

(1) Kabul Blast...

the casualties are believed to be civilians.

Kabul Police Chief General Rahman Rahimi told TOLONews at the scene that civilian homes bore the brunt of the blast and that a small military unit in the vicinity sustained only minor damage.

One resident, who was clearly traumatized after her house sustained serious damage in the blast, said two of sons were injured - one of whom was asleep at the time of the incident.

Another resident, who injured his hand, said many people were injured in the blast and that it had been a frightening experience for everyone living in the area.

The blast occurred in 3rd Street in Shah Shaheed area just after 1am local time. (Tolonews)

(2) Suicide Bomber...

and injuring over 400.

Extensive damage was caused to buildings in the vicinity - many of them collapsing all together.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for either of the attacks. (Tolonews)

(3) ERC to Submit....

nation's electoral system.

Delivering a speech to a gathering attended by a number of lawyers on Thursday, the ERC chairman Shah Sultan Akifi announced that the ERC has conducted a survey in at least seven zones of the country in order to gather information from people on issues pertinent to the implementation of comprehensive reforms to Afghanistan's election management bodies and to the electoral system.

About 1,500 people were interviewed for the survey.

Legal experts at today's gathering focused on a number of important topics on electoral reforms such as loopholes in the actual electoral law act, the lack of clarity on issues relating to electoral fraud and the lack of information on electoral crimes.

ERC representatives have over the past few weeks ramped up efforts to evaluate and study the problems Afghanistan faced during last year's controversial presidential race.

As part of the survey conducted, ERC members travelled to a number of provinces to speak to people in their bid to prevent electoral fraud and voter rigging in future polls.

"We have not been able to travel to all provinces of Afghanistan due to limited time, but we managed to travel to seven zones of the country where we interviewed almost 1,500 citizens and recorded their recommendations and ideas," Akifi said.

Some participants present at the event expressed concerns that if the government fails to rebuild public trust on the credibility of the elections, democracy in Afghanistan will be adversely affected.

Electoral experts however called on ERC members to inform the public if government tries to interfere in their work. (Tolonews)

(4) Japan Donates....

good health, in order to earn a living upon their voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan, while also enabling them to contribute to society during their stay in Iran, according to a UNHCR-Tehran press release.

In education, the Japanese funding will assist UNHCR in continuing its support to the Government in the construction of schools in provinces with a high number of refugee students to ensure greater access to quality primary education.

The generosity of the People of Japan will also support technical and vocational training programmes the UNHCR conducts with the Technical and Vocational Training Organization and the World Relief Foundation to enhance self-reliance and livelihood opportunities for refugees. This will empower them with the necessary knowledge to provide a source of income for their families in Iran and upon return to Afghanistan.

The contribution will complement the Ministry of Health's primary health care services to refugees including vaccinations, antenatal care, maternal and child health, and family planning. Also in collaboration with State Welfare Organization, UNHCR assists refugees in receiving timely treatment and rehabilitation assistance in settlements and urban areas. (IRNA)

(5) Time Ripe....

remarked.

He thanked Afghan Ulama for serving the people of Afghanistan and safeguarding Islam.

He said that "we had weak government since long but we had strong support and foundation of religious and Jihadi leaders who would always be ready to offer sacrifices for

protecting the motherland."

It had been the cry of the day that Afghanistan specifically would form a group of religious leaders, elders and all stakeholders who would create political and religious consensus in the country, he said, adding: "I would like to be treated like a true servant of the people like Caliphates to revive our past history and not like a president. Besides, I would like clerics of the state to get united for the future of Afghanistan."

Ghani emphasized that peace and unity should be mainly focused from every mosque, religious seminary and schools and everyone should raise about the unity of Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(6) Taliban Hold

founder of the group. The Afghan government has maintained Omar died two years ago at a hospital in Pakistan's port city of Karachi.

Several top Taliban leaders have expressed strong opposition to Mansour's leadership, calling him a puppet of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI).

Sources within the Afghan government told TOLONews on condition of anonymity on Thursday that scores of Taliban members - including both those who agree and disagree with Mansour's appointment - met with clerics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan on Wednesday to resolve the dispute over Omar's successor.

