

**(1) Top Defense ...**

insurgents reportedly stormed the base by initially launching a suicide attack and allowing the remaining militants to start shooting spree. The exact number of the casualties has not been announced by the security officials so far but reports indicate more than 100 soldiers and officers lost their lives in the attack. (KP)

**(2) Assault on...**

"Afghan security forces will take revenge on the Taliban for the barbaric attack," the NSA was quoted as saying in a statement from his office. He said individuals in security forces' ranks, who committed negligence or helped the enemy, would be held accountable under the country law.

Atmar also met Iranian National Security Council Secretary Ali Shakhani, who conveyed condolences over the attack. On the behalf of the Iranian government and people, Shakhani assured Atmar of full support and stressed joint efforts to eradicate terrorism. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Terrorism a ...**

Separately, Gen. Bajwa also expressed solidarity with the Afghan security forces and the resilient Afghan nation. "Terrorists are our common enemy and we shall defeat them," the Inter-Services Public Relations quoted him as saying.

In a statement, the Foreign Office reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working closely with the Afghan government as well as the international community in the fight against the scourge of terrorism. (Pajhwok)

**(4) Computerized ...**

"Registration and identification of voters on the election day and the voting and the vote counting processes will be totally performed through the computer system that will help prevent fraud," he said.

However, Warimach said security threats and lack of budget were two major challenges towards the upcoming election.

He said the government was yet to provide budget for the election process. "Financial commission of the government is working seriously to arrange the cost which is a major challenge for us after security problem," he added. About fraud allegations in previous elections, he said the IEC was working fast to computerize the election system to prevent rigging and ensure transparency. (Pajhwok)

**(5) Senators Ask....**

were involved in the attack. President Ashraf Ghani Saturday declared Sunday a day of national mourning. Sher Mohammad Akhonzada, a Meshrano Jirga member from southern Helmand province, told today's session that those who carried out the attack were not Muslims.

He held government leaders and the defense minister responsible for the attack and said: "We lack the ability to question you, but you will be accountable for the loss of 130 soldiers on the judgment day."

Mohammad Hassan Hotak, another senator, called the attack as barbaric and said: "Attack on prayers is against the Quran and Islamic values."

Zalmai Zabolai, a senator from Zabul province, criticized the appointment of a fact finding commission and said: "Mourning and commissions will not resolve people's problems, a national consensus must be created and the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US reviewed."

He asked the international community to put pressure on Pakistan to stop financing and equipping terrorist groups.

Another senator, Gul Ahmad Azami, also said it was an unforgivable incident.

"The main planners of this attack were regional intelligence and figures inside the government. Organizing such attack without inside support is impossible," he said.

He said poor management, intelligence and detection were other factors that allowed the attack to happen. "Losing 137 soldiers is shocking, if officials who committed negligence in the past had been punished, this incident would not have happened," he said.

Senator Lailuma Ahmadi said fact finding commissions in the past had not shared their information with the people, the national day of mourning would also not help.

A number of other members also called the attack against Islam and said the national day of mourning and tasking commissions were useless.

First deputy chairman, Mohammad Alam Ezediyar, who chaired the session, said, the attack on the 209th Shaheen Military Corps was intolerable and unjustifiable.

He hoped the incident would not be forgotten like other incidents happened in the past.

He said poor leadership, interference in recruitment, enemies' infiltration and

differences among government leaders were factors behind such incidents. Concealing information by past fact-finding commissions had made the nation not to trust the government anymore, he said, adding hiding facts from people would cause unwanted consequences.

Ezediyar asked the government to find the root causes of the current crisis and wars in the country and take action for tightening security. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Illegal Mining...**

PC member, endorsed Stanikzai's claims and said chromite mines were a national asset as they belonged to the entire nation. The government and local authorities should prevent the smuggling of precious stones, he demanded.

Zubair, an inhabitant of Mohammad Agha district, said: "There is a huge mine of chromites in our village, where illegal extraction has been ongoing over the past 10 years but no one has bothered about preventing it." He added two truckloads of chromites were smuggled daily to Pakistan through Paktia province.

