

(1) Our Afghan ...

announcement of Mullah Omar's death and Mullah Mansoor's killing in a drone strike. Sartaj Aziz told the state-run TV that US National Security Advisor McMaster had returned home satisfied with Pakistan's clarification regarding Afghanistan. Pakistan and the Trump administration should jointly work for stabilising Afghanistan, he believed, saying the overall relationship between Islamabad and Washington had been positive and stable. (Pajhwok)

(2) Telecom Firms ...

optic fiber project. He said a consider decline would be witnessed in the internet price over the next two years. The minister said practical work on the optic fiber link between Afghanistan and China would be launched in 2018 and the project's survey and design would be completed this year. (Pajhwok)

(3) China, ...

said the minister who was accompanied by Dr. Mohammad Humayoon Qayumi, advisor to President Ghani. Sadat had discussions with leaders of ZTE and HUAWEI companies in China where a number of power and energy companies promised investment in Afghanistan's energy sector. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghanistan ...

located in areas plagued by insurgency, and insecurity and kidnappings have made life difficult for tourists in the country. Last August Taliban insurgents attacked a group of American and European tourists in western Herat, a timeworn city near the Iranian border renowned for its citadel and blue-tiled mosque. The attack, which left some of the tourists wounded, brought into sharp focus global thrill-seekers who imperil their lives to vacation in war zones. Afghanistan has, however, welcomed travel to what it considers safe areas where Taliban militants -- seeking to topple the government and return to power -- are not deemed a threat.

A few such areas can be safely reached by air, such as the ancient city of Bamiyan, currently at the centre of efforts to boost tourism revenue.

Bamiyan is famous for gaping hill-side niches that once sheltered giant Buddha statues that were blown up by the Taliban in 2001. The surrounding province, a landscape of russet-hued cliffs, was once a caravan stop along the fabled Silk Road and also boasts Afghanistan's first national park.

The northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, famous for its blue-tiled mosque, and the spectacular Panjshir Valley, known for its snowcapped peaks and precious stones, are some other relatively peaceful areas. (AFP)

(5) Moscow Not ...

to the Taliban. "As far as I know, the Taliban is a force, a force which everyone wants to negotiate with. We cannot ignore them when negotiations are considered with them. Tadamechi [Yamamoto] UNAMA's secretary general told the United Nations Security Council in March that the Taliban is a political force and they should join the negotiations table," he stated.

The Russian ambassador meanwhile pointed out that it was not only Russia that had been in contact with the Taliban but said some western countries had spoken with the group, including the U.S. (Tolonews)

(6) MoAB ...

"We are in the area but it is filled with mines in every inch. You are aware that it was one of the biggest strongholds of Daesh. They wanted to keep it safe this way. We are clearing the area," Mohammad Radmanesh, MoD deputy spokesman said.

The MOAB bomb was dropped seven days ago reportedly on Daesh strongholds in Achin district, but it is still it is not clear exactly why the bomb was dropped. Hamid Karzai, the former president of Afghanistan meanwhile slammed the bombing during an interview with VOA (Voice of America).

"It was the biggest U.S bomb which was not used anywhere but was used in Afghanistan. The U.S vice president came and said a lesson should be learned from Afghanistan and here Afghanistan was an example [for the use of biggest bombs]," Karzai said.

Members of the public have however blasted the U.S Forces and the Afghan government for not having released information about the bombing.

The U.S Forces have also not released details of their investigation into the bombing, but the Afghan government said the bombing sent a clear message to countries supporting terrorism.

"This bombing had a clear message to regional countries and the message was that there should be a review of the support and assistance to terrorists," Mujib Rahman Rahimi, CEO spokesman said.

The delay in releasing details has however created doubt about whether the MOAB bomb really was dropped or not. But some MPs said dropping such a bomb should help bring security to the country.

"I think this will have consequences in the future. We hope that serious and practical steps are taken [by the United States] under the security agreement," Mirdad Nijrabi, head of Parliament's Internal Security Commission said.

Nangarhar police department has said 94 Daesh militants were killed in the bombing. Ministry of Public Health meanwhile confirmed that no Achin resident was killed or wounded in the bombing. (Tolonews)

(7) Neighboring ...

Balkh Noor asked the government to switch to offensive mode from defensive in the ongoing war against terrorism.

He said insurgency in the north was on the rise because militants had been provided the opportunity to grow.

The interior minister hailed the performance of the provincial government and assured them of considering their demands. (Pajhwok)

(8) Hekmatyar ...

Meanwhile officials of the commission assigned to implement the peace accord between Hizb-e-Islami and government confirmed Saeed's remarks and said that they are preparing for Hekmatyar to come to the country.