The names of those within the Taliban who are said to endorse Mansour's leadership are as follows: Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, Abdul Hassan Akhund, Mohammad Rassoul Akhund, Abdul Latif, Mansour Ibrahim Sadar, Abdul Rashid Shinwari, Abbas Akhund, Mohammad Essa Akhund, Mawlawi Abdul Rahim, Mawlawi Abdul Nabi, Mawlawi Mohammad Reza, Mawlawi Mohammad Nadim, Shahabuddin Dilawar, Mawlawi Jan Mohammad, Qazi Din Mohammad, Mawlawi Nek Mohammad and Mohammad Zahir Ahmadzai.

Meanwhile, the list of those thought to disagree with Mansour's appointment is also extensive: Mohammad Yaqoub (Mullah Omar's eldest son), Abdul Manan (Mullah Omar's brother), Abdul Raziq Akhund, Abdul Mobin Akhund, Mohammad Hassan Rahmani, Abdul Raouf Akhund, Abdul Bari Akhund, Abdul Rahman Zahid, Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahid, Mansour Dadullah, Mawlawi Hamza, Abdul Manan Niazi, Abdul Qayoum Zakir, Zabihullah, Mawlawi Shireen, Mohammad Akhtar Mohammadzai, Gull Pacha Amiri and Janan Haq Parast.

Some political analysts, meanwhile, have said the Pakistani government is seeking to exploit divisions within the Taliban's ranks. (Tolonews)

(7) Sayyaf Calls

years ago in Pakistan. He was brutally killed. No one could hide a natural death for two years," said Sayyaf.

The news of the Taliban leader's death came only two days before the second round of peace talks were scheduled to take place in Pakistan. On the Wednesday afternoon - 10 days ago - the news broke that the elusive one-eyed leader had died in April 2013 in a Karachi hospital. By Wednesday evening the Taliban confirmed the reports. The following day they asked for peace talks to be postponed.

Sayyaf did however criticize the group for holding sympathy ceremonies on behalf of Mullah Omar.

"My recommendation to those who loved Mullah Omar, they must go and stand beside Mullah Omar.

"For god sake enough is enough, till when will they be busy dividing up seats. Go after reform, work on security and corruption, go and build a nation," said Sayyaf.

On the issue of peace talks, Sayyaf said that there must be two conditions for the holding of such negotiations. (Tolonews)

(8) Pakistan says....

death of Mullah Omar.

"We do not want to be part of the controversy at this stage if there is rivalry or controversy inside of the Taliban on the leadership," the defense minister told the National Assembly or Lower House of the parliament.

An opposition lawmaker, Syed Naveed Qamar, said the government should deliver a policy statement on the Afghan peace process, Mullah Omar's death and the Taliban internal rift.

The Pakistani minister rejected claims that Mullah Omar had died in Pakistan.

The Afghan Presidential Palace says Mullah Omar had died in 2013 in a hospital in the Pakistani city of Karachi. The Afghan spy agency, NDS, had also made such claim.

"I categorically state that Taliban leader Mullah Omar has neither died nor buried in Pakistan," Asif said, adding Mullah Omar was not in Karachi and Quetta, the southern city of Pakistan. (Xinhua)

(9) MoD Rejects....

Afghan Defense Ministry said that volunteers enter the security forces and sign contracts and that once their contracts end they are free to leave. The ministry said that large numbers of people volunteer for the army and the ministry does not have any problems in terms of recruitment.

"This is not true that we lose 4,000 soldiers every month or that they desert. Most are on contract and after their contract ends, if they want to renew their contracts with us they do or if they want to leave they can," said MoD deputy spokesman Dawlat Waziri.

Meanwhile Afghan Ministry of Interior rejects claims that it is because of poor leadership that their security force members leave.

"I am not confirming Gen. Campbell remarks, because we don't have losses or deserters to that extent and we recruit enough people," said MoI spokesman Sediq Sediqi.

