

(1) No Military...

The UN chief encouraged the High Peace Council to reach out to all sectors and levels of society to help build a national consensus on peace.

The UN chief also called upon any Member State with influence on the Taliban to exercise such leverage in the service of a lasting peace.

About the upcoming elections in Afghanistan, Antonio Guterres said the slow pace of electoral preparations has put pressure on the timetable for holding parliamentary and district council elections in 2018.

He said concrete steps had been taken towards the development of an improved voter registry and the compilation of polling centre-based voter lists.

But delays in key decisions had raised concerns among the public about the capacity of the electoral commissions to ensure timely elections, he added. (Pajhwok)

(2) Civilian Fatalities...

peace to come to Afghanistan as it would jeopardize their financial interests.

"HPC in a press conference called them (Taliban) to start negotiations, but still we have not received any specific comments in this regard," said Sarabi.

The Afghanistan's Peace Process magazine is printed in English and contains researched articles by Afghan women from in the country and abroad. The articles all focus on the peace process. The magazine is set to be translated into the local languages and will be distributed "In the current situation where insecurity and civilian fatalities are increasing, focusing on the peace process has become vital and more important than before," said Mariam Safi, the founder of the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies. (Tolnews)

(3) MPs Reject Decree...

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim called for voting on the decree and of 121 lawmakers present, 101 rejected the decree.

Ibrahimi tasked the house internal security and defence affairs commission with working on the amended format of the law and presenting it to the house in upcoming sessions for a decision.

After the decree was rejected by the lower house, MoD spokesman Waziri told reporters the legislation was aimed at reforming and further strengthening the MoD because currently 5,000 young officers were on the reserve list.

"There is no problem in the draft law and if the Wolesi Jirga has rejected the decree, it is their authority. However, there is nothing wrong in the officers personal law," he added.

According to Waziri, preparation for the retirement of officers and generals is underway and the process would be completed in two years. (Pajhwok)

(4) Uzbek, US Presidents...

to the strengthening of peace and stability in Central Asia.

The presidents of Uzbekistan and the US underscored their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations of strategic partnership on the principles of mutual respect, trust and consideration of each other's interests.

In order to jointly consider prospective plans of expansion of the bilateral cooperation, President Trump invited his counterpart to pay an official visit to the US.

At the end of the conversation, the two presidents exchanged their greetings and best wishes on the occasion of the upcoming New Year 2018. (Trend)

(5) Law Needed ...

with the ICMC and the federal government.

Rustam Shah Mohmand, Pakistan's former envoy to Afghanistan, underscored the key issues Afghan refugees were facing in the international humanitarian context.

He highlighted the historical perspectives of Afghan refugee crises and emphasized adopting an approach similar to the one done by the Turkish government where integration of 2.5 million refugees is under consideration to avoid a long-term burden on Turkish resources.

Mohmand also suggested adopting a pragmatic approach with regards to issuing Proof of Registration (POR) cards so that refugees can live with dignity in peace as he noted that harassing and pushing refugees was creating a negative impact within Afghanistan which is not in the interest of Pakistan. (Agencies)

(6) New Reforms to Ease ...

goal is to ease public services in all forms to the people," he said.

At the same event, Public Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz said according to an agreement between the ministry and the reforms commission, some authority will be shifted to provincial officials of the Ministry of Public Health.

"From now on, those who want to open a pharmacy or move it to other provinces will spend less time, will not have to pay bribes and will complete the official procedures easily," Feroz said.

He said that most of the 800-plus pharmaceutical import companies are not accountable to the ministry. Therefore, he said, the ministry wants to reduce the number of these companies to 10 - all of which will be held accountable and made to ensure their business dealings are transparent. (Tolnews)

(7) Domestic, Foreign...

"Open Access Policy" to encourage the private sector and foreign companies to invest in the fiber optic sector in the country.

"With the implementation of this and expansion of fiber optics, Afghanistan will get an extraordinary reputation in terms of providing better internet services, it will also help the domestic market to be in a better shape; this can be interpreted as a connecting bridge in the region and Afghanistan will change into a hub of fiber transit in the region," said Atta Mohammad Yari, technical advisor of ATRA.

Economic commentators emphasize that the telecom sector plays a significant role in the economic development of Afghanistan, adding that the growth of telecom services can also help to promote good governance and reliable internet services to the public.

"Today there is the era of electronic governance in the world which guarantees transparency and public trust. Investment in the fiber optic sector will lead to the expansion of good governance, however investment in this sector needs comprehensive policies to attain the satisfaction of the investors," said Abdul Wase Haidari, an economist. The proposals for investments in Afghanistan's fiber optic sector come at a time that the government plans to connect the country's fiber optic network to the fiber optic networks in China and in the Middle East.