But the governor's spokesman, Salim Saleh, rejected the allegations of the public representatives as groundless. He said chromite extraction agreements had been signed with some companies to create jobs for locals.

He said no company would be allowed to extract the stones illegally and no security official was involved in illegal digging. Chromite mines exist in Logar, Kabul, Khost, Parwan and Maidan Wardak mountains. The mineral is widely used in construction projects. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Iranian Official ...**

an Afghan army base in the northern province of Balkh that killed at least 140 soldiers on Friday.

Condemning the attack on the Afghan Army base, claimed by the Taliban, Shamkhani voiced Iran's readiness for whatever help for those injured in the fatal assault.

He also called for the "acceleration of security and intelligence cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan", saying such interaction would contribute to the security and stability of the two neighbors.

For his part, Hanif Atmar stressed the need for constant consultations between Tehran and Kabul in the fight against terrorism and insecurity.

According to Afghan officials, the death toll has jumped to 140 following Friday's assault on an army base a few miles from Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of Balkh.

Another 160 people were wounded in the attack. Two of the attackers blew themselves up and seven were killed in the assault, which lasted several hours and targeted soldiers at a mosque and a dining facility, the Afghan Defense Ministry said. (Tasnim)

**(8) Officials Call ...**

helped increase the forest cover to 1.7 percent.

He also expressed concern over the increasing number of pye dogs and movement of outdated vehicles in cities. "Besides the growing urban population, the movement of 85 percent of old vehicles is another major challenge."

Malakyar said controlling environmental pollution needed a long-term plan, with efforts for prevention it already initiated. The EPA had asked Ulama, prayer leaders, teachers, experts, civil society activists and media to educate people on environment protection, he added.

Rural Rehabilitation and Development Minister Nasir Ahmad Durrani agreed air pollution represented a threat to people's lives. He urged scientists to find a solution to the problem.

He said the prevention of air pollution was also the responsibility of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) as it created asphalted roads, agricultural facilities and water supply to citizens.

Deputy Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation Minister Rafi Qarizada described forests as a source of healthy environment and said they were taking steps for the better management and conservation of forests. However, he did not provide more information.

Earth Day is celebrated every year on April 22 to affirm support for environmental protection. It was first celebrated in 1970, and is now coordinated globally and marked by more than 193 countries each year.

Afghanistan Independent Land Authority (AILA) says more than 650,000 acres of land has been usurped by powerful individuals countrywide. (Pajhwok)

**(9) Afghan Peace ...**

both the finance ministers agreed that well-coordinated economic and trade policies would enable the two countries to reap fruits of economic progress and development. Ishaq Dar strongly condemned the tragic terrorist attack

on the Afghan military in which more than 100 soldiers lost their lives. He reiterated that Pakistan was willing to work closely with Afghanistan to establish peace in the region.

The strong economic ties between the two neighboring countries were necessary to achieve the goal of peaceful neighborhood, he added.

Both the ministers agreed to hold meeting of the Joint Economic Commission of Pakistan and Afghanistan in near future. (APP)

**(10) Improper ...**

said the children under treatment were in stable condition.

About the wrong administration of vaccine, he acknowledged the drive was not conducted properly due to a shortage of professionally trained medics in remote areas of the province.

He explained the vaccine should be administered within six hours after the vial was opened. The director feared the measles vaccine might have been used several hours after the vial opening.

Dr. Miakhel added the vaccine should be kept in a warm place but the weather in Gizab was generally hot. He has dispatched a delegation to the area to investigate the allegations. (Pajhwok)

**(11) Kabul Says ...**

for better treatment, he said. Murtazavi said the president had also ordered security organs to take strict measures for security of military bases considering militants' techniques.

"An attack like this beyond the Taliban and terrorists' ability without support from an active government network, we in Afghanistan are not fighting a civil war but an international conflict, regional and other countries should understand us," he said.

He added the nature of the war had changed as both terrorist and drug mafia groups had joined hands to destabilize Afghanistan.

The presidential spokesman said the unity government was making all needed efforts for eradication of Afghanistan enemies and the Afghan forces had the ability to counter the enemies despite some problems.

