

(1) Graft in...

Very important is that the Afghan security forces continue to improve their abilities to deny the Taliban major progress on the battlefield," said the EU special representative. Ambassador Franz-Michael Mellbin stressed the need for continued professionalisation of the security forces, especially focusing on better leadership. He also called for a reinforced fight against corruption in the army and police.

The EU in Afghanistan is set to launch the fourth and final theme of its 2017 anti-corruption campaign focused on corruption in the security sector.

Melbin said: "We want to highlight the huge problems in the security area, but we also want to showcase some of the good things that are actually happening."

"Because we do acknowledge that the Government, NATO's Resolute Support mission and other actors in the international community have helped Afghanistan make progress in this area. But we still need to see much more done and it needs to happen now." (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghan, Iraq ...

serving and former soldiers. While rain dampened ceremonies in Melbourne and Canberra, and crowds at Gallipoli were a fraction of those in recent years, the Anzac spirit was alive and well among the generations who took part in dawn services and marches

At one of the biggest gatherings in Canberra, nearly 40,000 people braved a crisp morning to hear a former soldier tell of losing his legs in Afghanistan.

Sapper Curtis McGrath fell victim to an IED in August 2012 while serving in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan.

"We honour those who have died and suffered through the old and the new wars," said the former army combat engineer.

Many diggers moved from parades to pubs for games of two-up into the afternoon, before the day of commemoration wrapped up with low-key sunset services.

Overseas, only about 600 people attended the dawn service at Gallipoli, a far cry from the 10,000 who attended the 100th anniversary of the Anzac landings two years ago.

"25 April is etched into our calendar as a most sacred national day, not by a government edict or decree, but through the deep understanding of generations of Australians that this horrendous sacrifice was made in our name and for our nation, our freedoms, our democratic values and our way of life," Foreign Minister Julie Bishop told the crowd.

Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten paid their respects to the diggers who fought in Papua New Guinea.

In France, about 2000 people attended the annual dawn service at Villers-Brettonneux while the Duke of York took part in commemorations in London. (9news)

(3) Ex-Army...

investigate them," said MP Sadeqi Neelizada.

"It means they commit oppression against the people of Afghanistan and are rewarded for it, after this, if anyone commits an act of oppression, then he will get a good reward," political commentator Ahmad Saeedi said.

Based on the military law, whenever an army official quits his post due to negligence, then he should be held accountable.

However, many people believe government "rewards" such negligence. "The people of Afghanistan will not believe that this government will be a responsive government to them and the blood of the martyrs," said the head of the civil society association Aziz Rafae.

In the past, President Ashraf Ghani has appointed several officials to positions of ambassador following indiscretions or negligence on their part. (ToloneWS)

(4) Religious ...

and ethnic communities from violent attacks in 2017.

"In 2017, USCIRF also finds that the Taliban merits designation as an "entity of particular concern" for religious freedom violations under December 2016 amendments to the International Religious Freedom Act," the report said.

USCIRF recommends the US Government to urge the government of Afghanistan to reform the Afghan constitution and laws to comply with international standards of freedom of religion or belief, including by revoking the 2004

media law prohibiting writings deemed un-Islamic and the 2007 ruling that the Baha'i faith is blasphemous and converts to it are apostates. (Pajhwok)

(5) Economic ...

to this while industry will be over 21 percent and the services sector 51 percent.

"Our economic situation, God willing, will be good this year and in the future. We expect that the economic situation grows by four percent. However, security challenges are in place and government is trying to somehow decrease it," Mohammad Ismail Rahimi, MoE deputy for technical affairs said.

The ADB report also shows that this year the economic status of Asian countries, especially developing nations, will grow. (ToloneWS)

(6) ACCI Report ...

of land, erratic electricity supply and complications within business laws are key challenges investors face, said the ACCI.

"Corruption is a dangerous threat to Afghanistan's economic growth and it has not been tackled properly, but has increased. The other problem is strict laws and every day a new law comes into practice," said Khan Jan Alokozay, ACCI's deputy head.

According to the findings of the ACCI's study, production, services and trade companies face serious challenges and are having to lay off staff almost on a daily basis. However, the construction and agriculture sector appear to be more stable.

Homayoun Rasa, the minister of commerce and industries, meanwhile said last year they amended 27 business laws and a further 17 will be amended this year.

Rasa also said this year the import and export sector will be standardized in terms of international norms.

"We are committed to finalizing standardization this year and next year of all the import and export systems," he said. (ToloneWS)

(7) 91 Dead...

The bloody encounter followed the kidnapping of three drug smugglers by Daesh loyalists in Dasht-i-Lali area of Qush Tapa district, according to the gubernatorial spokesman.

