

(1) Expanding...

spheres,' he said, adding that we are prepared to embark on the issue of expanding ties.

Ibrahimi who held talks with Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani on the sidelines of the Eurasia parliamentary meeting, said that Afghan parliament attaches great importance to expand parliamentary ties with Iran.

'We are ready to develop closer cooperation and coordination with at the international forums,' he said.

The two-day Eurasia parliamentary meeting was attended by Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan Republic, Belarus, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Cambodia, Mongolia, Pakistan, South Korea, Russia, Thailand, the Philippines and Czech Republic last week. (IRNA)

(2) Govt. Unable...

celebrated on April 22 worldwide to demonstrate support for environmental protection. It was first celebrated in 1970, and is now coordinated globally and celebrated in more than 193 countries each year.

"If serious action is taken against land grabbers and bribery is prevented, it would be a big favour on the land. A man is convicted in three-tier court, but he is released in five minutes in exchange of money," he said.

The land suffered a lot and life safety badly affected by the continued insecurity, illegal use of natural resources, forests, green areas and energy resources and other improper methods adopted by powerful men and citizens, he said.

The past four decades of war has negatively affected the environment and the earth, he noted, listing concentration of population, urbanization, construction of more towering buildings, turning forests into agricultural land, agricultural land into residential areas and selecting modern life as some huge challenges the earth face.

Meanwhile, a message from Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah was read out by Syed Fazal Sancharaki, a cultural advisor to the CEO, at the event. In his message, the CEO said the past decades of war and the lack of rule of law had caused serious damage to the environment. Deforestation, expansion of unplanned cities and villages, lack of orchard maintenance, negligence in wild life protection, heaps of garbage on streets, use of weapons and explosives have polluted the land and air of Afghanistan, making the environment dangerous and difficult for human breathing, the CEO said in his message.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country director Douglas Keh said all should be ready against the climate change.

The natural resources of Afghanistan are under pressure and of 566,000 kilometre of land in Afghanistan, only 12 percent is cultivable. (Pajhwok)

(3) Pakistan 'Assures'...

the Afghan government and the Taliban was expected to be hosted by Pakistan in early March but the insurgent group refused to attend in a last-minute announcement.

Afghan refugees Minister Balkhi is in Pakistan to discuss problems facing the Afghan refugee population such as harassment at the hands of local police, forced deportations and illegal detentions during counterterrorism crackdowns.

His Pakistani counterpart, Abdul Qadir Baloch, says the visiting Afghan minister has been assured the complaints are being addressed through certain steps. He insisted that mainly Afghans living illegally as economic migrants and not the registered refugees, are facing the problems. Baloch says that to address the issue, Pakistani authorities, with the help of the Afghan government, will start within a month a registration process for an estimated 1.5 million undocumented Afghans.

"So, it will be done soon and hopefully once these Afghan refugees who are unregistered, they are registered and issued with Afghan documents and we also have a record of them and thereafter this complaint of them being harassed, or arrested, or persecuted in an undesirable manner that should come to an end, that will soon will come to an end," he said.

Minister Baloch says that there are around one-and-a-half-million registered Afghan refugees in the country and he will soon submit a request to the federal cabinet to extend their stay in Pakistan until the end of 2017. The current deadline for the Afghan refugee population to legally stay in the country ends on June 30 of this year. (VoA)

(4) CASA-1000 ...

transmission lines are expected to

commence from Sangtuda in Tajikistan and will pass through Kunduz, Pul-i-Khumri, Kabul and Jalalabad in Afghanistan and end up in Peshawar, northwest Pakistan.

The total length of the transmission lines is estimated to be 750km, 16pc of which would pass through Tajikistan, 75pc through Afghanistan and 9pc through Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(5) Name Picks...

international community know Pakistan's dual-faced policy on peace in Afghanistan, so the president wants to discuss the issue with public representatives. The president also wants to put pressure on countries with whom Afghanistan has signed agreements," he believed.

On behalf of the Meshrano Jirga, Wardak supported the meeting and said all members of parliament would support the president's decision.

