

(1) Afghan Child

reflecting an increase in fighting in built-up areas as the Taliban has pressed its insurgency. Fifty two women were killed and 143 injured during the period. Although the report said most casualties were caused by anti government forces, it noted a jump in those caused by security forces using explosive weapons like mortars and grenades and called on their use in civilian areas to be restricted. The figures come days after the Taliban announced the start of its annual spring offensive and stepped up attacks on Kunduz, the northern city that fell briefly to the insurgents last year.

There has also been heavy fighting in the southern province of Helmand, where the Taliban have pushed government forces out of many areas into smaller defensive positions around the provincial capital Lashkar Gah and other district centres. Last year, the first since NATO ended combat operations, civilian casualties hit a record 11,002, with 3,545 deaths and 7,457 injuries.

UNAMA estimated 60 percent of casualties were caused by anti-government forces including the Taliban and other groups such as Islamic State. Pro-government forces caused 19 percent of the total, but that was 70 percent higher than a year earlier. The rest could not be attributed directly. Reuters)

(2) 500 Judges

reshuffled the president and 402 others by the chief justice. He said none of the judges had been sacked. The development comes after a Pajhwok Afghan News survey revealed administrative corruption remained endemic in Afghanistan particularly in the judiciary, customs offices, municipalities and police department. In last month's online survey participated by 668 individuals, in every five persons, four believed corruption existed on large scale in the justice sector and 80 per cent people termed the culture of impunity a huge challenge in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(3) ANSF

1,343 people were injured during the first three months of 2016. According to figures from UNAMA, civilian deaths fell by 13 percent, compared to the first quarter of 2015. But the number of civilians wounded went up by 11 percent. The highest number of civilian casualties was caused by ground fighting. "Consistent with 2015 trends, ground engagements caused the highest number of total civilian casualties, followed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), complex and suicide attacks, as well as targeted killings," the report said. A statement from the Presidential Palace said the Afghan government had studied the UNAMA recent report on civilian casualties. It said the Afghan security and defence forces had been fighting for the protection of lives and properties of the citizens in line with domestic and international human rights laws.

"The enemies use residential houses and their inmates as human shield in clashes with security forces," the statement said, adding security forces carefully performed their duty in order not to harm civilians. (Pajhwok)

(4) HPC Optimistic

Nader Baloch, a senator, said: "Joining of Hizb-e-Islami with government will have a positive impact. The party has key figures who are working inside or outside the government. I think this will show unity and solidarity among people and will pave the ground for other groups [to join peace]." People of Afghanistan, after decades of war, are waiting for lasting peace in the country.

"They should come [and join peace], but they should not work for the interests of neighboring countries, for the interests of Pakistan and ISI or others," said Mujib, a resident of Kabul city. This optimism regarding peace talks with Hizb-e-Islami comes at a time that efforts by Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and United States to bring the Taliban to the negotiation tables has failed to yield results. (Tolnews)

(5) Afghan Refugees

than 200,000 Afghans fled to Europe in 2015, according to UNHCR figures, and untold others sought sanctuary in Pakistan, Iran, and within Afghanistan itself, Okoth-Obbo said.

"The Afghan refugee crisis is not impacting only Europe," he said, noting that already in 2016, 80,000 Afghans have been forced from their homes, joining more than a million others currently internally displaced within the country.

U.N. officials urged the international community to work with the Afghan government to try to support and reintegrate refugees and other displaced people so they can benefit from government programs and not rely on foreign aid.

"As the international spotlight focuses on Afghans on the move to Europe, it is important to remember that the largest and most vulnerable displaced populations in need are right here in their home country and in the regional neighbourhood," the U.N.'s top refugee official in Afghanistan, Maya Ameratunga, said in a statement.

Last year, some 60,000 Afghans voluntarily returned home, Okoth-Obbo said. That was unusually high as Afghan refugees in Pakistan faced increased "harassment, extortion, and other push factors" by officials in the wake of terrorist attacks, according to the U.N. (Reuters)

(6) Meshrano

MoE but they had recently filled 1,904 vacancies in different provinces through the competitive exam and the rest would also be filled soon. The minister said most of the vacant positions were in remote parts of the country, where educated people refused to perform duty despite a 30 to 50 percent increment in salaries.

To resolve the issue, he said, they were filling vacancies in district centres and provincial capitals, but 3000 positions in remote areas might remain vacant.

The 100 vacant positions of directors and managers will be announced for open competition through the Capacity Building for Result (CBR) programme and eligible and qualified persons will be hired through the process in the next two months, the education minister said.

Terminations, deaths and retirement were among reasons behind the vacant positions at the ministry, Balkhi said, but added they were been taking measures to fill the vacancies.