"Our stance against terrorism and our enemies is very clear, those who have taken up weapons against our people would be targeted by our security forces," he added.

To a question why death row terrorists were kept alive, he said that the president never remained silent about those involved in brutal crimes. (Pajhwok)

**(12) US Embassy ...**

The Taliban's killing of men in prayer in a mosque exposed their total depravity, the envoy said, adding the vicious attack only strengthened America's resolve to stand by the brave and courageous Afghan allies.

"The US commitment is as strong as the hardest steel, and the barbarism of the enemy only hardens our resolve," he added. (Pajhwok)

**(13) Karzai Says...**

Karzai once again raised his voice against the use of the Mother of All Bombs in Achin district of Nangarhar and said he has taken his votes back which he had casted for the government of national unity, protesting against the government for allowing the use of the massive bomb.

However, Karzai said he attended the funeral ceremony in ARG Palace to show solidarity with the Afghan nation and pay respect to the victims of the base attack in Balkh.

The Afghan government declared a nationwide national day of mourning after the attack on Shaheen corps base in Balkh.

According to reports, more than 100 people lost their lives in the attack although the exact number has not been confirmed by the government so far. (Tolonews)

**(14) OIC Strongly ...**

victims over this tragedy and urged the government not to relent in its nation building.

He further reiterated the principled position of the OIC that vigorously denounces any and all acts of terrorism and violent extremism in all forms and manifestations, just as it categorically rejects any justifications for terrorism. (Pajhwok)

**(15) 'World ...**

diseases including tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, pertussis, hepatitis B, haemophilus influenza, pneumonia, tetanus and measles.

"Immunization is the right of every child. We must accelerate our efforts to ensure all children all over the country are vaccinated and protected from diseases", Public Health Minister Dr Ferozuddin Feroz was quoted as saying a statement issued by his ministry. Dr Feroz said strengthening Afghanistan's routine immunization system was among the Public Health Ministry's top priorities.

"Through immunization we can

protect children from traditional vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and also pneumonia, a major killer of children under 5 years of age."

Afghanistan's overall immunization coverage remains low with disparities throughout the regions.

Vaccination can avert more than one third of under-five deaths but based on estimated routine immunization coverage, around 1 in 6 children still lack access to vaccines.

Afghanistan's under-five mortality rate remains among the highest in the world at 55 per 1,000 live births.

"Vaccines work to fight diseases, to protect individuals and communities and to save lives. We must make sure that routine immunization services reach all Afghans, no matter where they live," said Dr Richard Peepkorn, WHO Country Representative.

"We need to significantly step up our efforts to achieve universal access to immunization in order to improve child health and drive sustainable development in Afghanistan."

Ms Adele Khodr, UNICEF Country Representative, said immunization was one of the most cost-effective public health interventions that saved children's lives and contributed to building a better future for Afghanistan.

"We must reach all children with quality vaccines and intensify our efforts to reach the unreached children who are in greatest need and most vulnerable." Mortality due to vaccine-preventable diseases has decreased in the past decade due to the government's immunization efforts supported by local and international partners.

In the past year, the number of health centres providing immunization services increased by 12 per cent, now including 1,767 facilities around the country.

Currently 10 antigens are included in Afghanistan's routine immunization programme, available free of charge. In recent years, Afghanistan has successfully introduced new vaccines, including the Pentavalent vaccine protecting people from five deadly diseases and the Pneumococcal vaccine to fight pneumonia.

Afghanistan has seen major progress in efforts to eradicate polio in recent years and most of the country remains polio-free.

In 2016, 13 polio cases were reported, compared to 20 in 2015. Three polio cases have been reported so far in 2017 from Kandahar, Helmand and Kunduz provinces. (Pajhwok)

**(16) Mosque Imam...**

of the attack," he said.

On Friday, at least 10 insurgents made their way on to the army base - of which three were suicide bombers. One suicide bomber reportedly detonated his explosives outside the mosque on the base, a second detonated his explosives in the mosque and a third at the canteen.

All ten were dressed in full army gear and are believed to have killed as many as 135 soldiers.

The insurgents managed to gain access on to the base in two army vehicles and were armed with rocket launchers, and PK's and M249 machine guns, said Ahmadullah.

