

(1) Salt Mine Contract...

Nasir Ahmad Tahiri, the head of the contracting company, said in addition to preliminary investments made in the mine, they have had to pay money to meet the conditions of the contract. According to Tahiri, the termination of the contract means a huge financial loss to them.

"The economic council and mining ministry worked on this mine for two years. It should be asked why the ministry of mines did not assess the mine to find out if there was salt or something else (before awarding the contract)," said Tahiri.

"This shows that government does not have the capacity to manage the mines. This was a small contract and they signed after a few years, but now they say it has been terminated," Zaman Hashimi, a mining expert said.

Mutfi said however they will reimburse the company for the money paid out.

Based on the contract, the company had an obligation to invest up to \$400,000 USD in the mine and to pay 1,065 AFs to government for every ton of salt mined. The contract said the company would have extracted up to 25,000 tons of salt annually. (Tolo news)

(2) Over 47,000 People...

registration process was launched on Saturday.

According to the IEC, in the first phase of the voter registration process, 1,500 registration centers opened in Kabul and in cities across the country. In the first three days, 47,828 people, including 11,668 women, registered.

In Kabul, 374 centers opened for registration.

TOLO news journalist Karim Amini on Tuesday visited a number of these centers. Amini reported however that not many people had been to the centers to register while he was there.

Meanwhile, in response to criticism by some MPs and political figures over the lack of awareness campaigns around the voter registration process, the IEC acknowledged the issue but said they were working on plans to rectify this.

We completely accept the breakdown in awareness campaigns for the people, but we are trying to accelerate the process at the moment, the IEC commissioner Maliha Hassan said.

In the meantime, the CEO's deputies Mohammad Khan and Mohammad Mohaqiq, who on Tuesday registered to vote in Kabul, said the only way for a credible power transition was elections and urged people to register.

They also called on the public to participate in the election process.

"People should widely participate and monitor the process to prevent fraud as witnessed in the past," said Khan.

"If people think that a good government will not come by votes, at least they should use their voting rights to prevent a bad, or worse, government. They should register their names to become eligible for voting to determine their destiny," Mohaqiq said.

Deputy head of Jamiat-e-Islami party Ahmad Zia Massoud also registered to vote on Tuesday. He also noted the low voter registration turnout.

Massoud criticized the IEC for its inability to inform the people of the process and encourage them to vote.

"In order to break the power monopolization, people should

come and receive their cards to vote. If we think that we should have a democracy without using our political rights (voting), there is no way," said Massoud. The IEC meanwhile said about 40 centers have remained closed in cities due to insecurity. (Tolo news)

(3) 47 Voter Registration...

registration centers, 47 centers are closed and over 40 others face threats.

"Twenty (voter registration) centers are closed in one district and 27 centers have remained closed in another two districts which have fallen (to insurgents). And 13 centers which are under high and medium threats require military operations," he said. "We are prepared to carry out the process in the other 232 centers."

Residents in insecure areas in Badakhshan meanwhile called on officials to ensure the safety of all voter registration centers in the province.

"Badakhshan security agencies have the lowest facilities in terms of military power to suppress the enemy... people will not be able to attend elections if this situation continues," said Wahidullah Shewan, a local representative from Jurm district. He had been speaking at a meeting on election security in Faizabad City.

"Our information shows that residents of Yamgan, Wardoj and Ghustaka (districts) have been warned not to attend the voter registration process. We are fully ready to take part in the process," said Mawlawi Wahab, a local representative from Wardoj district.

Badakhshan police vowed to ensure the safety of all centers in the province.

"Election equipment and materials were delivered to areas which are under low and medium threat ... We have decided to launch operations when needed in order to ensure the safety of the electoral process," said Abdul Khaliq Aqsai, police chief of Badakhshan. (Tolo news)

(4) Meshrano Jirga...

talking to today's meeting of Meshrano Jirga, denounced Pakistani forces attack on Zazai Maidan district of Khost province and called it a blatant aggression.