"It is possible that in the next few days Hekmatyar will appear in one of the provinces and a commission is making preparations in this regard," said Ahmad Farzan, a spokesman for the commission implementing the peace deal.

Some MPs however questioned the implementation of the peace deal and said such statements had been made in the past but then his return was delayed.

"Many times the implementation of the deal has been postponed. Such delays will decrease people's trust regarding the accord and many questions will be raised in this respect," Gul Ahmad Azimi, a senator said.

The peace accord was signed between government and Hizb-e-Islami seven months ago.

Before this Hizb-e-Islami had said the release of its prisoners is a precondition for Hekmatyar's release. (Tolonews)

(9) SCO Supports...

Group would contribute to the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan.

The SCO is a political, economic and military alliance that is comprised of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as member states, and India and Pakistan as acceding states. Crisis-torn Afghanistan, along with three other nations, holds observer status in the international organization. Afghanistan has long been suffering from political, social and security instability due to the activity of the Taliban radical movement, which is outlawed in Russia. The international community, including Moscow, had made a number of efforts to launch a dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban militants. (Sputnik)

(10) Nangarhar ...

"This center is very useful because it is free, some students cannot afford course fees," she said.

Anita Naseri, deputy principle of the school, said most of the times in the past the lab door had been shut due to absence of electricity, a problem she said had been resolved now. The computer labs are not limited to girls schools only, boys schools are also provided with the same facility.

In the vicinity of Nazo Ana Girls' High School, a boys' school named Estiqlal exists where a cost-free centre for computer studies has been established with support from the USAID. A student of the centre, Farhad, said he was learning computer at the training centre during free

time which he previously wasted. "When I came to this educational centre, I had no idea how to switch on/off a computer. But now I have a lot of knowledge about computer programs e.g. Word, Excel, Photoshop and others."

Computer lab teacher at Estiqlal School Mohammad Samim Omaid said the solar power system had resolved many problems students faced earlier.

A USAID affiliated organization activated the solar power system and also provided laptop computers to the centre, he added.

Nangarhar Education Department spokesman, Mohammad Asif Shinwari, told Pajhwok Afghan News such training centres were set up in 30 high schools in Behsud, Surkhrod, Nazyan, Achin and Ghanikhel districts besides Jalalabad city.

He said students of 10th, 11th and 12th grade studied computer in specific period. Earlier there was no practical computer training in any school.

Currently, in many schools computer facilities have been made available with support from the USAID and other organizations.

Shinwari called upon donors to help them establish computer labs in all schools in Nangarhar.

USAID and some other organizations besides facilitating computer training have also provided internet facility to the centres. (Pajhwok)

(11) Ghani Inaugurates ...

Helmand River.

The first phase contractor, a Tajik construction company, completed its work in 2011 at a cost of \$10 million. The second phase, which began in 2012, was recently completed at a cost of \$15 million.

In the second phase, a similar wall on the other side of the river was constructed and the river's bed cemented. Nimroz Governor Mohammad Sami said work on the third phase would be launched soon. He added the dam would bring under irrigation 120,000 hectares of land besides producing electricity.

The administrative head of Chahar Burjak district, where the project is being implemented, said Nimroz's development critically depended on Kamal Khan dam's completion. Mohammad Nabi hoped the scheme would create jobs for people in addition to producing electricity. (Pajhwok)

(12) Trump Hails ...

their own nations."

Gentiloni, who took office in December, stressed the need for burden-sharing in the refugee crisis, given Italy's proximity to Libya, where large numbers of migrants take the risky voyage across the Mediterranean to reach Europe. Trump was quick to dismiss the notion that the U.S. would get involved in Libya, telling a joint news conference, "I do not see a role in Libya."

"We have enough roles. We have a role everywhere," Trump said.

Gentiloni noted Italy and America's "common commitment against terrorism." He said it requires social and economic collaboration with Muslim communities to be effective.

He said that despite budgetary limitations, Italy was committed to increase its defense spending from 1 percent of gross domestic product to 2 percent - the threshold that Trump has called for all NATO members to adhere to. Trump has complained that the United States contributes more to the military alliance than it receives.

"We are used to respecting our commitments," Gentiloni said.

Trump plans to attend a NATO meeting in Belgium next month before attending a summit of the Group of Seven major industrialized nations. Italy will host the summit, and Gentiloni can shape the agenda on behalf of European leaders wary of Trump's position on some long-standing agreements.

Trump has already pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a pact with 11 Asian and Pacific nations he said was "a disaster." This week he said he would make "some very big changes" to the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico or "we are going to get rid of NAFTA for once and for all."

Gentiloni has been strongly critical of protectionist trade policies shielding a country's domestic industries from foreign competition by taxing imports. Italy has suffered sluggish economic growth and was a staunch backer of a proposed U.S.-European free trade agreement negotiated by the Obama administration.

