

(1) MPs Approve...

on a candidate.

The names of the nominees and details on votes are as follows:

1. Hamayoun Rassa was approved as the minister of commerce and industries with 170 votes in his favor, 39 against, 24 blank and five invalid. He has previously served as the deputy minister of education, and a United Nations official.

2. Abdul Bari Jahani was approved as the minister of information and culture with 120 votes in his favor, 66 against, 35 blank and six invalid. He is a poet and a writer, and has worked with radio station - the Voice of America.

3. Asadullah Zameer was approved as the minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock with 192 votes in his favor, 28 against, 15 blank and four invalid. He has served as the financial advisor with the rural rehabilitation ministry, director at agriculture ministry and an official of the World Bank.

4. Gulab Mangal was approved as the minister of borders and tribal affairs with 188 votes in his favor, 28 against, 13 blank and eight invalid. He has been the former governor for Helmand, Paktia and Laghman provinces.

5. Mahmood Baleegh was approved as the minister of public works with 168 votes in his favor, 38 against, 23 blank and eight invalid. He has been a professor at Kabul Polytechnic University.

6. Abdul Sattar Murad was approved as the minister of economy with 152 votes in his favor, 51 against, 29 blank and six invalid. He has been the governor of Kapisa and an Afghanistan Ambassador to Malaysia.

7. Mohammadullah Batash was approved as the minister of transport and civil aviation; with 176 votes in his favor, 32 against, 25 blank and six invalid. He has been the governor of Faryab and the acting minister of transport and civil aviation.

8. Asadullah Hanif was approved as the minister of education with 161 votes in his favor, 27 against, 18 blank and five invalid. He has been an Afghan Ambassador to Kuwait.

9. Sayed Mansour Sadat Nadiri was approved as the minister of urban development with 202 votes in his favor, 18 against, 10 blank and four invalid. He has been an advisor of Afghanistan's National Bank and also owns insurance companies.

10. Abdul Basir Anwar was approved as the minister of justice with 138 votes in his favor, 65 against, 30 blank and five invalid. He has been an advisor to former president Hamid Karzai, and the acting minister of health during Mujahidin's government.

11. Abdul Razaq Wahidi was approved as the minister of information technology with 152 votes in favor, 53 against, 28 blank and five invalid. He has been a university professor and a member of the mathematician's association.

12. Dilbar Nazari was approved as the minister of women's affairs with 131 votes in her favor, 70 against, 28 blank and 9 invalid. She has been a member of parliament and has worked with the Independent Election Commission and also with the United Nations.

13. Salamat Azimi was approved as the minister of counter-narcotics with 155 votes in her favor, 60 against and 23 blank. She has been a University Chancellor and a Professor.

14. Farida Momand was approved as the minister of higher education with 184 votes in her favor, 31 against, 18 blank and five invalid. She has worked as a doctor in several government hospitals.

15. Nasrin Oryakhail was approved as the minister of labors, social affairs, martyrs and disabled with 169 votes in her favor, 42 against, 21 blanks and five invalid. She has been a medical instructor at Kabul Medical University and the head of some government hospitals.

16. Ali Ahmad Osmani was approved as the minister of water and energy with 168 votes in his favor, 36 against, 29 blank and five invalid. He has been a university professor and has worked with the European Union and the World Food Program (WFP).

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has meanwhile welcomed today's approval of the 16 ministers to the country's NUG.

"It is imperative in the interests of effective governance that a full cabinet be in office and today's approvals are vitally important," said Nicholas Haysom, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA.

"The United Nations congratulates the ministers-designate and looks forward to working with them, supporting both them and the government in its important work ahead." The Special Representative urged that the minister of defence and other outstanding senior governmental and judicial positions be filled at the earliest time in order for the government to be at its full strength.