According to Balkhi, there are more than 215,000 teachers countrywide, with 18 percent holding bachelor's degree, 50 percent bachelorette degree and the rest high school graduates.

Nearly 12,000 people under 12-grade education have also been hired as teachers because many people did not like to discharge duty in remote parts, the minister said. His ministry was been trying to improve the capacity of teachers, Balkhi continued. On ghost schools, he said his ministry would submit a detailed report on the number of students, teachers, schools and needs to the parliament. Meshrano Jirga deputy chairman Farhad Sakhi, who chaired today's session, asked the Ministry of Education to accelerate the process of recruiting teachers in a transparent manner. (Pajhwok)

(7) Atmar Leaves

Huichang, Meng Jianzhu, Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the Communist Party, General Fang Fenghui, the Chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of the People's Republic of China and others. (Pajhwok)

(8) Ready to

those hell-bent on fighting for the interest of outsiders. Senator Nadar Baloch said the Afghan security forces needed unwavering political support and the support of government leaders and ordinary people. (Pajhwok)

(9) Islamabad

without security forces while another 111 districts are under serious security threats with the security forces battling Taliban on several fronts. "The scale of threats are much higher. There are several terrorist groups that operate in Afghanistan. We cannot settle all threats within three or four months despite the security forces' continued efforts during winter. We launched operations in every area where there was a threat," Sediqqi said.

It is believed that the Taliban has returned to certain areas from where they were pushed back by security forces in recent months.

"In areas where you do not work, the enemy works there, districts where there is no district chief are areas under control of the enemy. The enemy

completes its works there," former deputy minister of interior, Mirza Mohammad Yarmand said.

Meanwhile, some Afghan political commentators have said that the lack of government's sovereignty in some parts of the country has brought about a power vacuum, which helps insurgents infiltrate these areas.

According to statistics, currently 18 districts are without chiefs, 14 districts are without security forces while another 111 districts are under serious security threats including 24 districts where there are development projects.

On the issue of Pakistan, Sediqqi said: "Their funding sources weren't rooted out and Madrasas where they are providing training were not closed."

While concerns over the upsurge in Taliban insurgency in the country gathers momentum, the interior ministry once again pointed a finger at Pakistan's Taliban policy, accusing the neighboring nation of not helping to bring Taliban to its knees and for failing to strengthen peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Afghan forces are currently involved in 16 counterinsurgency operations in twelve provinces in their bid to curb Taliban advances.

Despite the embattled Afghan forces having inflicted heavy casualty tolls against the resurgent movement, the Taliban's insurgency shows no sign of ending.

So far in these operations, 100 Taliban members have been killed and another 30 Taliban fighters wounded. (Tolnews)

(10) Afghan Forces

staged a major offensive on security outposts around Kunduz in its bid to capture the city.

Both sides have since claimed inflicting heavy casualties on the other, but it is difficult to ascertain official and insurgent claims because of the volatile situation in Kunduz and surrounding northern Afghan provinces.

A Taliban spokesman accused Afghan and U.S.-led foreign forces of conducting extensive aerial bombing in and around Kunduz.

He denied official claims of government forces killing dozens of insurgents in such an attack.

"These indiscriminate bombings have only targeted civilian areas," according to the Taliban spokesman. The Taliban had briefly overrun the strategically important city in September.

Residents said insurgents have since established hideouts and influence in the surrounding districts, helping them stage the latest offensive against Kunduz.

At a gathering in Kabul Sunday, civil society groups expressed concerns Kunduz is likely to fall to the Taliban again unless the Afghan government clears joining areas of insurgents. (VoA)

(11) II Government

Wasiq, Finance Manager Syed Mustafa Moosavi, Revenue Officer Syed Zamin, Revenue Control Manager Syed Naeem Moosavi and seven other employees of education and revenue departments were referred to the prosecution office for interrogation.

Meanwhile, Wasiq confirmed he had been asked to appear for interrogations, saying that the judiciary department had the right to interrogate the officials in such cases to clarify the accounts situation and fix responsibility.

However, the director refused to say anything about his involvement in the misappropriation of funds of the department. (Pajhwok)

(12) SAARC

is also expected to invest in a thermal power plant.

"We need to work on the industrial park. It's a huge project. It would be roughly about \$10 to \$100 million USD dollars project.... This will bring investment into Afghanistan," said Suraj Vaidya, Chairman of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Officials at the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) said that a trader in Kandahar is ready give land for the park.

