

(1) 2 Grant ...

road linking Qaisar district with Dari Bumb road -- a vital national strategic corridor. This financing comprises \$150 million of new funding and \$180 million of recycled funding. The road is the last section of the 2,200-km road that connects Afghanistan's major cities and is also a key corridor under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program.

The project will include both drainage and modern highway safety features. It also features roadside infrastructure facilities, including rural access roads and a community development programme.

A statement from Finance Ministry said the road would be designed and constructed to incorporate disaster risk and climate change adaptation features.

The second grant agreement of \$30 million was signed as additional financing to the Road Asset Management Project. The project will help finance the gap arising from changes in financing arrangements as well as in revisions of the project's scope.

This includes 240 km priority maintenance works for the Southern National Ring Road of Afghanistan's regional highway from Ghazni to Kandahar, which is considered an economic lifeline of the country's eastern region.

The additional financing will also include a capacity development component to introduce sustainable practices in road asset management and road maintenance.

The overall project will facilitate regional connectivity, improve the quality and efficiency of road transport services, and promote inclusive economic growth in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(2) Ghani Issues New ...

meantime, the Nangarhar provincial government said President Ghani also discussed the government's other plans regarding the implementation of the development projects for Nangarhar.

He said the Kabul-Jalalabad highway will be properly constructed and the electricity shortage issues in Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Logar, Paktia, and Khost provinces will be resolved with the completion of the 1000 mega watt electricity project.

President Ghani further added that the government also plans to build a solar power plant in Nangarhar to produce 20 mega watts of electricity for the residents of the province.

In other parts of his speech, President Ghani said the Citizens' Charter Program has also been instructed to include Khogyani district in its programs for the implementation of the development projects. (KP)

(3) 68pc Satisfied...

"They say people's suggestions should be heeded in implementation of different programmes."

He said public satisfaction with the Kabul Municipality had risen to 48 percent from 34 percent in last solar year.

Residents of 2nd, 4th and 11th municipal districts were satisfied with the municipality. But people of 21st, 18th and 22nd municipal districts expressed dissatisfaction with municipal services.

Afzal added Kabul inhabitants also demanded greater participation in municipality's programmes.

IWA's main suggestions to municipalities include: Taking decisions and preparing urban plans at people's requests, incorporating citizen demands on priority schemes and enhancing women's role. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghan Forces ..

HIMARS launch chief has said "Our mission is to have all-weather, 24-hour artillery support capability. Since HIMARS is the only weapon system that can do this, it provides fire support for any ANDSF personnel who need it."

Since their arrival, the Marines operating the HIMARS have executed more than ten missions in support of Afghan forces, helping them kill enemy fighters, destroy Taliban IED manufacturing and drug processing facilities, and enhance security for the Helmand populace, according to a report by Sgt. Lucas Hopkins in Resolute Support Headquarters.

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"HIMARS is capable of ranges of out to 300 kilometers. It's a highly mobile system that is very adaptable to any condition, and it provides [commanders] with... surface-to-surface all-weather fires in order to support our partners on the ground," said U.S. Marine Capt. Justin Noone, the officer-in-charge of the HIMARS detachment.

According to the report, Helmand-based ANDSF relied solely on coalition and Afghan air assets to deliver explosives onto enemy locations during their operations prior to HIMARS arriving. By using GPS technology, HIMARS delivers highly-explosive rounds across the battlespace with precision, while also giving an alternative to air-to-ground fires capabilities.

"It's allowed Task Force Southwest to shape the battlefield," said Noone. "The Taliban

used to be able to predict the targeting cycle, and with this artillery weapon system being surface-to-surface and firing in a different manner, it still brings a very lethal package and prevents the enemy from knowing our routine."

This come as operations are underway in southern Helmand province of Afghanistan with main focus being the elimination of the financial sources of the Taliban group.

The U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Lance Bunch said last week that the Taliban group will face a very long winter as operations involving air campaign is underway against the group mainly focusing on financial resources of the group.

"Since the beginning of this campaign, we have eliminated 25 narcotics processing labs from the Taliban inventory. This equates to almost \$80 million of drug money eliminated from the kingpins' pockets, while denying over \$16 million of direct revenue to their Taliban partners," he told reporters in Pentagon via teleconference from Kabul. (KP)

(5) Donors Unwilling...

donors do not want to see us self-sufficient in power generation."

Currently, 80 percent electricity being consumed in the country was imported from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran.

Ghaleb, however, said DABS had launched work on some small power generation projects such as the solar power projects through which the electricity shortage in Kabul would be resolved.

Regarding the recent World Bank (WB) report, Ghaleb said the issue had been discussed with government leadership and he demanded the arrangement of special meeting of the High Economic Council.