Trump favors bilateral trade deals and has used trade as a tool for

pressuring countries to do more on national security matters. That was evident most recently with his public statements promising China a "better" trade arrangement if Beijing cracks down on North Korea. Thursday's U.S.-Italy meeting took place against a backdrop of high uncertainty in Europe, following Britain's decision to leave the European Union and the upcoming French presidential election - the first round of voting is Sunday.

Like Trump, anti-establishment French populist Marine Le Pen hopes for an electoral boost by seizing on voter disenchantment with politics as usual. The EU has been a constant target, and Le Pen has called for a referendum similar to last year's Brexit vote. (AP)

(13) IEC Accused...

A number of main suggestions listed by the reforms commission are as below:

- Changing the single non-transferable voting system to a parallel system
- Invalidation of voter cards
- Specifying the education level of provincial council candidates
- Preparing the voters list based on the voters National Identity Cards ahead of elections
- Hiring two foreigners in the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission without the right to vote
- Hiring government employees instead of contracted staff during elections
- Accountability of the electoral commissions to the transparency committee
- Allocating a seat to Hindus in the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament)
- Making electoral sites smaller
- Rolling out electronic National Identity Cards (e-NIC)
- Approving 25 percent of seats for women in the provincial councils and district council elections
- Decreasing the IEC members to seven
- Decreasing the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission members to five

"Government has failed to implement these suggestions and also IEC simply has ignored the reform commission's suggestions," said Janan Abdul Rahimzai, a member of Afghanistan Civil Society and Election Network.

The Independent Election Commission meanwhile accepted that a big part of the suggestions has not been considered so far.

"A part of the suggestions will not be implemented, but the IEC welcomes and implements any suggestion which can help in bringing reforms and regaining the public trust in the electoral process," Gula Jan Abdul Bade Sayad, the IEC secretary and spokesman said.

Last month, the CEO's office announced that government is committed to holding the upcoming parliamentary and district council elections by the end of this solar year (21 March 2018). (Tolonews)

(14) Rare Initiative...

largely porous border. However, Pakistani and Afghan officials note recent high-level contacts both at political and military levels have led to an improved atmosphere, paving the way for the coming unprecedented dialogue between parliamentarians of the two countries.

"The discussion would be forward looking with the aim to find a path to improved bilateral relations with responding to our grievances, issues and perceptions," explained Zakhilwal.

A Pakistan government official told VOA Islamabad proposed the idea of opening direct interaction between lawmakers of the two countries to allow them to exchange views and proposals on how to bring stability to bilateral political and security relations.

The official, who requested he not be identified, said that President Ghani, in a letter to Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, welcomed the proposal and agreed to receive the Pakistani parliamentary delegation.

Pakistani government and military officials also acknowledge the active role Afghan Ambassador Zakhilwal has played in pushing the two sides to allow parliamentary interaction. Both sides hope the rare initiative will help reduce acrimony often witnessed during government-level negotiations, making the discussions less productive on issues dividing the two nations.

Afghan officials allege that safe havens on Pakistani soil are helping the Taliban to prolong the conflict in Afghanistan and have been demanding Islamabad take effective

steps to stop the activity.

Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Nafees Zakaria on Thursday again rejected Afghan allegations that Pakistani security forces are fighting only anti-state militants on their soil and sparing those involved in attacks against Afghanistan.

"We have said this thing time and again that we do not draw any distinction. We have taken action against ally types of terrorists and the manifestation of that is the improved security situation in Pakistan," Zakaria said.

For their part, Pakistani officials maintain the insurgents have long moved back to Afghan areas where the Taliban has established its control over the past two years, and that security forces are not allowing anyone to use Pakistani soil for engaging in cross-border violence.

The headquarters of Marine Corps operations in Afghanistan, Camp Leatherneck, was located in Helmand, and Marines waged hard and lengthy offensives in populous regions including Sangin and Marjah in the latter years of the war, driving the Taliban out of district centers there.

Shortly before the Marine Corps pulled out of Helmand in October 2014 to mark the end of formal combat operations, it marked a formal withdrawal from Sangin, celebrating a district with newfound safety, stable governance, and protection by local forces.

News of Taliban gains in Helmand began to surface shortly after the Marines pulled out. In 2015, Marjah, site of Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal's famous 2010 "government-in-a-box" counterinsurgency offensive, fell to Taliban control.

But even since the Marine Corps announced the new deployment in January, the region has become more dangerous and uncertain. In late March, multiple outlets reported that the Taliban had retaken control of Sangin, a district that cost the lives of some 50 Marines and 100 British troops in the primary offensive from 2010-11. A spokesman for U.S. Forces Afghanistan told The New York Times that the Afghan National Army had merely repositioned its district headquarters in the region, but other sources painted a grim picture of withdrawal and being overrun by the enemy.