Meanwhile, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Gulam Nabi Farahi said the president wanted to discuss some important issues with lawmakers. He denied to disclose the exact date and venue of the meeting due to security reasons, but said preparations for the meeting were in place.

During his brief remarks in the Wolosi Jirga, Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi called the planned consultative meeting a good idea. However, he reminded the president to introduce his nominees for National Directorate of Security (NDS) and MoD heads to the house before the meeting.

For about a year now, the MoD has been under an acting minister, Masoom Stanikzai. Similarly the NDS is being led by acting director general, Massoud Andarabi since November 2015.

Based on the constitution, a department head or minister could continue in acting capacity for two months only. But the rule has been flouted by the sitting administration, as well as the government of former president Hamid Karzai. (Pajhwok)

(6) Khalilzad ...

Afghanistan was because Pakistan created sanctuaries for the Taliban.

Pakistan's 'double game' Shortly after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 to drive out the Taliban, Khalilzad, who was serving as U.S. President's George Bush's special envoy to Afghanistan, said he began to realize that Pakistan was playing a "double game."

He said very few U.S. officials believed what he was saying. "I was the first administration official at that level to say a 'sanctuary' was being developed — to use that word. Now, if you say that no one would challenge that."

Pakistan has consistently denied that it allows militant groups to organize and plot attacks from its territory, or that its intelligence service aids some militant groups. However the country's inability to secure the tribal areas along the Afghan border has become a high-profile issue with both Washington and Kabul who say Islamabad should do more to rein in extremists.

A recent survey of Afghan public opinion conducted by VOA's parent organization, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, along with the Gallup news agency showed that citizens of Afghanistan have a very low opinion of Pakistan. Survey respondents gave Pakistan a favorability rating of 3.7 percent — the bottom of the list — faring even worse than Islamic State, which received a 5.8 favorability rating. Khalilzad said he is disappointed the United States could not do more in Afghanistan, but said the situation there is a lot better than before the U.S. invasion.

Iraq, Syria After serving the Bush administration in Afghanistan, Khalilzad became the U.S. ambassador to Iraq.

"If we knew what we know now, that Saddam [Hussein] didn't have WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction] or very little WMD that our intelligence was wrong," he said, "then surely we wouldn't have invaded" Iraq.

On Syria, Khalilzad said he does not support the Obama's administration policy. "I think we should have done more to stop the war. We should have created these safe zones. We have a lot of experience, we did it in Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait for the Kurds."

Sunni, Shi'ite rivalry When asked about the rise of Islamist extremism, Khalilzad said "whatever the reasons are, Muslims are divided themselves."

He said one of the most important factors in the rise of Islamic State is the rivalry between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. He said current policies in the Middle East have led to "supremely devastating circumstances for the Sunni Arabs" in both Syria and Iraq.

"Only extremists can survive in those circumstances," he said. "If you are a moderate, a professor, a dentist, a doctor, and you have children, you can not survive. You run away, or you become an extremist, saying this must be the will of God."

Zalmay Khalilzad's new memoir, "The Envoy: From Kabul to the White House, My Journey Through a Turbulent World," traces his journey from a boy in Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan, to his time in California as an exchange student, and his time as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and later the United Nations. (VoA)

(7) Experts Rally ...

agreement stated that within two years a constitutional amendment needed to be made to clarify the CEO's position.

In addition, within two years, necessary reforms in Afghanistan's election system need to be brought and a constitutional Loya Jirga must be held to consider amendments in the constitution.

The signing of the agreement was however met with profound criticism by law experts and critics who termed the NUG's creation against the constitution.

"The establishment of the national unity government does not comply with the constitution, but government leaders need to follow up on their commitments they made in the political agreement and implement them on time," law expert Mohammad Amin Ahadi said.

Following the establishment of the NUG, initially, the Afghan people anticipated a genuinely better future for their country in economic, security, social and political spheres. However, none of their dreams changed into reality, many critics have said.