WB has warned against the bankruptcy of power utility in 2018 if necessary reforms failed to be implemented, the amount government institutions and private sector owed to the power utility hasn't paid and the finance ministry stops taking profit.

Talking about the financial crisis of the power utility, he said DABS was neither profiting nor losing.

Ghaleb said the existing power generation could not meet the demand. He said no surge had been noticed in the supply of imported electricity while daily 350 to 250 electricity meters were being distributed to people in Kabul.

He pledged to decline the power outage in capital Kabul. Currently the residents of Kabul supplied electricity for 10 to 12 hours.

The Mesharano Jirga members asked Ghaleb to provide the house with the list of individual who has owed to DABS. In reply he said making the list public would not resolve the problem, adding that if someone really wanted to access the list they should refer to Pajhwok Afghan News.

The Breshna Shirkat officials have already shared the list of 73 individuals who did not paid their electricity due.

Waheed Tawhidi, the DABS spokesman, then said that state institutions owed 1.6 billion afghanis and some government figures and powerful individuals owed 700 million in their unpaid electricity bills.

Earlier, the Joint Anti-Corruption and Evaluation Committee (MEC) claimed Corruption was still massively rife in DABS.

MEC said since 2002 up to date 220 billion afghanis had been provided to the electricity sector of the country, of which 12.5 billion afghanis had been acknowledged by DABS. However billion of afghanis had been missing and the company was unaware about it, he said.

Ghaleb said most electricity projects in the country were supported and executed by foreigners and DABS was only monitoring them.

Regarding the claim that the Taliban were collected electricity bills in parts of Kunduz and Helmand province, Ghaleb said his institution was unable to collect electricity bills some areas of five provinces. (Pajhwok)

(6) Iran, Afghanistan...

of Iran hosting the Afghan refugees, Mr. Karampour voiced hope that legal presence of the Afghan nationals in Iran ease the procedure of receiving Iranian government's services to them.

"Our political ties are at a good level but the economic relations between Iran and Afghanistan are not at the desired level and far from meeting the expectations for the at-hand potentials," said the Iranian legislator calling for plans to remove the obstacle hindering the growth of economic cooperation. "We are hopeful that the Afghan nation and government to overcome security problems that threaten their country and the region with national solidarity and unity," noted the legislator after voicing concern over the security issues of Afghanistan.

The Iranian MP reassured the Afghan law-maker that Iran is ready to share its experience in the field of counter-terrorism with Afghanistan's government.

Mr. Kalkani for his part voiced content with the meeting and expressed hope that the visit made by the parliamentary friendship group to be an opener to more dialogue and cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries.

"We welcome sharing experience and cooperation with Iranian parliament in international venues," said the Afghan law-maker.

"Terrorism is created in Afghanistan and other regions of the world by the super-powers seeking their own objectives," noted the Afghan legislator.

"Afghanistan will continue war on terror and won't allow the expansion of terrorist groups' activities," he highlighted. (Agencies)

(7) Latest Clashes...

We have dispatched a team to survey the exact number of displaced families. A proper plan would be devised for immediate assistance to them," he promised.

Hashmi added the families had been displaced to the district centre and some other stable areas. The displaced people were faced with major problems, he continued.

Nawroz, who was displaced from Kunjak village, said: "Afghan forces conducted air-and-ground operations in our village. Our homes were destroyed and we were forced to flee." He complained they were yet to get assistance.

Another resident, Janullah, said the government should inform the residents before conducting operation. "When operation begins people remain unaware and leaving as a result of problems."

Ghulam Hazrat, spokesman for the 209th Shaheen Military Corps, confirmed the displacement of residents from Imam Sahib. "Taliban have made bunkers in people's houses. Thus airstrikes have damaged some houses and the families managed to flee their houses."

According to Ghulam, the security forces have been trying best not to avoid on civilian casualties or residential houses during the offensive. (Pajhwok)

(8) Final Date for ...

date of the rolling out process with the people of Afghanistan," said Ahmadzai.

In terms of president Ashraf Ghani's order, the new ID cards will include the religion and ethnicity of the holder.

On Thursday Ghani ordered the census department, the Afghanistan Civil Registration Authority, to be prepared for the roll-out of electronic identity cards within the days to come, director of the department, Homayoun Mohtaat said Thursday.

"Be prepared for the rollout of electronic national identity cards (e-NIC) within the next few days. I want to receive my electronic identity card as soon as possible," Mohtaat wrote in a Facebook post, quoting Ghani's order.

He further writes that the president has said that if the work of the joint committee does not give effect to the legislative decree, the head of state will respect the decision of the committee and will consider the necessary reforms in line with the decision of the committee.

Ghani's order on the e-NIC rollout met with mixed reactions among legislators in the parliament. A joint commission of the national assembly was formed to discuss the modalities of president's order.