Rahmatullah Husher, the Darzab district's administrative chief, said the three smugglers had arrived from western Herat and southern Helmand provinces to Dasht-i-Lali for a deal against 10 million afghanis with the Taliban.

But the smugglers were later kidnapped by Daesh along with a vehicle and weapons, the district chief said, citing a reason behind the clashes.

The Taliban repeatedly asked Daesh to release the kidnapers, but their request was ignored and then the Taliban decided to face Daesh. The Taliban came under Daesh attack when they entered Darzab district and a fierce firefight ensued and was still ongoing.

Sufi Mohammad, a resident of the locality, said the bodies of slain militants were still lying at the site. He said local residents could not differentiate between dead bodies of the Taliban and Daesh.

Mohammad said Daesh had taken more than 60 Taliban men in custody.

He said a Taliban commander, Haji Nokur, was among the captives. He said local residents were leaving their homes and trying to escape the area.

Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban's spokesman, said they were trying to contact their fighters at the site but a contact was yet to be established. He promised updates to the media about the developing story as soon as possible. (Pajhwok)

(8) Shurab ...

attended the meeting, said: "Creation of economic zones would start from here. This place has been built as a benchmark by foreigners, so it does not need more cost."

He said the zone would export agricultural, industrial and mining products to the international market. "With activation of this economic station, around 250,000 people would find work opportunities," he said.

Sahibzada said security situation would also get improve in Helmand province with activation of the economic zone.

Governor Hayatullah Hayat told the meeting that the economic zone would be a standard one where besides other services, domestic air flights would be made available. Mohammad Khan Nasrat, the pro-

vincial economic head, said the zone's construction would take 18 months to complete.

The center would contain cement, fruit processing, decoration and other factories, he said.

The area is located near Chabahar Port of Iran and goods would possibly be exported from the zone to foreign countries.

"Besides local factories, a number of foreign factories would also operate here," Nasrat added.

Plans for security of the center have been shared with the central government, Nasrat said.

The Shurab Military Base has been built by foreign forces around nine years ago. It was handed over to Afghan forces in 2014. (Pajhwok)

(9) Heavy Clashes ...

and eight have been killed." "Unfortunately, three of our soldiers were slightly injured," he said.

In the meantime, the provincial council members criticized government for not launching the military operation six months ago as was promised.

"It is the failure of the security forces and they (security forces) talked about launching a military operation six months ago but before government forces could do anything, the Taliban attacked - which is very dangerous," Bekzad said.

But officials at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) warned that insurgents will be destroyed in Badakhshan soon.

"We are very capable. We are currently busy fighting insurgents in Tagab district of Badakhshan and soon the enemies will be defeated," said deputy minister of MoD, Afzal Aman.

But the members of the provincial council and residents of Badakhshan warned that "if operations are not launched to destroy the insurgents, they will increase their attacks in most districts." (ToloneWS)

(10) Govt. Asked ...

been 10 to 12 soldiers at the three gates. All those who are involved in the case have been negligent. All are under investigation," said Abdullah Masroor, deputy head of the council.

Reports however indicate that 12 people have been arrested in connection with the incident.

Meanwhile, a number of Balkh civil society members said they will launch large-scale protests if government fails to make public the details about the attack.

"Many people believe that the casualties are beyond 500 dead. It means that revenge was taken on the north which was relatively secure for some years," said Jahid, a civil society activist in Balkh.

Until now, actual figures regarding the death toll and numbers wounded have been withheld by government. (ToloneWS)

(11) Arms Supply...

paid for supplying their national leaders with reliable intelligence know only too well that these allegations are untrue," he remarked.

TASS news agency quoted Lavrov as asking Taliban to end the armed confrontation and join the process of peace talks. "The Taliban must join the nationwide dialogue on the basis of the criteria endorsed by the UN."

Reconciliation in Afghanistan could not be promoted unless the dialogue was based on these principles, Lavrov explained, asking the US to stop trying to shift the blame. (Pajhwok)

(12) Over 18,000...

of the overall war in the country; if action is not taken to reduce the figure, there is the possibility that thousands more soldiers will be affected," said Karim Atal, head of Helmand Provincial Council.

Civil society activists in Helmand said that poor leadership of the war is one of the key reasons behind this problem.

"We are extremely concerned about the figure of casualties among the security forces; poor war leadership is one of the key reasons for the fatalities; government needs to prevent it to avoid more casualties," said Abdul Haq Zuwakman, a civil activist in Helmand.

This comes amid ongoing battles between Afghan security forces and the Taliban in several cities and towns in Helmand. (ToloneWS)

(13) Safety in ...

