

(1) Moscow to Host...

Peace talks between the US and Taliban in Doha and the perspective of a national reconciliation process will be discussed in the meeting, the embassy said.

In the last round of the US and Taliban talks in Doha in mid-March, the two sides agreed in draft on foreign forces withdrawal from Afghanistan and counterterrorism assurances.

Russia has said it is in favor of coordinating efforts for Afghan peace by Washington and Moscow so that the "interests of regional states and Afghanistan's neighbors" are portrayed in peace-related meetings. (Tolo news)

(2) Final WJ Election...

were held later.

After new IEC commissioners took charge, final results from Balkh, Paktika, Ghor, Herat, Farah, Logar, Helmand, Takhar, Nangarhar, Kandahar and for the Hindu minority seat have been announced so.

With final results from 29 constituencies yet to be announced, IECC said two days back that the Wolosi Jirga election results for the rest of provinces and the Kuchi constituency would be unveiled within a week. (Pajhwok)

(3) US, Taliban See...

Washington's disappointment over the cancellation of much-awaited Afghan talks with the Taliban that were to have been hosted by the Qatari capital on April 20. The two-day meeting was called off at the last minute after insurgent officials objected to the unusually large size of the 250-member Afghan delegation.

Khalilzad, however, has attempted to play down concerns the collapse of the much-touted dialogue has dealt a blow to the U.S.-led peace mission. "A bump in the road isn't reason to slow down," the Afghan-born U.S. chief negotiator tweeted Monday.

U.S.-Taliban process

The Taliban's Doha-based political spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, told VOA his group welcomes and is keen to resume the dialogue with the U.S. in the coming days, but he would not say when.

Shaheen echoed Khalilzad's optimism, saying the canceled intra-Afghan meeting had nothing to do with the U.S.-Taliban peace process.

"They are two different processes. The collapse of [the] intra-Afghan conference last week has no negative impact on the process of negotiations with the U.S. side," Shaheen said.

The conference, he stressed, was the second round of a dialogue the Taliban initiated last February in Moscow with politicians, civil society representatives and tribal elders outside of the Afghan government. The Taliban rejects the Kabul administration as illegal and a product of the American "occupation" of Afghanistan.

Khalilzad's team has held five rounds of direct talks with the Taliban since last year and both sides say they have drafted a preliminary agreement toward ending Washington's longest overseas military intervention.

The deal, if finalized, would bind the Taliban to stop Afghan soil from again becoming a hub for transnational terrorists, and Washington in return would agree to a timetable for total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. The Afghan government has been excluded from the U.S.-Taliban talks.

Intra-Afghan discussions

Khalilzad, however, has repeatedly said that a comprehensive Taliban cease-fire and the rebel group's participation in intra-Afghan peace discussions would be key to concluding any deal with the insurgents.

Shaheen, however, reiterated the Taliban has made it clear from the outset it will not take part in any formal internal Afghan peace discussions until Washington agrees and announces a troop withdrawal timeline.

The Taliban has already given assurances in the last round of talks that it will prevent Afghanistan from being used to harm other countries, including the United States, said Shaheen, who noted that "some details" still have to be fleshed out. He did not elaborate. After finalizing the delegation for the now-canceled conference in Doha, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his reconciliation adviser had declared it would be representative of the state of Afghanistan. That statement apparently angered the Taliban and prompted its representatives to pull out of the event.

Ghani, critics say, is trying to remain in charge of any prospective peace deal with the Taliban, ignoring strong opposition from the insurgent group. Ghani's constitutional term was due to expire next month and concerns have been raised about an impending constitutional crisis. The Afghan Supreme Court on Sunday ended the political uncertainty by allowing Ghani to remain in office until Sept. 28, when the country is set to hold twice-delayed presidential elections. (VoA)

(4) Ghani Wants...

Ghani reiterated.

Ghani said delegates from around the country will freely share their ideas and suggestions on peace during the Jirga and that there will be no "censorship".

He said that national, regional, international and Islamic conditions have been provided for peace and hurdles on the way of peace have been addressed.

Ghani said the delegates from around the country are expected to determine a framework for peace talks with the Taliban.

"One of the advantages of Loya Jirga is that no one can censor it and people's representatives can freely express their opinions, suggestions and consultations. It belongs to the Loya Jirga and delegates that how they will draft the way forward towards peace," said Ghani.

He added peace was a dream in the past but said that it has changed into a serious discussion and every Afghan talk about it over the past two years.