These comments come on the back of Gen. Campbell's debate at the Brookings Institute in Washington DC on Afghanistan's Future. Speaking at a question and answer session Campbell criticized senior security officials in Afghanistan and said the main reason for troops deserting was because of a lack of a proper management of army and police personnel in the country.

Gen. Campbell also stated that because of the ongoing war, security force members were unable to take time off for a vacation. (Tolonews)

(10) Steps Being

\$10-billion pipeline project. A Pakistani team will leave for Turkmenistan on Thursday.

"During the dialogue in Turkmenistan, progress on the service contract being negotiated between the Turkmen government and multinational companies will be reviewed and the way forward will be discussed to build the pipeline," a senior government official said.

Earlier, US energy giants Chevron and ExxonMobil had expressed interest in gas exploration contracts and laying the pipeline, but they wanted a share in gas production which Turkmenistan did not endorse. (Pajhwok)

(11) MoMP Looks....

around its extraction operation.

According to Afghan officials, an inter-ministerial commission's investigation has revealed that CNPC owes the government 68 million USD for real estate that it has failed to develop. The company is now said to be running a 90 percent deficit for the project.

"We want to regain the contract for five oil fields in the Amu River oil basin," MoMP spokesman Muhadiuddin Noori said. "Because the company has been able to move in line with the contract, the contractor has relied only on extraction." (Tolonews)

(12) Defense Ministry....

international community cut its air support, the Afghan forces would likely face serious problems.

"We need radar, defense systems, jets and attack aircrafts," Waziri said, noting that the helicopters which the Afghan forces are currently using in battling insurgents is not sufficient. Military analysts believe the lack of a strong Air Force can put the ground forces at risk and result in more casualties. (Tolonews)

(13) ANSF Ready....

Pakistan for its strong action against the Afghan Taliban and bringing them to the table for peace talks with the government of Afghanistan, Feldman urged Islamabad to take similar strong actions against other terrorist networks like the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which he said has the potential to destabilize South Asia.

It is clear that there can be no long term peace and stability in Afghanistan without the support of Pakistan, he said, and praised Islamabad for taking unprecedented steps to facilitate peace talks with the Taliban.

Later participating in a panel discussion, Stephen J. Hadley, the former National Security Advisor, said that the National Unity Government is under pressure and there is some loss of patience. "It is time for it to step up and show some success. They need strategic communication," he said, adding that the security forces have greater challenge than anticipated. (Pajhwok)

(14) President Ghani....

today and will be on the investiga-

tion into the attack and how to help the victims," Ghani said adding that on Saturday he would hold a special security meeting on the situation.

"We are committed to peace and such terrorist attacks will not be ignored," Ghani said in a statement earlier in the day. (Tolonews)

(15) Takhar Insecurity....

anti-state actors," he noted.

Qurbani pointed out that a number of youth had been jobless since long which benefited militants who recruited them. Provincial council members should find ways to create jobs, he said, adding that "nobody can question local officials. PC members emphasized on quality, transparency and right implementation of projects." (Pajhwok)

(16) Electoral System....

Madadzai told the gathering that the electoral law and the law on the composition, duty and authority of the election bodies needed to be amended.

He said the two laws did not define electoral crimes which should be told apart from electoral violations in these laws.

He said the appointment of commissioners on the election commission should be legalised under the law on composition, duty and authority of the electoral bodies so that these individuals could be appointed on the basis of their qualifications.

But legal expert Kabir Ranjbar said the parliament could not amend the electoral law under the Constitution. He said Article 103 of the Constitution clearly stated that the Wolesi Jirga could not discuss elections in the last year of its five-year term. (Pajhwok)

(17) Kabul Blast....

Destruction caused by the blast can be seen at the scene of the blast such as damaged buildings and wide spread rubbles. Hardly a building has left safe in 70 meters area of the blast.

Pedestrians hardly protect themselves from smithereens of broken crockery in front of marbles market and pieces of glasses.

Three buildings and four houses close to the explosion area have been completely destroyed where as hundreds of shops and residential areas have partially damaged.

A slight sound of hissing and weeping of the poor shopkeepers break the silence and one can loudly hear inaudible sounds of weeping and mourning. (Pajhwok)

(18) 74 Fighters....