"They (attackers) were all in military uniform and armed with guns and came to the check points and showed identification that they belonged to the first regiment of the ANA. They had also rank (insignia) on their uniforms," said Ahmadullah, quoting colleagues. Ahmadullah said soldiers manning the base's check points have said the insurgents had what appeared to be authentic ID cards and all details including their rank and blood group were in order. He said colleagues on the base told him that because of this, they were given access.

Ahmadullah said army personnel inside the camp told him the attackers managed to get through three check points but where stopped at the fourth check point where troops ordered them to hand in their weapons.

"One of the officers on duty asked the attackers where they wanted to go? The attackers replied that they belonged to the ANA's first regiment and wanted to enter the base. The officer asked them to hand in their weapons, but the attackers refused to do so, and they shot the soldier in the head," added Ahmadullah.

"Following this shooting, there was panic and chaos; the attackers moved forward and threw hand grenades around the check point. Prayers (in the nearby mosque had started) five or ten minutes earlier but with the shooting, everyone was running and trying to hide inside the mosque compound and bathrooms; but the suicide attackers were coming close and then detonated their explosives around the mosque," he said.

"Some clerics who were my close friends were also killed in the attack after the attackers threw grenades in the rooms where they were hiding; all rooms were burned; insurgents stormed the crowd of soldiers who

were trying to escape through windows" he said.

"My brother was also martyred in the yard of the mosque," he said adding that his brother had been in the army for two years and had been a commander of an ANA unit.

"His commanders phoned him in the morning and asked him to be on duty that day. Then he (his brother) asked me to stay with the guests at home. He was married only four months ago and his wife is from Kunduz province," he said.

He said that such attacks were completely in contradiction to the teachings of Islam.

"The Holy Quran does not tell anyone to kill people inside mosques or to carry out suicide attacks while people are praying, Islam strongly condemns the killing of people," Ahmadullah said.

"Enemies once again demonstrated their barbaric action toward the people of Afghanistan; it shows that these people (insurgents) do not care about places of worship; they do not believe in religion and Islam.

"Even Jews do not do this. But insurgents commit crimes in the name of Islam and it is a horrific trend. Insurgents exploit Islam and Jihad; Islam does not allow the killing of worshippers, children and innocents," he said.

"I have a message to the government ... If they are fighting (against insurgents) they must fight them for real. Do not kill people every day. Every day people are in sorrow. What do the people have to do? They should not think about hunger or about sorrow. If you ask a mother she tells you how hard it is to raise a child. If government leaders were united, then we would not face such a situation," added Ahmadullah.

"My message to the insurgents is that what you are doing is not in the name of Islam. Insurgents have been deceived. They must think about their futures and the people of Afghanistan. They must think about the interests of people, live in peace and avoid thinking about their own objectives," he said.

However, early Sunday, a spokesman for the military corps, Abdul Qahar said the "attack was planned outside the country" and added that "the bodies of the victims are being transferred to their families."

He did not provide more details.

It's believed however, that the death toll of the attack could rise to 200 and the military corps is dealing with a shortage of coffins. The victims of the attack are mostly from the northern provinces of the country.

President Ashraf Ghani meanwhile visited the army base on Saturday and declared Sunday a national day of mourning.

Atta Muhammad Noor, the provincial governor, said the president had ordered an investigation to find out whether there was any truth in allegations of insider help.

More than 6,700 members of the Afghan security forces lost their lives in 2016, a record high that is nearly three times the total American casualties in the Afghan war.

The high number of casualties of Afghan troops has also raised concerns among the NATO coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Head of the US Forces Afghanistan, Gen. John W. Nicholson, recently requested a few thousand additional American soldiers to assist in training Afghan recruits.

Last week, US President Donald Trump's national security adviser H.R. McMaster said in an interview with TOLONews that members of the Taliban who refuse to join the peace process will be defeated on the battlegrounds.