President Ghani concluded that the Jirga's organizing committee will take required measures for better organization of the event.

The peace Jirga is scheduled for April 29. (Tolo news)

(5) 'Children Comprise...

marriage and denial of access to essential services - particularly healthcare and education - have all undermined children's right to a safe and protective environment, compromising their physical and psychological wellbeing.

Over the past years in Afghanistan, humanitarian actors have increasingly sought to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development interventions, in recognition that principled humanitarian actions can kick-start recovery and build longer-term resilience among affected population groups. Though humanitarian involvement in development activities has remained limited in both scale and ambition, MoLSA in collaboration with UNICEF and in partnership with relevant government institutions, child protection and humanitarian non-governmental organizations, and local communities, are working towards strengthening child protection systems to prevent and respond to abuse, violence and exploitation of children in all settings throughout Afghanistan.

Ghulam Haidar Jelani, Deputy

Minister of Labor and Social Affairs said, "We will not make significant policy shifts in the areas of child protection and social protection at this point in time, but we will surely bridge the gap between humanitarian and development nexus and co-construct collective outcomes and strategies that addresses the critical needs and response priorities of children in need of care and protection during and beyond emergencies."

In her remarks, Acting Representative for UNICEF Afghanistan, Sheema Sen Gupta affirmed UNICEF's commitment to continue to work tirelessly with the Government of Afghanistan to improve the lives of children in Afghanistan and deemed the strategy vital for the children of Afghanistan, "This workshop and the strategy developed will help to get children's issues and

Protection higher on the political and public agenda; ensure that the wellbeing and rights of the children are at the core of our work and commitment."

Translating this strategy into concrete action is an important next step if we are to make gains in addressing child protection in Afghanistan and help children in Afghanistan to be protected and their rights adhered to.

Current statistics, show children continue to be the most disadvantaged as the result of the on-going emergencies in Afghanistan.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF have worked together continuously in Afghanistan since 1949, making it one of the longest-serving partnerships in the country. For over 65 years UNICEF has supported GoRA in the promotion of the rights of children and women in Afghanistan, especially those who are most in need. (Pajhwok)

(6) Baghlan Sugar...

Tuesday and demanded the revival of the factory.

Ahmad Shah, one of the protesters, said all equipments in the factory were functional but due to the lack of proper administration the work had been stopped.

Ghulam Sakhi, head of the factory, told Pajhwok Afghan News they faced the lack of raw materials issue from the past two years.

"The amount of beet we needed was not supplied and today the factory was formally closed," he said.

It is worth mentioning that farmers in Baghlan cultivated beet on 2.5 acres land and supplied it to the factory but there was decline in the cultivation of beet recently. (Pajhwok)

(7) Security in...

among the people," he remarked, saying the strength of security forces had been completed with the arrival of additional personnel.

Police chief Col. Mohammad Khalil Wardak promised that remarkable improvement would be brought to the security situation in the province as soon as possible.

"We have drawn up appropriate plans for the security of highways and districts. The plans will be implemented in near future," the police chief added.

Wardak claimed the Taliban had lost the ability to fight against the security forces, The rebels, therefore, had resorted to conducting suicide attacks, he continued.

Maulvi Mohammad Ismail, the Ghazni Ulema Council head, said there were rumours of Taliban planning to storm Ghazni City. He hoped the security forces would protect the people.

Rahimullah, a resident of Andar district, told Pajhwok there was always fighting between the security forces and Taliban across the province, barring Ghazni City.

"We have not seen any improvement in the security situation be-

cause there are always clashes in districts," the man said, contradicting official assertions.

Shah Mohammad, hailing from Ghazni City, alleged security operations had mostly failed -- a view endorsed by other residents. (Pajhwok)

(8) 3 Traffickers Killed...

Logar had become a transit area for the smuggling of drugs. He stressed elimination of the scourge.

Nearly 1,500 kilograms of drugs have been recovered in Logar since the start of the new solar year, authorities say. (Pajhwok)

(9) 'Taliban Collect Tax...

district and collect tax from cargo trucks.

He said that Mazar-Shebrghan highway Taliban charge each truck transporting fuel from Aqina and Andkhai ports, 18,000 Afghanis as tax.

If any of the truckers refused to pay money to the Taliban, the insurgents would stop his truck and sell its fuel on other people, he said.

Kakar said that Taliban take all the oil of trucks which have contracts of fuel supply with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and NATO forces.