Afghanistan is currently connected to the fiber optics line coming through Pakistan but people in Afghanistan have been critical of the high cost and poor quality of internet services. (Tolnews)

(8) Jamiat Asks ...

the legitimacy of government." The statement said that government was violating conditions of the NUG's agreement and that Jamiat had the right to defend the public's rights.

On Monday evening, Noor addressed a gathering of his supporters in Balkh province, and rejected claims of having resigned. He called on his supporters to take civic action against the decision but to act in accordance with the law.

"Your movements for now must be civic and within the law. If the aggression and threats increase against us, then we can use other options," Noor said.

He added: "I want to announce from here that my dismissal and apparently my resignation is completely rejected, it is not acceptable and we are rejecting it and we will take further decisions, about this, after consultations with Jamiat-e-Islami and the National Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan."

Meanwhile, he called on the international community not to interfere in Afghanistan's affairs.

Noor's supporters have said that they will resort to civil action in support of Noor.

"I am ready to give up this rank of general, money and the car, I will be the first person to sacrifice my

blood," said Haseebullah Quraishi, the commander of Public Protection Force in the north.

"Now that they have decided to offer the resignation as a reward, we are ready to stay alongside you (Noor) till the last drop of our blood," said Abdul Raziq Qaderi, head of the security department of Balkh police headquarters

"We will use all our civil rights which are part of democracy and the right of every Afghan citizen, but we can decide on other options as well if our civic action does not provide results," said Afzal Hadid, head of Balkh provincial council.

Balkh province is one of Afghanistan's key provinces in the north. Noor has served as Balkh governor for 14 years. (Tolnews)

(9) Lawmakers' Response...

the issue of Noor's resignation should not be politically or ethnically promoted.

"Is there any verse in the Quran that Noor would be the governor of Balkh forever, if not then let the people live their life," he said.

He also said: "We support the (government) move because the people of Balkh have been liberated from the grip of tyrants."

Naseema Niyazi, a lawmaker from Helmand province, said: "Change and transfer is the principle of democracy. Dictating terms is not in the interest of the country and no one should dictate terms."

Lawmaker Aryan Youn said those who were part of the system and wanted to destabilize the system through illegal means should be suppressed like Daesh and Taliban. But Abdul Rauf Inami, a lawmaker from Badakhshan province, said the country was ruled by the unity government and Noor was part of the arrangement.

He said approval of Noor's resignation was against the commitment of the unity government.

KABUL (Pajhwok): Like upper house members, the Wolesi Jirga members too on Wednesday expressed a mixed response to the approval of Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor's resignation by the president.

President Ashraf Ghani approved the resignation of Noor, the governor of northern Balkh province, on Monday and appointed Eng. Mohammad Daud as his replacement, according to a statement.

The Jamiat-i-Islami Afghanistan party on Wednesday rejected the approval of Atta Mohammad Noor's resignation as and slammed president's decision.

In a statement, the party said the resignation of the Balkh governor was unacceptable to them.

"Noor is the chief executive of the party that has a key role in the government based on the unity government agreement," the party said.

Noor on Tuesday rejected the Presidential Palace's approval of his resignation as the governor of northern Balkh province, saying his conditions had not been met. Speaking at today's lower house session, lawmaker Qudratullah Zaki said the issue of Noor's resignation should not be politically or ethnically promoted.

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(10) India Welcomes US...

to shape a world antithetical to US values and interests.

On Tuesday, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying urged the US to abandon its Cold

War mentality and zero-sum game concept.

"China will resolutely safeguard its sovereignty, security and right to develop," she said. "No one should have the fantasy of expecting China to swallow the bitter fruit of harming its own interests."

Separately, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin told journalists that the document had a "clearly imperial nature" and demonstrated a reluctance to abandon the idea of a "unipolar world". (Pajhwok)

(11) UNICEF to Assist ...

asked the UNICEF representative to increase mobile teams delivering healthcare services to locally displaced people in Nangarhar.

He also requested her cooperation with regard to Bibi Fatima Zuhara and the Nangarhar Civil hospitals' children and newborns wards. Khudr expressed her happiness that health activities were ongoing in a better way in Nangarhar. She assured the Nangarhar health director of addressing their request as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Khudr during her visit to neighboring Kunar province met with public health department and provincial hospital officials and discussed with them health related issues.

She also inspected the Kunar provincial hospital's children and newborns' ward and the three-day polio vaccination drive's affairs in various areas of the province. (Pajhwok)

(12) 95pc of Buildings in ..

lack of footpaths and parking areas.