"The constitution has defined the working tenure of the government. The government is committed to implementing commitments it made in the political agreement," a deputy presidential spokesman, Shah Husain Murtazavi said.

The two years mentioned in the political agreement end within six months. "There are concerns these commitments will not be placed according to the timeframe and there would be delays in complying with it, but the government is resolute in delivering on the promises," Mohammad Natiqi, a member of the Commission Overseeing Implementation of Political Agreement, said on Saturday.

Amid the growing controversy, law experts however say that the government will face serious credibility challenges if it fails to convene the Jirga and comply with the political agreement.

"The national unity government was opposing the constitution from the beginning, if this shaky government does not comply with the agreement, it will face a crisis and the termination of its job," law expert Abdul Wahid Farzayee, a member of the governing board of Afghanistan's Lawyers Association, said on Saturday.

It is believed that the implementation of reforms in the election system and the holding of the Loya Jirga could work to the benefit of the NUG. However, there is a perception in the country that government leaders seem to be reluctant to respond to these calls. (Tolnews)

(8) Russia Not ...

was clear, the Russian Embassy emphasized that the Taliban group should accept the Afghan constitution and refrain from violence and terminate links with al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks.

The statement said that Moscow remains committed in supporting Afghanistan to bolster security and capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces.

The statement comes in a wake of reports regarding the growing concerns of Moscow as the loyalists of the Islamic State are expanding foothold and terrorist related activities in Afghanistan. (ANI)

(9) 60pc Taliban ...

security organs, subduing Taliban's activities and planning to bring about a lasting peace to Helmand.

On Saturday, Qahraman told reporters at the parliament premises: "We worked on good process (in Helmand), we had inclusive talks with the opponents. I personally spoke to them (militants) face-to-face and I was able to convince 60 percent of militants that the war is not a solution to the issue, which should be solved through talks."

Qahraman had previously also said he launched talks with group leaders, field commanders and other figures of Taliban militants and many had gone off the battlefield voluntarily.

He had said he had exclusive meetings with 4500 individuals who were now assisting him in bringing the conflict to an end.

Today, Qahraman said with people and security forces' support and with creation of coordination among security organs, the conflict in Helmand has been controlled.

However, the Taliban are in control of four districts of Helmand and Babaji area of Lashkargah, the provincial capital. The rebels are in full control of Baghran, Dishu, Sangin, Musa Qala and Nawzad districts.

"The concern that Helmand will fall to the insurgents has been removed. Helmand will not only be kept from falling to Taliban, but all areas lost to the rebels will be retaken," Qahraman said.

He said the Taliban wanted to turn Helmand into a massive battlefield because the province bordered Pakistan and Iran.

"Unfortunately our two neighbours (Iran and Pakistan) have no good intentions about Afghanistan," he said and warned insecurity in Helmand would affect the entire southern zone and the zone would affect the whole country.

Clashes have been ongoing in various parts of Helmand, including the provincial capital, between security forces and Taliban militants. (Pajhwok)

(10) US Pushes ...

Tuesday. The Taliban group claimed responsibility for the attack, which came days after the insurgent group announced its 'spring offensive' in the region.

The Afghan officials, including the international community, widely denounced the attack.

While President Ashraf Ghani vowed to revenge each drop of blood of the Afghan people shed by the militants, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah called the attack as a clear sign of terrorists' hostility and enmity against the people of the country. (ANI)

(11) Religious Scholars ...

to denounce violence and join the peace process.

The remarks by religious scholars in Kunduz come after at least 20 armed militants recently laid down their arms and joined the peace process in Baghlan province — one of closest provinces to Kunduz.

The leader of the 20-member group said they realized that war is not the solution and that they should not fight against government forces. (Tolnews)

(12) Karzai Seeks ...

terror. He blamed the US for failing to address the root cause of the scourge. Karzai assailed the US and its partners for ignoring terrorist sanctuaries, funding and training facilities in the region. "They concentrated on the war in Afghan villages. Today, after 14 years, Afghanistan is not secure..."