"No one said it was going to be easy," said Haysom, referring to the process of the formation of the NUG, "but today is an important step forward, providing a real opportunity for fresh momentum and a refocusing on the many serious challenges facing the country. We would hope that this confirmation will give impetus to finalizing other outstanding appointments in a spirit of mutual cooperation." (Tolonews)

(2) President Hail ...

today to complete the long delayed process.

Over 239 lawmakers attended the today's session and the minister-designate needed 120 votes to be declared winner for the post.

Earlier, the government introduced 25 ministers-designate and heads of two independent departments out of which only eight ministers and director of the spy agency managed to win trust vote. (Pajhwok)

(3) Talks Underway...

traders with more facilities in the transit of Afghan goods.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan Pakistan and Tajikistan have been working on a trilateral transit agreement to further boost trade and economic activities among the three countries.

In January this year, Pakistan handed draft of the proposed PATTTA to both the Afghan and Tajik governments and sought their proposals.

The working group headed by additional secretary Ministry of Commerce dispatched the said draft to relevant ministries of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In the meantime, three governments held internal discussions on the said draft.

Afghan businessmen have been complaining against the non-cooperative attitude of Pakistani custom officials regarding the transit of their goods.

He said Afghanistan's suggestion regarding India involvement was no acceptable to Pakistan, adding that without the presence of India the commerce related problems of Afghanistan could not be resolved. (Pajhwok)

(4) Officials ...

negligence during Badakhshan incident will be taken to justice. I, on behalf of the government, appreciate every father and mother and brave residents of Badakhshan for protecting Islam and national honor," he said.

Six months ago ANA forces faced with collision, but now the force had considerably improved and they were being appreciated worldwide, Ghani said.

Pointing to Taliban, he said: "Today is the day the Taliban should clear their decision whether they join the terrorists or the nation. If you (Taliban) are Afghan then come and join the government." (Pajhwok)

(5) Afghanistan, Pakistan...

and whole back the progress and prosperity of our countries is the sustained continues support in backing of our people."

"To you my dear young cadets, this change nature of the threat environment we all face together, and the change nature of war in peace in our age means that you must think of peace, security and stability beyond our limited national borders because we cannot have peace in our country when the neighbor is surfing and vice versa," he noted. The ongoing strategic dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, he reiterated gave him great hope and there was need to redouble bilateral sincere efforts so that realize the noble and rightful aspiration of millions of citizens for a life of peace, security, dignity and prosperity.

He said: "We must not under any circumstances let this historic opportunity slips from our hands." At the end, he thanked the senior PMA Kakul leadership as well as "my brother and good colleague Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif for asking me" to come and speak to you.

Maj Gen Nadeem Raza commandant PMA, parents and family members of graduating cadets and other guests were present on the oc-

casion. (Pajhwok)

(6) EU Ambassador...

emphasized that the change in Pakistan's policy had brought the Taliban to get interested in peace talks. The EU Ambassador expressed that Pakistan was following a new strategy to fight insurgency. He hoped that besides implementing those strategies, Pakistan would also take new steps for the stability of region. "I think from the top leadership, there is a word to say there is no good or bad terrorists anymore and they understand that this is a threat from terrorist groups against state actors and that state actors need to work together to combat that."

He, however, expressed concerns about presence of Daesh militants in parts of Afghanistan and urged on joint combat against the group by Afghanistan and Pakistan. (Tolonews)

(7) Ghani Visits ...

before holding a press conference where he discussed the security issues facing the country.

Salahuddin Rabbani, the Foreign Minister, and a number of the military commanders accompanied him on this trip while representatives from the 27 provincial districts also met with him in Fayzabad.

Shah Waliullah Adeb, acting provincial governor, told media present at the press conference that insurgents have turned their focus on the area and "were trying to infiltrate bordering districts of the province."

Meanwhile, Ghani told journalists present that soldiers from Nangarhar and Badakhshan have had the most casualties. "I salute to their sacrifices! It will not go to waste," he said.

He said he inherited a government with a \$125 million USD deficit and that six provinces had been on the brink of collapse.

However, "due to the sacrifices made by our soldiers the country no longer faces the threat of collapse," he said.