Salman was son in law of former Daesh commander Mullah Abdul Rauf who joined Taliban soon after the killing of his father in law. (Pajhwok)

(19) Pakistan's Ulama....

many more such voices for peace in our region. So I hope other Ulama in Pakistan would join this noble cause, too," the ambassador said.

He said that both the countries needed to enhance dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistani Ulama for peace aimed at taking away all false justifications for violence. (Pajhwok)

(20) Pakistani Minister....

without providing such details.

None of the reports could be independently confirmed. The Taliban have been in turmoil following confirmation of the death of their leader. Asif's remarks appear to be part of Pakistan's efforts to dispel the impression Mullah Omar died after being treated in Pakistan. (AP)

(21) Pakistan Fires

with all being fired from across the border. Hopefully no one has been hurt as a result of these attacks," Wali Khan Shinwari, Commander of 301 Brigade of the Frontier Corps of Selab Army Corps, said on Thursday. (Tolonews)

(22) 'Electoral Laws Be....

Mohammad Ali Amiri, member of the council, said problems that existed in Bamyán included scattering of the population in different areas and lack of polling stations in all the areas. (Pajhwok)

(23) IMU Declares....

word Baya which would indicate a pledge of allegiance.

Another militant leader identified as Sadullah Urganji also issued a video statement in March this year claiming that the group fights for IMU in northern Afghanistan.

Urganji said his group was recognizing the authority of ISIS leader Baghdadi while pledging allegiance to the terror group.

The allegiance by IMU to ISIS terrorist group comes shortly almost two

weeks after the death of the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar was confirmed.

IMU issued a statement earlier this month demanding clarification from the Taliban regarding Mullah Omar's death while accusing the group lying his death. (KP)

(24) 12 Mosques....

"The Taliban should surrender the perpetrators to the Ulama Council," he said, adding otherwise it would be viewed that the group itself was behind the sacrilegious act.

Col. Abdul Rashid Bashir, deputy police chief, said six of the mosques have been completely destroyed while six others were partially damaged.

He said the mosques were located in Wardakha, Islamabad, and Ahmadzai areas of Dand-i-Ghori.

Bashir claimed Taliban were behind the act, but Akhtar Omari, a Taliban commander, denied the group's hand in the incidents. (Pajhwok)

(25) Senior Daesh....

western Heart, former Taliban group member Ghaus-u-din known as Amir saheb son of Abul Baqi, Syed Mustafa son of Mohammad Qasam, Noor-ul-Hadi son of Noorullah and Mohammad Yunus son of Mohammad Murad.

During initial interrogation, Abdul Fatah told that he contacted the other detained men through social media Facebook and later met them in person recruited them.

They were arrested before Abdul Fatah could take them to Daesh group in eastern Nangarhar. The exact date of the arrest and location could not be made public, the statement added. (Pajhwok)

(26) Security Posts....

launched after provincial officials cited security concerns to travel to these districts. So far 25 militants had been killed or wounded, the official said.

"The operation is aimed at improving security in the area, driving militants, destroying their possible safe havens and also targeting criminals and drug smugglers," Lewal said.

He said security posts would be increased in areas cleared of militants for the sake of durable security in the Khogyani zone.

Afghan National Army's 201 Selab Military Corps official Col. Jan Mohammad called the "Operation Iron Triangle" as a success.

He said the troops had detected and defused hundreds of landmines securing a number of roads and routes. First deputy head at the National Directorate of Security (NDS) Gen. Bismillah Khan Farahi said more than 70 militants were killed during the outgoing week in coordinated airstrikes by foreign forces and various operations by Afghan security forces.

He said seven militants, including an Islamic State and Taliban commander Hayatullah had been arrested in Jalalabad during the period. Last night, he said, they arrested four Taliban militants in the Ghanikhel district.

Besides detecting landmines, NDS officials confiscated 150 kilograms of explosives over the past one week, preventing terrorist incidents, the intelligence official said.

To a question by this scribe, Farahi said clashes between Taliban and Islamic State fighters were still continuing in the Shinwari zone, but on low scale.