Fawzia Sadat, another senator, said, "Pakistan's assault on the Afghan soil is a violation of all international laws, Afghans are ready to defend their territory," She asked the government to empower and equip Afghan security forces and talk to Pakistani through diplomatic channels for solving the issue. The Pakistan aggression should be formally complained in the United Nations.

Latif Zhwandai, representing Khost people in the upper house, appreciated the people and Afghan forces for defending Zazai Maidan district, asking the government to equip local residents with weapons so they would be able to stand against further violations of Pakistani forces.

Fazal Hadi Muslimyar, Meshrano Jirga chairman, hailed the local people and Afghan forces standing against Pakistani forces' attacks and said, "If Pakistan has any (ominous) plans, we also should be prepared, our people in Mohammad Zahir Shah era also protected the border districts,"

He said that the people of border districts should be equipped and work under the framework of border forces to defend the country's territory. Muslimayar and a number of

other members of Meshrano Jirga asked the international community to stop Pakistan's violation against Afghanistan. The United States should also equip Afghan forces with advanced weapons following the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA).

Based on the agreement, the Afghan government and United States would jointly take action against any serious threats posed to Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(5) Top Officials...

security for these centers as well as security for polling stations during the elections and we assure people that they will go to polling centers without any fears."

Stanekzai in turn said: "I ask the people who do not have ID cards, go and get ID cards because it is a good time to get ID cards; you must know that ID cards are necessary for the elections ... and also they are useful in your normal life."

In addition, Nicholson and Bass said they both support the Afghan election process.

Nicholson called on the people to take part in the elections and said: "The more people that can vote, the more credible the election."

"My pledge to you is, we will strongly support the MoI, the Independent Election Commission, the MoD, all the agencies in government whose job it is to provide security to the elections. We will give them all of our support," said Nicholson.

Bass pointed out how important the elections were - both this year's parliamentary and district council elections, and next year's presidential elections.

"This election, this fall, and the elections next spring, gives all of your brothers who have been in the mountains an opportunity to make a different choice and to choose a future that they are involved in peacefully," said Bass. The Afghan and foreign officials also reiterated calls to the Taliban to join the peace process and reach their goals through political ways and to participate in the elections.

Nicholson also said the Afghan government and the international community's move to put pressure on the group and on Pakistan was important in terms of reaching a negotiated, political settlement.

But the Taliban has rejected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's call for the group to take part in the upcoming parliamentary and district council elections.

In a statement issued by the group on Sunday night, they reiterated their stance that Afghanistan is an occupied country.

This comes after Ghani on Saturday officially launched the voter registration process and signed up to vote in the upcoming elections.

Speaking at the event, Ghani reiterated the peace offer made in February to the Taliban and said they must end the war and register as a political group.

He also said the Taliban should prepare themselves to take part in the elections adding that elections were a means to end disagreements.

The group also called on the people to boycott the elections.

The Taliban has still not however responded to Ghani's peace offer made at the Kabul Process meeting at the end of January. (Tolo news)

(6) Tree Plantation...

provides fresh air and improves the quality of life but also con-

tributes to the beauty of our environment.' He further said 'We will continue to further extend our tree plantation program and will cover more areas in the coming future.'

Present at the plantation ceremony, Sailab Wazire, director of district 10th of Kabul municipality said, 'We appreciate Etisalat's involvement in social welfare activities and encourage other private firms to take part in making Kabul a clean and beautiful city.'

Wazire also expressed his gratitude for Etisalat's contribution to other advancement opportunities the company has been providing for Afghans. Etisalat is committed to cover more areas of Kabul city and will work closely with Kabul municipality to provide the follow-up care for the planted trees. (PR)

(7) Women Drivers...

have applied for driver's licenses and 150 of them have passed the test," said Gen. Assadullah Assad, head of the Balkh traffic department.

The new license holders meanwhile said they were thrilled at having passed the test but that it was a struggle for women to learn to drive in the province.