The tax collection process by the Taliban on the highway has empowered the insurgent group and that is the reason the war has intensified in the region, he said.

"If the government fails to improve security on the highway, traders have no way but have to pay tax to the Taliban which would then affect the public Afghans, because traders increase the prices on products in return of charges applying on them," he said.

He said the Taliban collected millions of Afghanis on the highway on daily basis.

Taliban have warned traders their trucks would be set at blaze if they bypassed their custom office without paying tax, he said.

He asked security officials to take practical steps for solving the problem.

Mohammad Afzal Hadid, Balkh provincial council head, told Pajhwok that security problems were increased on Mazar-Shebrghan highway.

However, he was unaware about the Taliban's custom office on the highway. He said that probably such problems existed on the highway, but no one has complained to the provincial council on the regard.

A fuel transporter, Shoaib (not a real name) talking to Pajhwok said that Taliban started collecting taxes from truckers on the highway about a month ago.

He said that he transported fuel from Aqina port to Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of Balkh province, twice a week and he was obligated to pay tax both to the government and the Taliban.

He said as many as 10 trucks were torched or seized by the Taliban over the last two months. Some of these trucks were transporting fuel to security organs but some were private who were not paying taxes to the insurgents, he added.

Shoaib said that hundreds of trucks were moving on the highway on daily basis and the Taliban charge all of them.

The Taliban's custom office is mobile and it can be in different locations in different times, he said.

Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Industry executive manager, Nasir Ahmad Qasimi also said that commercial activities were affected in the region due to security problems on Mazar-Shebrghan highway.

He added in the past two months trucks related to businessmen have been stopped or burned to ashes.

Qasimi, however, said they have not yet received a formal complaint regarding imposing duty by the Taliban.

He said businessmen often demanded security officials to provide them security on Mazar-i-Sharif-Shiberghan highway but they did not take effective steps in this regard.

According to Qasami, if the issue of insecurity on Mazar-Shiberghan highway not resolved it would have negative impact on business activities.

Governor spokesman Munir Farhad rejected the establishment of custom office by the Taliban on the outskirts of Chahar Bulak district.

He said the Taliban after sunset often appear on the highway, adding the group have no a fixed custom office in the area.

Farhad said the Taliban were not in a large number to come out on regular bases and extort trucks.

He said the Taliban one to two times stopped vehicles on the highway which was faced with a strong reaction by security forces.

He said plan had been chalked out to create security check-points and military bases along the highway.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed to Pajhwok the group one percent tax from trucks loaded with foreign goods.

He added in response to tax collection, the Taliban provided security to the vehicles. (Pajhwok)

(10) Putin & Kim...

summit between him and President Donald Trump possible. Kim also expressed dissatisfaction with the negotiation style of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, saying that he should be excluded from future talks.

But Washington insisted on keeping Pompeo on the team.

Russia welcomed the face-to-face talks between the US and North Korea but opposed the use of ultimatums and stressed that sanctions alone can't resolve the situation. (RT)

(11) Japan Looks...

were ongoing and views on the issue were being exchanged between the firms and the government.

Separately on Tuesday, Japan's Industry Minister Hiroshige Seko said that Iranian oil accounts for only about 3 percent of Japan's oil imports.

"The government will monitor crude oil prices and consult with the United States when needed, depending on how the situation unfolds from now," Seko told a press conference, adding that opinions on the matter and how to proceed would be exchanged with relevant Japanese companies.

Japan's total crude oil imports are comprised of 5 percent of oil coming from Iran due to favorable prices, industry insiders said Tuesday. (Xinhua)

(12) Israel Run by...

support one country, which is now run by a right-wing, dare I say, racist government," he added.

Prior to the election in Israel, Sanders said he hoped Netanyahu would lose. "When election time comes in Israel, he always tries going even further to the right by appealing to racism within Israel, I think it's unfortunate," he said at the time.

The remark was in response to Netanyahu's pledge to annex the illegal Jewish settlements in occupied Palestinian lands to Israel after being reelected. Another Democratic hopeful, Beto O'Rourke, leveled similar criticism at the Israeli prime minister on the campaign trail in Iowa. The former Texas representative said the US-Israeli relationship "must transcend partisanship in the United States, and it must be able to transcend a prime minister who is racist as he warns about Arabs coming to the polls, who wants to defy any prospect for peace as he threatens to annex the West Bank and who has sided with a far-right racist party in order to maintain his hold on power." (RT)