"The Taliban must be defeated as well. They can be defeated in a number of ways. For those that are reconcilable, who are now willing to join their Afghan brothers to strengthen the Afghan state, to end the violence, to be part of the political process, I think your president and the chief executive officer will welcome them back in. So it is their choice now," he said. (Tolonews)

**(17) Ghazni Civil ...**

the project. "I talked about the building's construction to the Ministry of Public Health several times, but the officials there told me it would be completed until 2019."

However, he said the building needed urgent construction as the old one was under threat of collapse. "One part of the old building has collapsed, another has been vacated and there is only a limited working space for doctors," he said.

Mohammad Kazim, a resident of the province, said corruption was one of the reasons for delay in the project implementation. "A large area of land has been allocated for the hospital. We were promised a hospital will be built here, but work is yet to be initiated."

Another resident of Ghazni, Lal Mohammad, also urged the government to construct a new building for the hospital as soon as possible. "The old

building does not have enough capacity for patients, some of whom are put in corridors while others have to wait or visit private hospitals."

Patients from Zabul, Logar, Paktia, Paktika, Bamiyan and Maidan Wardak provinces also refer to this hospital for treatment, in addition to traffic accident casualties on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. (Pajhwok)

**(18) Security ...**

people and to the Afghan soil. They are only loyal to the people who have appointed them because of ethnic and ideology issues," the former National Security Advisor Rangin Dadfar Spanta said.

"Contradictory messages are being sent from the capital to provinces from time to time because of political disagreements in the central government. It has its effects. And secondly, interventions in security and defense issues from tribal, geographical and political points of view and creating different decision making layers is a reason behind poor management in security departments," said Rahmatullah Nabi, the former head of the National Directorate of Security.

A number of former officials accused government of hiding the facts about the attack on the Afghan National Army's 209 Shaheen Corps Headquarters in Balkh province and the attack on Sardar Mohammad Daud Military hospital in Kabul. They also said they are concerned about Taliban's infiltration among security forces.

"The northern part of the country is a serious target for Taliban and government, along with NATO forces, should launch precautionary operations," General Atiqullah Baryalai, the former deputy minister of defense ministry said.

"There are people, there are soldiers, there is a headquarters and they know about the facts. When they hide the casualty numbers, it puts a negative effect on soldiers, because they think government is lying," Atiqullah Amarkhil, a former military officer said.

Members of the public have also blasted government for hiding the facts about the number of deaths.

"Sons of deputy ministers, sons of ministers and officials do not take arms and do not fight the enemy," Aryan, a Mazar resident said.

"The officials' sons and families do not die in these attacks," said Bashir Ahmad, a resident of Kabul city.

"The sons of poor people are killed and the officials do not care about them," Sayed Navid, another resident of Kabul city said.

Ministry of Defense (MoD) however has said in operations launched by security forces last year, more than 400 terrorist commanders were killed and security forces notched up good achievements.

"The enemy has been defeated and has failed to reach their goals. The security forces were successful in doing their job," MoD spokesman, Dawlat Waziri said.

Before this, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) released a report on security forces' casualties in the past year.

According to SIGAR, from January 2016 to November 2016 more than 6,700 soldiers were killed in different incidents and more than 11,000 others were wounded. (Tolonews)

**(19) Saudi King...**

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is also defense minister, to meet Trump at the White House last month. (AP)

**(20) Pence Tries...**

his visit, which included meetings with Tumbull and other government officials at Admiralty House, an official residence with spectacular views of the Sydney Opera House. (Reuters)

**(21) Germany's ...**

which has lurched to the right since being founded as an anti-euro party in 2013, is treated as a pariah by established political parties, which refuse to work with it. (Reuters)

**(22) North Korea**

PUST told me his arrest was not related to his work at PUST. He had been involved with some other activities outside PUST such as helping an orphanage," Park said.

"I sincerely hope and pray that he will be released soon".

An official at South Korea's National Intelligence Service said it was not aware of the reported arrest. (Reuters)

**(23) Tajikistan Opposed...**

Iran as a full member," the Russian top diplomat said in Kazakhstan. That would give Iran formal ties to Russia and China, the two leading powers in an organization often regarded as "a counterbalance to the Western-dominated international institutions that have held sway since the end of the Second World War," as Newsweek put it. (Agencies)