But, "today unfortunately all security forces are dependent on international aid", he stated.

He said that the country faces a new war. "The basic reasons for instability in Afghanistan are terrorism, insurgency, criminal economy and armed groups," he said.

"Terrorists are using Afghan blood and soil for their proxy war. It is not our war," he stated.

"Terrorists do not care about the future of our children. Afghan public must get ready to defend our soil and dignity shoulder to shoulder with ANA," he said.

"Afghan security forces can defend Afghanistan. Defending our country runs in our blood. We have proved it time and again."

He said this nation does not bow to threats and dangers and that Afghanistan will fight (insurgents) to the end. "The way forward is still full of obstacles and dangers but together we will overcome them too, as always."

"I assure you that the big dangers have passed us. We passed through huge challenges with success. I call on our religious scholars to once again perform their national duty of defending the country and raise awareness amongst people against this war," he said.

"Afghan security forces sacrifice their lives to defend national unity while our politicians try to divide us. This new war is a grave threat to our soil, dignity and survival. Thus, fight against this war is our collective national obligation," he said.

"Having a professional and well trained army is the only way to guarantee our existence," he said. Ghani's visit comes amid a rising number of complaints over the government's slow response to the situation - which saw almost 30 ANA soldiers killed when more than 500 Taliban stormed their military posts late at night.

Critics claimed earlier this week that one of the reasons for the high death toll number was that soldiers were not able to escape because there was no fuel in vehicles. The Ministry of Defense (MoD) has ordered an investigation into the incident. Preliminary findings suggest major negligence on the part of certain ANA officers, who sources close to the issue say are likely to face legal repercussions.

The Taliban reportedly seized over 20 posts and stole a large amount of military equipment including weapons and vehicles. (Tolonews)

(8) 38 Dead,...

attack took place. People rushed to the spot soon after the explosion. "Dozens of people are killed and wounded while ambulances have not reached to the spot to shift the

victims so far", he added.

The explosion took place in a busy market place on the first working day of the week.

Ameerzada, a reporter of Pajhwok Afghan News, said 40 wounded and dead were shifted in rickshaws and private cars to the hospital.

The second blast rocked the Dolki Baba Shrine, close to the department of information and culture.

Abdul Basir, another eyewitness, said the bomb was planted in bicycle near the municipality and Kabul Bank offices. Mehmood, a guard at the shrine, confirmed two children were wounded in the explosion.

Ahmed Zai Abdulzai, the governor's spokesman, confirmed the blasts but had no details into casualties to share. Col. Lutfullah Zaryab, a senior police officer, also confirmed the twin explosions but had no details.

An official in the provincial hospital wishing anonymity said that dozens of dead and wounded were brought in to the hospital, with most of the injured were in critical condition. He feared the death toll could surge.

People were asked to donate blood for victims of the blasts. No group so far claimed credit for the attacks. (Pajhwok)

(9) Protest Held ..

until they were assured of safe release of passengers.

Shakila Ibrahim, a Wolesi Jirga member from Logar province, supported the protesters and asked the government to take measures for early release of passengers. (Pajhwok)

(10) Protesters Want...

government and security organs. The protesters gathered in Zanaq square of the capital Kabul chanting slogans: "To forgive Afghans' murderers is a crime. Abdullah (CEO) should stand with us or resign and death to Taliban supporters and death to representatives who released Taliban from Badakhshan jail."

Mohammad Islam Yaftali, an organizer of the protest, accused the government for negligence about Warduj attack and said that security forces should launch clearing operations in northern regions as soon as possible.

Another protestor Abdul Manan Shiwa demanded government officials end the evil trend of promoting ALP and Islamic State groups in Badakhshan otherwise all residents of the province would stand against government.

He said the people of Badakhshan would never accept any deal and the residents should not be sacrificed for others' interests.

Iran Gul Saihoon, another protestor, said jailed Taliban should not be given amnesty or released from prison because releasing them was the main cause of ANA casualties.