Brig. Gen. Wali Khan Shinwari, the 301 zone border police commander, told the press briefing that there were clashes between Taliban and IS militants last night in Gorgori and Haroon Baba areas of the Haskamena district.

"The two groups are fighting each other in the Nazian district and periodically clash in Patan and Gargai areas of the Achin district."

The security officials like the past week again said the clashes between the two groups had been taking place away from government-controlled areas amid increased airstrikes by foreign forces targeting both the sides. (Pajhwok)

(27) 2-Day Journalism....

professional duties in times of violence.

"The journalists were given training how to report violence and file their reports. They were told how to play their role in minimizing the scale of violence and basics of principles of journalism," Mangal added.

He said that the AJPC was planning to arrange more such workshops in the future to bolster the capacity of local journalists.

Saifullah Zahir, a journalist working with Milli Radio Television, said that before they were looking at only one angle after an event but now they learnt that reports on a single event could be filed at

various angles. (Pajhwok)

(28) Commanders ...

the government for years.

Hijratullah, a resident of Babos area, told Pajhwok Afghan News the airstrikes and subsequent firing started in their village about 11pm and continued until 3am. He said they came to know in the morning that some militants had been killed.

The Taliban have said nothing so far about the strikes.

Elsewhere on Thursday morning, the quick reaction force headquarters came under a suicide attack in central Logar province, killing three civilians and as many policemen. Another 26 people, including eleven doctors and three policemen, were injured in the attack.

In Sari Pul, the acting governor, Abdul Jabbar Haqbin, told Pajhwok Afghan News Afghan security forces on Thursday morning launched an operation codenamed "Shamshir-2" in the Kohistanat district.

So far 17 insurgents, including a commander Abu Bakkar, had been killed and eight villages cleared from their presence.

A tribal elder in Kohistanat district, wishing anonymity, said Taliban commander Abdu Bakkar was killed at about 10am on Thursday and his funeral prayers were offered in Laghman area near Sari Pul city, the provincial capital.

There has been no word from the insurgents about Abu Bakkar's death. (Pajhwok)

(29) Kandahar Clash...

First, he said the attackers started firing and in the ensuing battle two policemen were killed. Police seized two kalashnikovs and several hand grenades after the fire-fight was over, he added.

Adul Wasay, a resident of the locality, said the gun battle lasted for half an hour and he expected the death toll of militants was higher than reported.

Taliban have not yet commented on the incident. (Pajhwok)

(30) Hiroshima

stories is considered an urgent task. The bomb, called "Little Boy," destroyed 90 percent of Hiroshima. A "black rain" of radioactive particles followed the blinding blast and fireball, and has been linked to higher rates of cancer and other radiation-related diseases among survivors. (AP)

(31) UNHCR Calls....

registered in July alone, mostly on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Samos and Leros.

In light of these trends and amid signs that the inflow of refugees will continue to grow, the refugee agency defined the situation as a humanitarian emergency taking place within the European Union. (Xinhua)

(32) Russian Hackers....

Staff email system as soon as the hack was discovered. The email system will reportedly be back online by the end of the week. They said that the digital intrusion is possibly tied to a Russian hacking group, known as APT29, which was recently profiled in a report from security firm FireEye, NBC reported. That team uses a tactic called Hammertoss that allows hackers to clandestinely communicate with malware that has already infected a computer system, allowing it to remain undetected. (Xinhua)

(33) Turkey....

decision which will be valid until Feb. 26, 2016.

This decision reflects UN Security Council resolution which authorized sanctions against anyone in Yemen who obstructs the country's political transition or commits human rights violations. (Xinhua)

(34) China Committed....

has already elaborated China's stance when attending a series of foreign ministers' meetings on East Asia cooperation." Hua stressed that China has always been committed to settling South China Sea disputes through consultation and negotiation with countries directly concerned, on the basis of historical facts and in accordance with international law. "China is willing to work with ASEAN to build consensus, deepen cooperation, manage differences, and make the South China Sea a place embodying peace, friendship, and cooperation," Hua said. (Xinhua)