Afghans," said Laurence Hart, the head of IOM operations in the country.

"[We] work together to complement each other's efforts in areas of high return, with partners and the Government, for greater efficiency and to ensure support to those communities to mitigate protection risks," added Fathiaa Abdalla, the head of the UNHCR office in Afghanistan.

Each year, registered Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans make the decision to return home from Iran and Pakistan, in spite of the difficult situation in Afghanistan. Since 2002, more than 5.24 million registered Afghan refugees have returned - more than 58,000 in 2017, according to a new, first of its kind, joint IOM-UNHCR report.

"Given the scope of the ongoing conflict, high levels of internal displacement, already overstretched services and difficulty finding jobs, returning Afghans face protection risks and significant barriers to sustainable reintegration," said the two UN agencies.

UNHCR and IOM have been collaborating closely in the country to assist the returning refugees and undocumented migrants. Together with the Government, they have also been actively coordinating the provision of humanitarian post-arrival and reintegration assistance.

With estimates that 280,000 registered refugees and 420,000 undocumented Afghans expected to return in 2018, the two agencies are harmonizing their operations, in particular related to monitoring, reporting and analysis and developing key indicators for displacement and mobility tracking.

These estimates depend on a number of factors, including the situation in places of return as well as countries where the refugees and undocumented persons are staying in. (PR)

(6) Peace Process...

is not possible without a strict will and without specifying Taliban's supporters and without eliminating the Taliban."

"The peace process is facing a crisis on a national and international level. Neither government nor peace institutions or the international community have a clear program for peace," said Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, former vice president.

Qanooni said no delay is acceptable in the peace process.

"The Independent Election Commission should announce the timeline for the presidential election. No delay will be acceptable in this election," he added.

Other participants at the event meanwhile called on Taliban to join the peace process.

"The peace offer is not comprehen-

sive or clear, but we call on the Taliban to join the (peace) process," said Anwar-ul-haq Ahady, head of the New National Front of Afghanistan. The remarks come just weeks after government made a peace offer, without preconditions, to the Taliban. The group, however, has not yet responded to the offer. (Tolo news)

(7) Voter Registration...

nothing about the election process and voter registration (process); we don't have any experience in elections," said one Kabul shopkeeper, Hajji Ahmad.

"Our votes will not have any value or meaning," a taxi driver Shafiq said. "Elections must be held in a transparent manner so that we can elect credible candidates," said Kabul resident Jan Aqa.

According to the IEC, all necessary arrangements for the elections have been completed and election materials have been delivered to all provinces.

"The list will be prepared, this list will be shared with the people of Afghanistan, the same list will be put up on a wall before the voters arrive at the polling centers to cast their ballots," said Hashimi.

"Public awareness campaigns are one of the most important aspects of the process; if the commission is able to rebuild the public's trust and then safeguard the public's trust, it will not be necessary to invest in these processes," said Habibullah Shinwari, a member of Election Watch Afghanistan.

The voter registration process will be broken up into three phases.

In the first phase, those eligible to vote can register at IEC offices in provincial centers from April 14 to May 12.

In the second phase, which starts from May 15 and continues to May 28, the process will be carried out in the districts.

In the third phase, which starts from May 28 to June 22, the voter process will be carried out in remote regions of the country.

The IEC has estimated the cost of the voter registration process will be \$30 million USD and it has hired over 11,000 people for the duration of the registration process.

The IEC and the government have earmarked 7,300 polling centers across the country, however, nearly 1,000 of these centers are located in areas out of government's control. (Tolo news)

(8) Naghlo Dam...

World Bank (WB) had announced \$6.6 million in aid to the Afghan government to reconstruct the turbines at Naghlo dam. The contract for the reconstruction project was signed with a Russian company.

According to DABS, the progress on Naghlo power dam is a step forward towards Afghanistan's self-reliance in power.

DABS chief Amanullah Ghalib said work on several solar projects was also expected to start in the eastern regions of the country in the near future.

"We managed to start work on the self-sufficiency projects such as solar energy projects, hydro power energy projects, small hydroelectric projects and mega dams. If God willing, we will get self-reliance in the future. Imported electricity will be replaced by transit power projects and the money which will be received from the transit of electricity can be utilized in our own mega production projects," said Ghalib.

Meanwhile, a number of lawmakers in parliament stressed the need for more energy projects to be launched in the country.

They also called for an end to corruption by certain people involved in power supplying projects. "They must try to supply electricity to the villages in the eastern parts of the country, this will boost our economy and will leave positive impacts on the lives of the people," said MP Sayed Ekram.

"We have seen mostly that transmission lines are cut during the summer and some people ask for levies and money. My expectation from the government is to deal with such people as it deals with Taliban and Daesh, money shouldn't be given to such people," said MP Saima Khogyani.

According to DABS, Afghanistan has the capacity to produce 125,000

megawatts of thermal and hydro power, but currently produces only 20 percent of this in hydro power.

Afghanistan needs 7,000 megawatts of power and currently Naghlo Dam in Surobi district of Kabul produces 80 megawatts, Salma Dam in Herat province produces 40 megawatts and Kajaki Dam in Helmand province produces 51 megawatts. But plans are in place for Bagh Dara Dam in Kapisa and Parwan dam to produce an additional 280 megawatts of power over the next five years. (Tolo news)

(9) Afghanistan Ha...

After describing these threats in details, Pompeo said that the failed state of Syria poses a mounting threat to human rights, national security, and regional stability - and it deserves an increasingly severe response. Thereafter he clubbed Afghanistan with several other challenges.