At the end, they adopted a resolution, saying that senior provincial authorities should be sacked and replaced with professional and efficient officials. (Pajhwok)

(11) 300 Teachers...

pursuing the training program, training-related issues will be addressed in the capital, and in the provinces, to some extent the lack of professional teachers will be reduced," acting minister of Information and Culture Osman Baburi said. (Tolonews)

(12) Kabul Pessimistic...

Pakistan civilians and army officials pledged several times to demonstrate sincerity and take serious steps to keep the peace process toward success. But security incidents on border areas and recent surge in violence put a big question mark on tall claims of Pakistani officials. "President Ashraf Ghani has clearly said spring is a testing season for Pakistani claims. If there is increase in security incidents then it is an ample proof that Pakistani claims are not genuine," Khan recalled.

Dr. Faiz Mohammad Zaland, a political analyst and Professor at Kabul University, said the government of Afghanistan took steps for peace but could not achieve any results. He said Pakistan played tricks and focused only on its own interests but Kabul failed to understand and accepted demands of Pakistan.

Zaland said Kabul took decision in haste and sent soldiers for training to Pakistan. He said Pakistan did not take concrete steps to address issues pertaining to peace process past. "The government can't differentiate between friends and foes and kept India on one side only to gain the favour and support of Pakistan," he remarked.

But Akhter Munir, press attaché at Pakistan Embassy in Kabul, said: "Pakistan is sincere to keep the peace process forward on track. Peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the interests of Pakistan and Islamabad always support Kabul to achieve durable tranquility."

Talking to Pajhwok Afghan News, he said that peace and stability were linked to peace and prosperity in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Peace, he said was a process that would take time.

He expressed optimism that recent increase in diplomatic contacts between the two countries would help facilitate the peace process and leave positive impact on bilateral relations.

Abdul Hakim Mujahid, director of High Peace Council, stated that peace was the prerequisite for progress and development of both the countries. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline project and Central Asia and South Asia (CASA-1000) project could only be implemented if there was peace and stability in the region.

Taliban and governments in the region reached to the conclusion that greater peace was the only key to regional stability and solution to problems, he said, suggesting that governments should take Taliban into confidence to pave way for talks and get the desired results. (Pajhwok)

(13) President Blames...

repeatedly raised the ominous prospect of IS making inroads into Afghanistan, though the group that has captured swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq has never formally acknowledged having a presence in Afghanistan.

"Most of the leadership [of the Taliban] has disappeared or has not shown itself in the last many years, and because of that, a lot of analysts believe that the Afghan Taliban, the young ones, are now moving towards IS", added FRANCE 24's Siddiqi.

Taliban insurgents, have meanwhile, denied responsibility. The militants, who were ousted from power by a US-led invasion in 2001, rarely claim attacks that kill large groups of civilians, saying their activities are restricted to foreign or Afghan military and government targets.

"The IS presence has never been confidently confirmed, and we still have to be cautious about claims made in the name of IS", Haroon Mir, a Kabul-based political analyst, told the AFP news agency.

The deadly bombing comes as Afghanistan braces for what is expected to be a bloody push by the Taliban at the start of the spring season. "The announcement by the IS today is alarming, if verified, and would mean that Afghanistan should prepare for a bloody summer, maybe the bloodiest in the past 14 years", said Haroon Mir.

One civilian was also killed and two others wounded on Saturday in what appeared to be a remote-controlled car bomb attack in the Behsud district of Nangarhar province. Another blast was reported near a shrine in Jalalabad, but no one was hurt.

According to a recent UN report, the number of civilians killed and wounded in Afghanistan jumped 22 percent in 2014. (Reuters)

(14) Jalalabad Suicide...

National Police (ANP) discovered, defused and exploded two explosives-rigged motorcycles in the area, the other two explosions were controlled explosions.

It strongly condemned all acts of violence as "these heinous acts go against the values of humanity as well values of peaceful Afghans. These attacks also demonstrate and extreme level of atrocity by terrorists against innocent and defenseless civilians."