Officials at the Afghanistan Industrial Association (AIA) welcomed the investment and said that government should avail this opportunity. "Taking into consideration the interest for investment in Afghanistan, the government should make best use of these opportunities, because these investments raise the private sector's confidence to work in Afghanistan,"

said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, head of the association.

Officials at the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that if the government paves the ground, some investors will consider investing in Afghanistan. (Tolnews)

(13) Governor

, the officials concerned will lose jobs."

Deputy provincial police chief Col. Syed Abbas Sadat told Pajhwok Afghan News that the traffic department and some other departments were not cooperative in managing the city's affairs.

"The authorities concerned should discharge their responsibilities. Police are responsible for maintaining security. I am certain the traffic department will take action."

Meanwhile, deputy mayor Eng. Hakim told Pajhwok Afghan News: "It is true we have failed to organize the city's affairs. One reason is that the city is small but is overpopulated."

He said the city needed to be expanded and special paces created for handcarts and other similar stalls.

But he said the municipality was working in this regard and the department would take serious the governor's latest directives.

Sanaullah Shagiwal, a moneychanger who sits in front of the Talashi square, told Pajhwok Afghan News the municipality should identify places for them to do business. "Where should we go?"

He accused some municipality officials of accepting bribes from handcart owners against allowing them to roam the city's streets.

A handcart owner, Noor Mohammad, who was selling fresh vegetables, said the government should provide them alternate place for doing business.

"The government does nothing except harassing the poor handcart owners. What should we do, where should we go to eke out a living for our children," asked the poor man.

Transport Department director Mohammad Ayub Sharafat told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Taxi stands in Jalalabad are known. If drivers call in passengers on roads outside the stand, it is police responsibility to prevent them."

He said the provincial administration had created a commission of the city's management and the panel would soon start its task. (Pajhwok)

(14) 12 Passengers

the dozen bodies brought to Qala-i-Naw Civil Hospital, when six were identified and, were residents of Herat. The identities of the rest of six people were yet to be ascertained, Dr. Abdul Latif Rostaee said.

Separately, five people drowned in floods on Saturday in the Hazrat Sultan and Dara-i-Sauf Payeen districts of Samangan province, where crops were also washed away. The victims including three children and two men were yet to be found. (Pajhwok)

(15) Test Conducted

the ministry's initiative would help evolve an effective framework for the employments of prayer leaders. Prayer leaders played a special role in guiding people to the right path and resolving social problems, he believed, supporting the government based on Islamic teachings. (Pajhwok)

(16) Buddhas

the bombs went off, the Taliban shouted Allahu Akbar with every blast. They were calling themselves idol breakers. They slaughtered several cows and held special celebrations after the Buddha was completely destroyed," he said.

The large statue was 55 metres high and the small one 33 metres. Ahmad Hussain Ahmadpur, spokesman for the Information and Culture Department, told Pajhwok Afghan News the destruction of Buddha statues was a big loss for Afghanistan's culture and history.

Abbas, another eyewitness of the incident, said: "I was crossing Garwana village of Bamyan city when I suddenly heard a heavy explosion. I saw smokes arising from the Buddhas when came close. People were afraid, they even could discuss it. All people knew the Taliban were busy planting explosives from several days."

Information and Culture Director Mohammad Ishaq Azizi told Pajhwok the Taliban had committed a national treason by destroying a heritage site that was inimitable in the world. (Pajhwok)

(17) Samangan Flood

Payeen and Mazar-I-Sharif. The floodwaters harmed hundreds of acres of farmland in the area.

The floods also caused damages and casualties in Hazrat Sultan district. Sarajuddin, the district chief, said a baby was swept away in Shulkato area and cropped fields damaged in nine villages.

Disaster Management Authority official Rajab Ali Yousafi confirmed the casualties and damage caused by the floods in the two districts. He said five people were missing. (Pajhwok)

(18) MoD Confirms

name of Omari Operations.

The group announced its offensive early on Tuesday and vowed to carry out more attacks across the country.

The militants of the group has since then launched numerous coordinated attacks including a major offensive in northern Kunduz province with an aim to capture the strategic Kunduz city.

However, the attack was repulsed by the Afghan security forces, causing heavy losses to the militants. (KP)

(19) Civil Society

informed me that my daughter was kidnapped by a young guy of our neighbors and then killed her," he said.

Iranian media outlets said Setayesh Quraishi was raped before being killed and sprayed with acid. However, the father of the victim said it was unclear whether her daughter had been raped or not. The 17 years old Iranian kidnapper has been arrested by police.

Dozens of protestors including women condemned the killing of Setayesh Quraishi and issued a resolution, asking Iranian and the Afghan governments to investigate the incident.