The Taliban were dictated by intelligence network, especially by the Pakistan spy service, Karzai alleged. However, for the sake of stability in the country, he supported talks with the militants, saying most of them were Afghans. (Pajhwok)

(13) Badakhshan ...

from Argu district, said that since agricultural land in Badakhshan was inadequate, most of the poor people chose to cultivate the illicit crop.

He suggested the government should take tangible steps for the development of agriculture and ensure availability of refined seeds and fertilisers to the growers at subsidised rates.

According to Affendi, last year 169 kilograms of heroin, 984 kilograms of opium, 73 kilograms of hashish, 135 litres of alcoholic drinks, more than 450 kilograms of chemicals and weapons were recovered from smugglers.

Dr. Ahmad Bashir Samim, head of the provincial council, said the assistance provided last year did not go to the deserving people. As a result, farmers felt discouraged and did not cooperate with eradication efforts. He stressed a halt to the smuggling of drugs to the world market.

Saadullah Abu Aman, head of the Ulema Council, said drug trafficking and its cultivation was forbidden in Islami. Growing the illegal crop was dangerous for the rising generation and society at large, he added.

According to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), more than 30,000 people, including women and children, are addicted to drugs in Badakhshan. (Pajhwok)

(14) 21 Militants...

arms and joined the government-backed peace and reconciliation process, according to High Peace Council officials, but the claim has been rejected by the armed outfit. (Xinhua)

(15) Taliban ...

Baghlan Governor Abdul Sattar Bariz said Taliban commander Amruddin

along with his 19 fighters joined the government and surrendered 19 weapons to security organs.

Amruddin told Pajhwok Afghan News that they had been fighting against the government in Doshi district over the past two years.

"We did not know Taliban are receiving orders from Pakistan. We shunned insurgency after realising it and with our elders' suggestion," he said. He asked the government to pay attention to their protection. (Pajhwok)

(16) Govt. under...

since the end of the winter, and if the battles continue, Taliban will attempt to bring the entire province under its control and government held areas will collapse," a resident of Helmand, Abdul Ahad, said.

Amid the controversy, Helmand officials however stress the Taliban will not be able to occupy Helmand. They said enough security forces have been deployed to the area to foil such attempts by the resurgent movement.

"I assure you that Helmand will not collapse. We have deployed sufficient forces in Helmand, however we need to concentrate on the leadership. We are also working on strategic programs and will give the enemy a well-measured response wherever we see them," governor of Helmand province Hayatollah Hayat said.

Helmand, once a key Taliban stronghold in the south, has faced several rounds of deadly battles over the past few months — after the insurgent group extended offensives against security forces in the area. (Tolnews)

(17) Work on...

pay greater heed to the quality of roads and properly monitor the construction activity.

Wahidzai said: "There is urgent need for road maintenance. The Ministry of Public Works should maintain the transit route, install scales and pay attention to the quality of roads."

Director of Public Works Eng. Mamoor Shah said most of roads in Khost had been damaged over the past few years. If the central government did not pay attention to the issue, he warned, the roads would be destroyed soon.

He said: "The road's lifespan is 12 years and should be repaired every four years, but over the past eight years, roads have not been repaired." (Pajhwok)

(18) Coming ...

cooperation with important countries in the world; therefore, we decided to collaborate with a leading mineral water company in Afghanistan," said an official from Pepsi company. Nemat, an official from the Afghan firm, meanwhile, said: "The agreement provides job opportunities to at least 500 individuals, and indirectly, it creates jobs for almost 2,000 families."

Meanwhile, officials from the Afghan Consulate in Dubai said that considering the current situation in Afghanistan, the investment would be crucial for the country.

"We will continue our cooperation and support to them [Afghan investors]. The agreement is crucial for the current situation in Afghanistan," said Abdul Samad, an official from the Afghan consulate office in Dubai. Talking on the issue, head of Afghan Businessmen's Union in Dubai, Obaidullah Sadarkhail, said: "The agreement is very important for Afghanistan and the Afghan people as it will create job opportunities for them." (Tolnews)

(19) 13 Militants ...