The MoI expressed: "Its deepest condolences to the families and relatives who lost their lives in this incident," the statement concluded.

In a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan condemned the deadly terrorist attack in Jalalabad this morning in which many precious lives were lost and a large number were injured.

"Such cowardly and indiscriminate attacks against civilians have no justification under any circumstances. We send our deepest sympathies and condolences to the families of the victims and pray for speedy recovery of the injured," the statement added.

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif strongly condemned the bomb blast, a separate statement from the prime minister office said. Extending condolences to the bereaved families on this tragic incident, he said: "Terrorism is a common enemy of both the countries

which are now taking joint steps to eradicate this menace."

In a statement, the headquarters Resolute Support strongly condemned the killing and injury of dozens of people in Nangarhar province today.

Anti-government elements continue to demonstrate their complete disregard for human life through attacks such as these. "We are saddened to learn of the murders of innocent civilians, victims in this attack," said Brig. Gen. Wilson Shoffner, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications.

Ambassador Ismail Aramaz, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan also condemned today's attacks. "I join President Ghani and the United Nations in condemning this atrocious act of indiscriminate violence against the people of Afghanistan. On behalf of all NATO allies and partners, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed and injured in this barbaric attack," he said. (Pajhwok)

(15) Daesh Claims ...

for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA.

"Those responsible for this horrendous crime must be held accountable," he said.

On behalf of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the Special Representative expresses his condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery for the injured.

Another blast has been reported in Behsud district, on the outskirts of Jalalabad - which has claimed the life of at least one person.

In addition the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) confirmed that another two explosive devices were found and defused near the scene of the first blast in Jalalabad.

President Ashraf Ghani has meanwhile issued a statement and condemned the attack as an act by "terrorists". He says: "This attack was inhuman and un-Islamic."

He says attacks like these will only increase the country's hatred of the insurgents. He also passed on his deep condolences to the families of those killed.

CEO Abdullah Abdullah has also issued a statement condemning the attacks. He passed on his condolences to the families of the deceased and wished those injured a speedy recovery. (Tolonews)

(16) 3 Ghor Districts ..

ment, said presence of anti-state elements and lack of cooperation from the residents were main factors that telecom services could not be received in Tolak, Chaharsada, and Pasaband districts.

He added some antennas of Etisalat had established in Chaharsad districts but militants damaged the generators, suspending the signals from properly functioning. (Pajhwok)

(17) Two in Five ...

Behrouz Afagh, comments: "The results of this survey show that the BBC remains strong in Afghanistan. People continue to come to us in large numbers because they trust our journalism and find it objective and relevant. We can also see that people are increasingly using our TV offer, including our new daily TV programming in Pashto."

Referrals from social networks in Afghanistan to the BBC sites - bbcpashto.com, bbcpersian.com and bbcpersian.com/Afghanistan - have been increasing steadily and now account for around a quarter of weekly traffic to all these sites.

Around 56,000 and 40,000 people a month come to the BBC Persian and BBC Pashto websites respectively from social networks in Afghanistan. Almost half of the BBC Pashto Facebook fans (330,000) and nearly fifth (417,000) of BBC Persian Facebook fans are from Afghanistan.

This audience update is based on the main results from a national media survey conducted in Afghanistan in October 2014. (BBC)

(18) Hundreds of...

But the PHE medical advice on which defence officials base their decisions has never recommended the use of Lariam for those going to Afghanistan. In a statement, a PHE spokesman said: "Mefloquine/liariam has never been recommended as an anti-malarial for people travelling to Afghanistan by the Advisory Committee on Malaria Prevention (ACMP)."

A combination of chloroquine and proguanil, which do not have Lariam's damaging side-effects, is recommended.

This combination, known as C&P, is considered to be the most effective and appropriate anti-malarial when balancing risks of malaria against potential side effects of drugs (Agencies)