The protestors also asked UNICEF and international human rights organisations to oversee the trial of the murderer. They said the accused had killed, raped and burnt Setayesh. He should be awarded deterrent punishment, they demanded.

Afghanistan Civil Society Association (ACSA) head, Hussain Dad Mohammadi, told Pajhwok Afghan News the silence of the Iranian government was cause for concern. "Our demand is dispensation of justice to heal the pains of the Afghan community," he remarked.

Sughra Attaye, a civil society activist who participated in the protest, said the killing of Setayesh was an example of atrocities against the Afghan refugees in Iran. Some of such incidents are revealed by conscientious Iranians, but most of Afghan murder cases were hidden, she said. She asked the Afghan government to protect the rights of Afghans wherever they were living.

On the other hand, officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said they were aware of the incident and the Afghan embassy in Iran was tracking the issue. (Pajhwok)

(20) 15 Taliban

also killed and four others were injured," he said. He added that the insurgents had taken control of three security outposts. The clashes reportedly started late Saturday and lasted until early Sunday morning. Currently, security forces are in clashes with insurgents in more than 10 provinces. Dozens of insurgents have however been killed over the past few days, according to officials. (Tolnews)

(21) Russia Refutes

bombers flew over the U.S. guided missile destroyer Donald Cook in the Baltic Sea on Monday and Tuesday.

The Russian side denied its acts were aggressive and insisted all flights were held in accordance with international law. (Xinhua)

(22) Yemeni Secessionists

the war with Houthis who came from northern Yemen to invade Aden last year... we will keep demanding independence from them until death," Naif said tearfully.

North and South Yemen were peacefully unified in 1990, however their relationship deteriorated in 1994.

Calls for separation from the country's southern regions were renewed in 2007. The southerners complained of being marginalized, particularly after loosing a four-month civil war in 1994.

Pro-secession protests are rising in

the south during a deteriorating economy and discrimination allegations favoring the northerners.

Concerns have developed as the conflict in southern Yemen is causing instability, where the Yemen-based al-Qaida offshoot may take over further territories. (Xinhua)

(23) Iran Showcases

host of missiles and missile launchers, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), fighter jets, choppers and radar systems were among the military equipment showcased at the ceremony. Also, Iran displayed parts of Russian S-300 which have been sent to the country recently.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari said on Monday that Iran and Russia had signed a new deal on the delivery of S-300 missile defense system and it was in the process of implementation.

Russia and Iran signed an 800-million-U.S. dollar contract in 2007, according to which Moscow would supply Tehran with five S-300 missile systems. In September 2010, then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev canceled the contract in line with a UN Security Council resolution, which banned such deals with the Islamic Republic. Iran later sued Russia over the arms embargo.

In 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin lifted the ban as Iran withdrew the lawsuit against Russia. The original S-300 system, named SA-10 Grumble by NATO, was first deployed in the former Soviet Union in 1979 to defend the country against aircraft and cruise missiles. Subsequent modernized versions were developed to intercept ballistic missiles, and the S-300 is currently regarded as one of the most potent air defense systems. (Xinhua)

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(24) Russia to Defend

more interaction between the Russian and Chinese defense ministries every year, Antonov said, prospects for cooperation with China have become much brighter.

"There is a lot we can do together to strengthen security of China and the Russian Federation," he said when particularly mentioning the threat of terrorism in the region, which probably could spill over from the unstable Afghanistan.

The issue of fighting terrorism has been chosen as a key topic for the Fifth Moscow International Security Conference scheduled for April 27-28, Antonov said.

The anti-terror fight "requires common approaches, common understanding and common solutions," Antonov said, noting that several countries in the Asia-Pacific region are infiltrated by militants of Daesh, also known as the Islamic State or IS. He also blamed the United States for planning to deploy elements of a missile defense system in the Asia-Pacific region, which, besides presenting a direct threat to China and Russia, has a wider implication as to undermining the global security system. By saturating the region with warships, fighters and bombers and setting up different kinds of military bases, the United States does not contribute to strengthening regional peace and security, Antonov said. Countries in the region should take the initiative and make joint efforts for the establishment of a new and broader security system, he noted. (Xinhua)

Also in the province, an Iraqi aircraft bombed a house said to be used by IS militants in Zuwiya area near the IS-held city of Fallujah, some 50 km west of Baghdad, killing five militants and wounding 12 others, the source said citing intelligence report. Three days ago, the troops raised the Iraqi flag in the town of Heet, some 160 km west of Baghdad, after 14 days of fierce clashes with the extremist militants.

Iraqi security forces and allied paramilitary units have been battling IS militants for re-control of large territories in northern and western Iraq that have been seized by the IS since June 2014. (Xinhua)

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