Mujahid rejected the claim as groundless, alleging that innocent civilians, including women and children, had been killed in the airstrike. He said the arrested individuals were local elders who had no connection with the Taliban.

Shukrulah, the resident of locality, said one woman was wounded in the air raid, but the Taliban suffered more casualties. (Pajhwok)

(20) Merkel, Obama ...

that "it is good for us as we will be able to appraise our competitors." The United States is Germany's biggest trading partner. Advocates of the trade deal say it would unleash further growth while critics warn it could undermine consumer rights and environmental protection. (Reuters)

(21) UNHCR ...

According to Arif, if countries have efficient and fast asylum system and they return a person who is not qualified, that person goes back to his village and he will say "We did not make it because their systems are working". So you will not have more

displacement from their place of origin.

But if you have people coming and their application for asylum is delayed for months, people call their relatives back in their countries and they say "I have reached this country and it is OK. You can come". And other displacement will take place. (Xinhua)

(22) Merkel...

helping Turkey improve conditions for the 2.7 million refugees it is hosting.

Diplomatic relations are strained following President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's warning that the deal to curb the migrant flow to Europe would fall through if the EU did not keep up its end of the bargain by allowing visa-free travel for Turkish citizens. (AFP)

(23) Kurdish, ...

by Kurdish security forces, though pro-Assad forces still hold a few areas in the city center, and its airport. (Reuters)

(24) Any Peace ...

significance to the nation's right to decide its fate.

He also slammed certain countries for plotting to topple the Damascus government and said the US and other sponsors of Takfiri terrorists will fail in their attempts to install a puppet regime in Syria.

Commenting on the presence of Iranian military advisers in Syria, Yelayati said Tehran's advisory mission comes at the request of the Syrian government and does not need the permission of other states. (PressTV)

(25) Security...

and landmines leading to the al-Qaida-held city of Zinjibar, a tribal source who is participating in the attack alongside the security forces told Xinhua.

More than 16 al-Qaida militants were killed and dozens injured in the ongoing fighting, the trial source said, adding that five security member were also killed. (Xinhua)

(26) Turkish ...

Iraq on Saturday morning, according to the statement.

All 12 warplanes safely returned to the bases in Turkey after hitting the PKK targets in northern Iraq, said the statement.

The air raids were part of an escalated campaign against PKK posts in northern Iraq following a suicide car bombing on March 13 that killed 37 people in the capital city of Ankara. The Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK), a Kurdish militant group linked to the PKK, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Feb. 17, a suicide car bomb targeted military shuttles in Ankara, killing at least 29 people and injuring 81 others. TAK also claimed responsibility for that attack. (Xinhua)

(27) S. African ...

Vosloorus, outside Johannesburg in honour of nine ANC members who died in a traffic accident last week.

The ANC members were killed last Sunday when the bus they were travelling in overturned between Winburg and Ventersburg in Free State Province. They returning home to Ekurhuleni in Gauteng Province after attending the launch of the ANC's local election manifesto in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province. Zuma said the ANC members "lost their lives while on duty for this movement".

"The ANC is kept alive by its members who dedicate themselves to serving the people that entrust it with their votes," the president said. "We are now called upon to return to the homes of our people to remind them of the work that we have done. We must proudly tell the story of the good strides that the ANC government has made," he said. (Xinhua)

(28) Palestinian, ...

for the sake of the future of our planet," he added. "Unfortunately, President Abbas chose to exploit this international stage to mislead the international community." Earlier this week, Danon and Palestinian envoy Riyad Mansour yelled "shame on you" at each other during a regular U.N. Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East. That meeting turned into a rare shouting match. (Reuters)

(29) At Least ...

harden the opposition's position. Anas al-Abda, the leader of the Turkey-based Syrian National Coalition represented in the Geneva talks, lamented the international community's "limpness" in responding to what he called "massacres" against civilians, in response to the Aleppo violence. (AP)