"Whenever a woman takes her seat to drive in Mazar-e-Sharif city, then she is harassed by the male drivers," said one female driver, Parwana.

"When the women stand up to the males and drive and show courage, I think this is a good point," said one 21-year-old female driver, Rukhsar - who is the mother of two children and a graduate of Balkh university.

"Still there are some problems for women who want to learn to drive, but there are restrictions on them by their families," said civil society activist Palwasha Pawiandi. (Tolo news)

(8) Pakistan Should...

from across the border," remarked Abdullah.

Referring to the Pakistani prime minister's recent visit to Kabul, Abdullah said: "Shahid Khaqan Abbasi supported the position of the Afghan government. We expect practical measures from the neighboring country."

Two days back, a border skirmish erupted between Afghan and Pakistani forces in the Zazai-Maidan district of southeastern Khost province.

Pakistani soldiers tried to establish a check-post on Afghan soil. On Monday, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said 14 Pakistani soldiers were killed in a border clash in Khost province.

On the other hand, Abdullah hoped the Taliban would accept the unity government's offer of reconciliation parleys.

"We hope the legitimate position of the Afghan government, which is welcomed by the international community, will make the Taliban realise they will not achieve anything by war but through peace and negotiation," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(9) Turkey...

migrants trying to reach Europe. Turkey accelerated the deportation process on April 8, following reports that nearly 20,000 undocumented Afghan migrants have arrived in the country over the past three months, an unprecedented number.

The first group of Afghan migrants, consisting of more than 200 people, left Erzurum on April 8 on a charter flight bound for Kabul, with reports following that a total of 3,000 were planned to be deported from Erzurum alone.

The Interior Ministry on April 7 said the Afghan migrants had crossed into Turkey through Iran due to "ongoing terrorist activities and economic troubles" in Afghanistan and security forces had handed the migrants over to provincial immigration authorities

"Following the completion of deportation procedures for illegal migrants in our other provinces, deportations will speed up and continue in the coming days," the ministry said in a statement. During an official visit to Kabul on April 8, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the Interior Ministry was conducting a productive plan to stop the inflow of illegal Afghan migrants.

(10) 6 Passengers...

told Pajhwok Afghan News two individuals in military uniforms stopped a vehicle carrying passengers from Herat to Ghor.

He said the uniformed men opened fire at the vehicle, killing six passengers and snatched two others. Women and children were among the passengers but they escaped unhurt.

Police spokesman Mohammad Iqbal Nizami said three people were killed and two others wounded in the shooting. The victims belonged to the same tribe. (Pajhwok)

(11) 'Afghanistan Has...

collection in 32 provinces of the country.

Talking to beekeepers, he said, "Our honey production should be upgraded to international standards, we are cooperating with you in this area, our honey should be offered to international markets and its quality should be further improved,"

He said that a meeting to review beekeepers problems and finding solutions to them would be organized in the near future.

MALI has programs for finding markets for honey, increasing its production, encouraging the private sector for honey exports and providing modern facilities for beekeepers, Durani added without giving details.

He said the quality of Afghanistan honey was better compared to the foreign one, stressing Afghans should use domestic honey. "Using domestic honey would help improve its production and quality and encourage more people for investment in this area,"

However, a number of beekeepers complained about limited services in the beekeeping area by the government and honey in the market offered by unknown sources.

Abdul RabHamidi, Afghanistan Beekeepers Union head, said that sales of honey offered by unknown source to the market and with low quality faced beekeepers with problems. Such honey should be banned in the market. He said the union in cooperation with the government and donor organizations would take steps for improvement of beekeeping and resolve problems in the regard.

Mohammad EdressRauf, in charge of beekeeping project at MALI, said currently 6,100 beekeepers including 550 of them women in framework of eight cooperatives and 28 unions were busy across the country.

He said a large number of other people were individually busy in this industry.

In today's ceremony, different types of honey were put on display in MALI exhibition hall. (Pajhwok)