"We will convene the meeting on Monday, it will determine the minority and the majority," said Hashim Ortaq, a member of the joint commission.

What happens next if the joint committee rejects the presidential order?

"The government of Afghanistan should not start the rollout process of electronic identity cards before the decision of the national assembly," said Mohammad Asif Sediqqi, second deputy of the senate.

"When it gets legal status, then we are obliged to consider the necessary changes on the basis of their decision in our working process," said Ahmadzai.

The first phase of e-NIC will be launched in Kabul and then it will be extended to the provinces.

The process is composed of four phases. First, data is collected about the person, then his or her identity is certified and in the third phase, the applicants go through a biometric system. An applicant could receive the ID card within a week. (Tolonews)

(9) India Most Reliable ...

adding that at least 130 Afghans travel to India each year to attend various military and commissioning programs.

India has also donated limited security assistance, most notably four Mi-35 aircraft, the Pentagon said.

"The new South Asia policy highlighted our relationship with India and called on India to provide more assistance to the international efforts in Afghanistan. The United States welcomes additional Indian economic, medical, and civic support to Afghanistan," the Pentagon said in its report. This is the first report of the Pentagon to Congress after US President Donald Trump announced his new Afghan and South Asia policy in August.

"Our purpose in Afghanistan remains the same: to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a safe haven from which terrorist groups can plan and execute attacks on the United States, or our allies and citizens abroad. To accomplish this, we continue to support our Afghan partners and train, advise, and assist its military and government institutions," it said.

Under the new strategy, the US will continue to support the Afghan government and security forces in the fight against the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Daesh of Iraq and other insurgents and terrorists, to strengthen the Afghan government and prevent

reestablishment of terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan.

The new strategy does not mean a return to US-led combat operations, instead, the key to success lies in improving Afghan security forces capabilities and allow them to lead in the fight against the Taliban, it clarified. (Tolonews)

(10) Abdullah Stresses...

countries, suggesting the goodwill should be utilised for improving relation between the two countries.

He reiterated the purpose of efforts at creating an environment of trust with Pakistan was to fight against the scourge of terrorism and eradicate terrorist safe havens across the border. (Pajhwok)

(11) Shahzad Returns...

Mohammadi said.

At the press conference the Chairman of Afghanistan Cricket Board, Atif Mashal, asked all the cricketers to observe the laws of ICC.

"I am very happy that Mohammadi will return on 17th of January 2018. During the time that Mohammadi was banned the ICC, he was doing fitness and we were informed in this regard. Based on the ICC law, we were not able to help him, because it was a principle and we had to implement it," Mashal said. (Tolonews)

(12) Raw Marble ...

where government's writ was weak.

"If the smuggling of raw and half-processed marble is prevented, the customs revenues will go up by 15 percent. We suffer a loss of 50 million afis annually due to the smuggling of marble to Iran and other countries."

According to him, Herat customs department annually collects 20 million afis from marble exports through the Islam Qala crossing.

Several public representatives from Herat allege that some government officials and Wolesi Jirga members aid the smuggling of marble.

Massouda Korkhi, a legislator, told Pajhwok: "Herat's raw marble is smuggled abroad by people having influence in the parliament and within the government." However, she did not name any individual.

Closure of factories

Officials of the Herat Industrialists' Union claim marble smuggling has resulted in the closure of marble factories in the province. Hameedullah Khadim, head of the union, said about 45 marble-processing factories were operational until recently in the Herat industrial park. But due to the absence of marble stone, most of the factories have ceased to function.

"The first-degree, high-quality marble, before being processed, is smuggled by mafia to Iran and other countries. Thus the local factories are supplied with the 2nd and 3rd-degree marble for processing."

Several factory heads complained of a shortage of the stone. Since the beginning of current year, Herat miners worked for only three months.

Toryalai Ghawsi, the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) deputy head for Herat and owner of a factory, said due to the shortage of marble, he had suffered a 55 million afis loss.

"In the past, the government would extract the stone and place it at factory owners' disposal. But currently, the market is free and the good-quality stone is not supplied to factories and the government pays no heed. Earlier, about 45 factories were active in this sector, but now the number has dropped to 20 to 25 factories."

Ghawsi pointed to four kinds of marble excavated in the province --top marble, 1st, 2nd and 3rd degree marbles -- but the factories were given the low-quality stone for processing.

"We once had 52 workers but now we have only 15. If we work 24 hours consistently, we produce 400 square metres. And in 48 hours, our production reaches 1,500 square metres."

Currently, each square metre of processed top-quality marble is priced at 800 to 800 afis, the 1st degree marble at around 500 to 600 afis, the 2nd degree at 300 afis and the 3rd degree at 200 afis in Herat markets.