"Similarly, our nation faces unique and pressing security, governance, and development challenges in Iraq, Afghanistan, Latin America and Africa, where our diplomacy must support people's efforts to improve their lives," Pompeo said.

"The State Department must also be at the forefront of America's efforts to ease humanitarian crises in Burma, Yemen, Venezuela, parts of Africa, and elsewhere," said the nominee for the Secretary of State. And surprisingly there was no mention of Pakistan at all in his testimony. (Pajhwok)

(10) Daesh Still...

Now Afghan National Army are stationed in those areas and are preventing Daesh militants from entering to Afghanistan from the other side of the Durand Line," Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish told TOLONews on Friday.

According to government officials, Daesh militants are operating in Nangarhar, Kunar, Jawzjan and some other provinces and carry out terrorist activities.

The group has carried deadly attacks in Kabul, killing dozens of civilians.

"Anti-terror efforts should be much practical and they should be followed up to the end. Those who support insurgents should be found and should be sanctioned. In this symbolic way, we cannot eliminate insurgency from Afghanistan," Ahmad Zia Massoud, former vice president under Hamid Karzai's government, said.

"No country can claim that they will eliminate Taliban or Daesh in the region by their own. I believe that they (Afghan government and its allies) can remove them, but such acts (like dropping the Mother of All Bombs) will result in political tension between big powers (in the world)," Moeen Moeen, member of Mehwar-e-Mardum-e-Afghanistan movement, said.

The Afghan Defense Ministry and the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan have said the total number of Daesh fighters in Afghanistan reaches to 1,500.

Hundreds of Daesh fighters have been killed in Nangarhar and other parts of the country since the emergence of the militant group in Afghanistan.

Last year's bombing in Achin raised hopes that the group will be eradicated from the area, but it did not happen.

MOAB was dropped on a Daesh stronghold involving caves and tunnels in Mohmand Dara area in Achin district.

The bomb weighs more than 10,000kgs and contains 8,164kgs of explosives and each bomb costs an estimated \$16 million USD to build.

Its explosion is equal to 11 tons of TNT and the blast radius is about 1.6kms.

The bomb was never used before, until on 13 of April 2017 was dropped in Achin in which 40 Daesh militants were killed.

The MOAB is a concussive bomb, meaning it detonates above ground rather than penetrating hardened defenses, and was designed in 2002 for "psychological operations."

Anyone within 300 meters will be vaporized, experts say, while those in a 1km radius outside ground zero will be left deaf.

The bomb was a GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) which is commonly known as the Mother of All Bombs, as it is one of the most powerful conventional-or non-nuclear weapons existence. (Tolo news)

(11) Amnesty Hails...

convicts were hanged at the Pul-i-Charkhi prison on the eastern outskirts of Kabul. In total there are another 600 death row inmates in Afghanistan.

Worldwide the Amnesty International recorded 993 executions last year compared to 1,032 in 2016. The London-based human rights watchdog said in its latest report - Death Sentences And Executions 2017 - that positive measures, such as legal amendments in Iran to limit capital punishment for drug-related crimes, and notable reductions in the number of death sentences worldwide have contributed to a 4 percent drop in executions compared to the previous year.

More than half of recorded executions - 507 - were carried out in Iran, followed by Saudi Arabia, with 146, Iraq, with 125, and Pakistan, with 60 confirmed executions.

However, the number does not include thousands of executions carried out by China, which remains by far the world's top executioner but does not disclose data on executions and treats such information as a state secret.

Both Iran and Pakistan saw a decline in the number of executions compared to the previous year - some 10 percent in Iran and more than 30 percent in Pakistan.

The report said a record-high number of people - at least 7,000 - remained on death row in Pakistan, almost 5,000 in Punjab Province alone. In the majority of countries where people were sentenced to death or executed, the death penalty was imposed after proceedings that did not meet international fair trial standards. Among the countries cited were Iran, Pakistan, Belarus, Iraq, and China.

Military courts sentenced a high number of civilians to death in Pakistan, the report noted. In Iran and Iraq, the report says, "confessions" of guilt reportedly obtained through torture were broadcast on television before the trial took place, in violation of the presumption of innocence. Amnesty also noted that people with mental or intellectual disabilities were put to death or remained under death sentence in Pakistan and the United States.

The sole country in Europe and Central Asia to carry out the death penalty remained Belarus, where two people convicted for rape and murder, Siarhei Vostrykau and Kiry Kazachok, were executed by shooting in 2017. The two were put to death in secret, in May and October, the report says.

Russia, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan continued to observe moratoriums on executions, although in Kazakhstan one man remained under sentence of death after being convicted and sentenced in 2016 for terrorism.

In Russia, senior legislator Vasily Piskaryov and the Kremlin-backed head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, publicly called on two separate occasions last year for the reintroduction of the death penalty. But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that Russia's moratorium on the use of the death penalty will not be suspended, the report said.

Among the positive developments, the report highlights the progress in sub-Saharan Africa, where Guinea became the 20th state of the region to abolish the death penalty for all crimes.

Besides Guinea, Mongolia also scrapped the death penalty for all crimes, taking the total number of abolitionist countries to 106 in 2017. (Pajhwok)

(12) Our Crops...

had been making false promises about the water scarcity problem.

However, agriculture, irrigation and livestock director Mohammad Akbar Sharifi said the drought had caused a lack of water in many parts of the province.

He said they had several times contacted the authorities concerned in Helmand province, who had promised to find a solution to the issue.

Governor Eng. Mohammad Sami acknowledged the water shortage issue had long been haunting the people of Nimroz and demanded the central government to address the issue.

Sami was sure water would be released into Nimroz from the Kajaki dam in Helmand based on recent coordination with authorities there. (Pajhwok)