In the wake of the Pentagon's decision to drop a 21,000-pound bomb on a network of caves used by Islamic State militants in Nangarhar province to the northeast, a Helmand spokesman reported that 11 civilians were killed and one wounded in separate roadside bomb blasts in Helmand's Nawa district and its capital, Lashkar Gah.

In January, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller told Military.com that he had "no delusions" about the challenges of the region to which the Marines were set to deploy.

"Are we going to change the game? I don't know; we'll find out," he said. "It's going to be a very challenging mission. Helmand and the Helmand River valley and that whole area is right smack-dab in the middle of [Taliban territory]."

The task force is set to replace a similarly sized Army unit, Task Force Forge, and will likely operate out of Camp Shorab, the Afghan Army's 215th Corps headquarters located at the former Camp Leatherneck, and Lashkar Gah, which also serves as the headquarters of the Afghan National Civil Order Police.

"We're going there to facilitate the capabilities of the Afghan 215th Corps and the Afghan police in Helmand and Lashkar Gah so they can be more effective and protect the security of the people who live there," Neller said in January. (Agencies)

(16) 70pc Increase...

fields. Governor Mangal expressed happiness over the 70 percent increase in industrial activity during the past six months.

He said he was trying to pave the way for further investment in Nangarhar in order to improve economy and create job opportunities.

The governor conferred appreciation letters on the ACCI members for their efforts at strengthening the local industry. (Pajhwok)

(17) 57 Garden...

(MALI)'s NHLP initiative had established a garden for him on 13 acres of land.

"It was arid land, the NHPL provided us with water and then it built us a solar system, enabling us to draw water for irrigation. We have planted almond trees on five acres and apples, grapes and walnuts on three acres. They are likely to produce fruit this year," he said.

Abdul Qudus, a resident of Tarma Bayer area, said the NHPL programme had established a garden for him on five acres of arid land. He collected lots of fruits last year.

"It was a rain-fed land, we did not think pear, grape and apple trees will yield grow here. Besides fruit trees, we cultivated wheat, watermelon, cucumber and different types of vegetables which have yielded good results," he said.

The NHLP programme of MALI was launched in 2009 in the north-eastern zone. Thousands of gardens have been established in Taloqan and a number of districts under the programme. (Pajhwok)

(18) Cinema, Theatre...

called acting one of her childhood dreams.

Much to her delight, the long-cherished has come true. She urged the government to support cinema and theatre in the country, something that could help reduce violence and contribute to social reforms.

Rahela Rezaee, a film actress, remarked: "If allowed by men, women can work even better. They are capable of working wonders." She has been working in Herat's cinema for the past nine years.

Film director Abdul Rashid Azimi said: "More women are joining the cinema industry now, compared to the past." He asserted women were more interested in the field than men. Women's achievements were grater in theatre despite the fewer modern tools and equipment at their disposal. (Pajhwok)

(19) May Says...

commitment on foreign aid spending - a pillar of predecessor David Cameron's attempts to soften the image of the Conservative party. (Reuters)

(20) EU's Chief...

will also be Poland's goal in Brexit negotiations.

"As far as a financial agreement is concerned, we understand different political, budgetary and legal obligations but we want the agreement to be honest and objective," Szymanski said.

"There is no reason to punish Great Britain for its democratic choice, but is must fulfill the obligations it has taken upon itself as an EU member," Szymanski said. (Xinhua)

(21) China, Russia...

management of international crises. To Lavrov, coordination and cooperation between China and Russia in international institutions such as the UN Security Council and the OPCW have shown the importance of the two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership. (Xinhua)

(22) Syria Dispersed...

can say authoritatively they have retained some (chemical weapons). It's a violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions, and it's going to have to be taken up diplomatically," Mattis said. (Reuters)

(23) DPRK Delegation...

the national dialogue such as achieving territorial integrity of Syria.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti government also provided humanitarian aid to the DPRK for its flood damage last year.

The DPRK backed Arab countries in its wars with Israel and recognized the Palestinian state. (Xinhua)

(24) Algeria, US

the legal framework of cooperation between the two countries."

"Beyond its political significance in our relation with this strategic partner, the treaty reflects both governments' willingness to provide strong and excellent collaboration, particularly in the fight against terrorism and all forms of criminality, with required legal framework that has been lacking so far," he specified. U.S. Ambassador to Algeria noted that "the ratification of this treaty represents another step forward in the development of strong bilateral partnership between the United States and Algeria, mostly in terms of the fight against terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, as it enables justice departments in both countries to directly and efficiently communicate. (Xinhua)