"We obtain one tonne of raw and irregular top marble for 8,000 afis, one tonne of 1st degree for 5,650 afis, the same quantity of 2nd degree for 3,500. But the 2nd-degree marble is sold for only 300 afis."

While stressing the construction of a bridge on Harirod River in Chasht-i-Sharif for resolving people's problems, he asked the government to monitor the activities of factories and miners to ensure the extracted marble was distributed in a just manner to factory owners.

Ghawsi claimed factories in Herat had high capacity and advanced equipment, which could process marble in a standard way.

But Abdul Sami Tokhi, an extracting company owner, said Herat factories lacked the ability to process marble stone because they only prepared it in a semi-processed form for export.

Meanwhile, Miners Union denied the smuggling of marble. It said local factories were unable to process raw marble to internationally accepted standards.

Attaullah Popal, head of the Miners Union and owner of a mining firm, said extraction

from Herat mines continued for only two months. "Our work was stopped due to water-shedding from Salma Dam for four months. The Chast-Herat road asphaltting took three months. Overall, we have worked very little this year.

"We have extracted less than 1,000 tonnes, but we paid a tax on 13,000 tonnes to government. Tax on a tonne of marble is 830 afis. Unfortunately, we suffered a \$30,000 loss every month and we haven't paid salaries to our employees over the past five months."

He called the shortage of electricity, lack of bank loans to factories, dilapidated roads and the absence of a bridge on Harirod River the factors that contributed to their losses.

In the past years, 17 mines of marble existed in Herat. But now the number has fallen to 11. Abdul Jamil Ilyasi, former head of Herat Mines and Petroleum Department, recently said that 33 mines of marble existed in Chasht and Oba districts.

Of the mines, 11 were being tapped in the two districts and about 18,000 to 25,000 tonnes of marble could be extracted from each mine in the province.

Ilyasi had also expressed concern over the smuggling of raw marble to foreign countries from Herat because the factories did not have the capacity to process marble or meet international standards.

Despite all this, Zia-ul-Haq, the head of Herat Mines and Petroleum Department, spurned the claims of marble smuggling. He said the marble was being exported in semi-processed form.

Herat marble

Herat marble mines are situated 125 kilometers east of the provincial capital, stretching from Oba to Chasht-i-Sharif district.

Four types of high-quality marbles -- fine crystalline marble ranging in colour from pure white to subtle light green white, Carrara and granite -- were identified in Chasht-i-Sharif district.

In 1976, the Chasht-i-Sharif mine was estimated to have 500 metres length and 100 metres width and the capacity to produce 9.5 million cubic metres of marble. However, recent studies show the length of the mine is more than 20 kilometres. (Pajhwok)

(13) Airlines to be...

But the revenue for the current year (2017), which has not ended yet, are at five billion and 835 million afis, up by 34 percent.

He linked the revenue hike to the handing over of Afghanistan's airspace control to Afghan institutions. Previously, Afghanistan's airspace was controlled by NATO forces.

"Two years earlier, Afghan airspace was controlled by NATO. Every foreign flight passing through Afghanistan was charged \$500.

"But currently the charges have been increased to \$700 per flight and the number of flights has also risen," the official told reporters.

The ACAA head added 27 planes were active in the country. About 90 percent of their control has been handed over to Afghans, with local staff having been trained. Habibi said the ACAA planned to reconstruct terminals, runway and boundary walls around Herat, Farah and Zabul airports this year.

Reactivation of airfield meteorology centres after 40 years and improving the activity of Aviation Institute without sending students abroad were other developments that took place.

"Another issue that we frequently face is postponement of flights. To control flight delays, we will soon send a new regulation to the cabinet. Every airline that delays flights would be fined."

Habibi said the ACAA had been able to expend 66 percent of the \$70 million budget this financial year. (Pajhwok)

(14) NDS Releases ...

source added NDS discharged its responsibility according the law and the remaining belonged to the ACO and Interior Ministry.

Earlier, security forces have arrested one Afghan and three Turkish teachers linked to the faith-based Gülen movement.

According to the Reuters, the move against Afghan Turk CAG Educational NGO (ATCE), the organization that runs the schools, appeared to be part of a witch-hunt being waged on followers of Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen, accused by the Turkish government of masterminding a coup attempt in July 2016. (Pajhwok)

(15) Herat Govt ...

districts had not paid their electricity bills. If the government departments, the private sector and residents did not clear their electricity dues, he warned, DABS might not be able to provide good services.

Toryalai Tahiri, deputy head of the Provincial Council, called the non-payment of electricity bills against the law and urged government institutions to pay the DABS its dues. "Every government institution is responsible for paying its electricity bills," he said, remarking: "The non-payment of bills means heads of the defaulting department are irresponsible." Jilani Farhad, the governor's spokesman, said efforts were ongoing to include the government departments' bills in this year's budget. (Pajhwok)