Command spokesperson Col. John Thomas said that over 50 individuals, including soldiers and civilians, were killed when Taliban

terrorists stormed the Afghan National Army's 209 Shaheen Corps Headquarters and attacked individuals in the base's mosque during prayers.

The death toll then rose to about 135 soldiers, while at least 60 servicemen were injured, with some of them currently in critical condition, the news outlet TOLO reported, citing a government official.

Other media reports suggested that the death toll rose to 140 people, while the Afghan Defense Ministry confirmed later on Friday that over 100 individuals had died in the attack.

Afghanistan has been experiencing significant political, social and security-related instability for decades, as terrorist organizations, such as the Taliban and Daesh, both outlawed in Russia and many other countries, continue to stage attacks against civilian and military targets.

That is why Kabul's latest request for cooperation with Moscow could include the issues related to ensuring security, Muhammad Ashraf Haidari, head of the Afghan Foreign Ministry's Department for Policy and Strategic Planning, told Sputnik Dari.

"We have always discussed issues of cooperation with regional states, including Russia, which are concerned with the problems of regional security and stability, as well as issues such as combating terrorism, radicalism and drug trafficking in Afghanistan," he said. (Sputnik)

(14) back Detainee ...

delegation on the government's failure to provide statistics on complaints of torture and torture investigations.

The government is due to respond to the committee today (April 26).

"But there is no reason to believe the delegation's responses will provide a more hopeful picture of efforts to eliminate Afghanistan's deeply entrenched torture and bring to justice those responsible," Gossman said. (Pajhwok)

(15) Pakistan Urges ...

our military operations currently include comprehensive economic uplift strategy in disturbed areas...

We are consolidating our gains under the comprehensive national action plan," Asif noted.

The defense minister also stressed that Islamabad remained committed to playing a role in achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan and fully supported the Afghan-led peace process.

The two countries share a long porous border which is regularly crossed by militants that carry out attacks in both countries. Islamabad and Kabul accuse each other of harboring the militants and Pakistan often repeats calls on Kabul to secure the border and take firm action against cross-border incidents. In February, Pakistan blamed Afghanistan for failing to crack down on militants that plotted a string of suicide attacks in Pakistan that killed scores of people. (Sputnik)

(16) Attack on

been confirmed," TOLOnews reported Tuesday, quoting "credible" sources.

The TV station also named the provinces to which the bodies of the victims have been dispatched for burials.

Possible impact on morale cited Government officials privately have insisted that releasing the death toll could undermine the morale of the Afghan army battling a resurgent Taliban. But critics assert the government was disrespecting the slain soldiers by withholding the number of casualties.

Officials and insurgents say a group of 10 heavily-armed Taliban fighters wearing army uniforms, and accompanying an allegedly wounded soldier, stormed the base and carried out the massacre.

The attack mainly targeted a dining hall and mosque deep inside the facility where hundreds of Afghan soldiers were offering special Friday prayers. Itnesses and security sources said that Taliban assailants drove up to the base in two army vehicles mounted with machine guns, waving fake identification cards and claiming they were bringing back a seriously injured soldier from the frontline. Some of the attackers detonated explosives strapped to their bodies while others were gunned down by Afghan commandos before the hours-long siege ended, aid renews criticism

The brazen raid has renewed criticism of Afghan security institutions' ability to stabilize the country. The carnage prompted the defense minister and the army

chief to step down on Monday. President Ashraf Ghani has also removed several corps commanders, including that of the Shaheen Corps, following the attack.

A high-level investigation is underway to determine how the attackers managed to enter the highly-fortified military facility in Mazar-i-Sharif and whether they had received "inside help."

At least four Afghan soldiers are suspected of having helped the attackers but they remain at large, according to officials.

American military advisors and trainers were also present at a different location inside the regional military headquarters.

The Taliban, while claiming responsibility for Friday's attack, said more than 500 soldiers were killed or wounded. It went on to say the assault on the army base was a prelude to its coming "spring offensive" in Afghanistan.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, during his day-long visit to Kabul on Monday, also warned "2017's going to be another tough year for the valiant Afghan security forces and the international troops." (VoA)

(17) Taliban Plant ...

the bombs soon. He added security forces had defused 480 landmines in the past few days.

The Taliban have not yet commented about planting landmines in people's homes. (Pajhwok)

(18) Juwin Road ...

Governor Mohammad Arif Shah Jahan thanked the Public Works Ministry and asked the government to carry out more such projects in the province.

Eng. Mohammad Salem Farahi, the public works director, said construction work on another road from Farah City to Anardara district was about complete. (Pajhwok)

(19) 38 Rebels ...

large number of light and heavy weapons and six motorbikes were also seized from the Taliban.

He said foreign forces provided air support to the Afghan forces throughout the operation.

Meanwhile, an official at the Emergency-run hospital in Tirinkot, said they had been delivered 12 injured policemen from the scene.

However, the Taliban in a statement denied their fighters had suffered casualties in the operation as untrue and claimed government forces were inflicted casualties. (Pajhwok)

(20) Nangarhar ...

ground for new and dangerous weapons.

He said the MOAB use was against international norms and asked the United Nations Security Council to investigate the massive bombing. Durrani said corruption had affected the health, education, security and other sectors. The public representatives also slammed the provincial government for taking a horse of slain Daesh leader Hafiz Saeed to the president.

Before addressing the press conference, the provincial council members had a closed door meeting with the deputy governor at the council's office. The meeting lasted about one and a half hours.

When asked about the meeting, the deputy provincial council head said: "Our meeting with the deputy governor was not about stopping us from addressing this press conference."

He said the deputy governor, pointing to the security situation, sought some time to bring about reforms. The governor's spokesman, Attaullah Khogyani, said condemning the MOAB strike was a democratic right of the provincial council members.

However, he said, some members of the council and people across Nangarhar particularly the residents of Shinwari zone had welcomed the attack.

About corruption in government departments, the spokesman said the provincial administration had tackled the menace to a great extent and efforts were on to get rid of it. About Hafiz Saeed's horse gifted to the president, Khogyani said Hafiz Saeed had three horses. Two of the horses were eliminated in the attack that killed Saeed and the third one had been captured in Kot district by members of an uprising group eight months before the killing of Saeed.

That horse was taken to the president, the official said. (Pajhwok)

(21) 34 Daesh ...

added. Daesh did not comment about the

operation.

Separately, three people were arrested in connection of different crimes by police in Nangarhar where three landmines were also discovered and defused during a demining process. Officials did not clear the date and location of these incidents. (Pajhwok)

(22) ISIS Suffer...

was arrested with his nephew and three militants Uzbekistan.

According to Waziri, the other nephew of Akhundzada was killed along with ISIS commanders and four militants.

He said several weapons and ammunition belonging to the terror group were also destroyed during the operation.

Zabul is among the relatively volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban insurgents and other militants including ISIS loyalists are actively operating.

This comes as a senior commander of the terror group identified as Gul Agha was killed during a similar operation in this province earlier last month.

The operations in Zabul have increased after the local residents and tribal elders recently met with the government officials in Kabul to convey their concerns regarding the growing activities of ISIS in some remote districts of the province. (KP)

(23) Casualties as ...

seized six landmines and other weapons.

A resident of Abdullah Gul area, Izzatullah, said the clash between police and Taliban gunmen lasted two to three hours.

He said security forces had cordoned off the area and were not allowing people to get close the clash site.

The Taliban also confirmed the clash, with the group's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claiming that the fighters stormed a police post and killed five policemen.

He said the rebels suffered no casualties in the incident. He said the police post had been destroyed. Separate, police had arrested a Taliban official, Asad Kuchai, responsible for guerrilla attacks, during an operation in Ghazni City, the provincial capital, last night.

Ghazni police chief Brig. Gen. Aminullah Amarkhel said Kuchai had been involved in the killing of a number of police officials in Ghazni. (Pajhwok)

(24) Japan PM...

Minister Theresa May. Defense cooperation, trade and Britain's exit from the European Union are among key issues to be discussed. (AP)

(25) U.S. Deeply...

Toner also noted that the Iraqi government had expressed concerns with Turkey's airstrikes, stressing that "military action in Iraq should respect Iraqi sovereignty." (Xinhua)

(26) S. Korean ...

Sang-jung of the minor progressive Justice Party and Yoo Seong-min of the minor conservative Righteous Party who gained 8.0 percent and 5.1 percent each in support scores. (Xinhua)

(27) Philippines ...

activities on the 50th anniversary of ASEAN this year, ASEAN's relations with its dialogue partners and other external parties, and preparations for the 50th ASEAN foreign ministers meeting (AMM) and related ministerial meetings in August in Manila. The meeting also exchanged views on possible outcome documents and various initiatives for the 50th AMM and other ministerial meetings and the 31st ASEAN summit in November," the statement read.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will chair the summit that will be attended by ASEAN leaders from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. (Xinhua)

(28) EU Ponders...

is seen as decisive for the future of the EU after Britain decided to leave the 28-nation bloc last year. Marianne Thyssen, the commissioner for employment and social affairs, said she was pleased the proposals were made now.

"I hope that this is taken up in the campaigns because it shows that social is at the heart of the European policy," she told a news conference.

"We realize that many people are afraid of being the losers of the changes we see due to digitalization and globalization." (Reuters)