Medical stores, food shops, moneychanger outlets, blacksmiths and sellers of vegetable, beverages and fabrics are jumbled up. An unfamiliar person has to walk the entire city to find what he/she needs. Sherzad said it was the responsibility of the municipality to specify markets, organise streets and define areas for specific products.

Atiqullah Jamalzai, a shopkeeper in Asadabad, said the entire city was like a single street, having no sidewalks or parking areas. People can't walk through the city, where goods are sold on roads and streets.

He explained the Asadabad Civil Hospital was located in an area where ambulances could not ply easily due to crowds. Maternity homes are situated on the second floor of buildings, adding to patients' woes.

The Kabul Bank branch is also on the second floor of a building, with little space for visitors who have to wait on the road.

Khalilullah, another resident of the city, alleged government and municipality officials did not bother about discharging their responsibilities. They do not care about violations of the law.

There was rampant corruption behind the worsening situation in the city, he charged, stressing the need for proper urban planning and management.

Jamal Din Sayyar, a provincial council member, grumbled Asadabad had no canalisation or drainage systems. The electricity produced by power generators is supplied only to a limited number of people.

Mayor Eng. Mohammad Rahim said the master plan was not implemented due to the unstable situation in the country. He confirmed 95 percent of construction works were against the master plan.

"We don't have that much funds to acquire land and implement our master plan," he argued, saying the ministry concerned could execute its programmes on existing land.

The Ministry of Urban Development has prepared a strategic plan for Asadabad and it would be implemented step by step. Based on the plan, buildings constructed in violation of the master plan will be destroyed and their owners would be given land in elsewhere.

However, Rahim did not say when the plan would be implemented. The mayor added he could not give a specific date as they were faced with a funding shortage and security problems.

Urban Development Director Eng. Abdul Aziz Momand also hit out at past governments, as well as the incumbent administration, for their

failure to enforce the Asadabad master plan.

He revealed a newly drawn-up plan by the ministry contained all requirements of the city. "We cannot demolish Asadabad at one fell swoop; we would translate the plans into action in a gradual manner."

Engineering teams of the Ministry of Urban Development will visit Asadabad city in the beginning of the next solar year to help enforce the fresh plan.

But he cited lack of government land as a major hurdle to the plan's execution. The authorities would have to acquire enough land before taking steps towards implementation of the plan.

Buildings for government departments would be constructed in the Lachgali area of Asadabad inside an office complex. The area is currently being surveyed by engineers. After the construction of the complex, all government offices would be shifted there, a step that would help resolve the issue of crowding in the city, the director continued.

Kunar Governor Wahidullah Kalimzai called the foundation of the city substandard. The provincial capital is bounded by a river and a mountain. The local administration is trying to implement the new plan prepared by the Urban Development Ministry. (Pajhwok)

(13) Olympic Committee ...

"The delegation which visited Kabul this week, decided after meetings with the president (Ashraf Ghani) and us and heads of federations, to hold the committees' elections," Aghbar said.

"The delegation decided to hold the football federation's election based on FIFA laws. Then the National Olympic Committee's election will be held," he said.

Meanwhile, Bawar Hotak, the head of Afghanistan's bodybuilding federation, was appointed as the acting head of the National Olympic Committee.

Ehsanullah Nero was selected as the secretary general of the Olympic committee with a majority of votes.

"I promise to work honestly and provide the ground for federation elections and the Olympic committee's election in collaboration with the Physical Education and Sports Department," Hotak said. (Tolnews)

(14) Huge Weapons ..

deputy governor, Sher Badshah Argoni, said such discoveries could improve security.

"We are proud of our intelligence forces, they work day and night to improve security for the people," he said.

Qadim Afghan, a provincial council member, said collection of illegal weapons would help prevent tribal conflicts and deny militants access to guns. (Pajhwok)

(15) Pakistan Unhappy...

a little sad after hearing this news as it should have been Pakistan who played the first Test match with Afghanistan which would have been a historic occasion for both countries. In reality, this should have been the case and we had arranged for that, but their board took a very political and an unnecessarily aggressive line towards Pakistan which is completely uncalled for."

Earlier, the Afghanistan's Cricket Board (ACB) had called off all ties with Pakistan following a bomb blast in Kabul after the country's intelligence bureau confirmed that the deadly attack was carried out from Pakistan by insurgents.

"Whilst we obviously wish the Afghanistan Cricket Team the best of luck as they embark on a new chapter of their cricket history, it is a rather sad to hear that Afghanistan will not be playing their first ever Test match against Pakistan," Khan added. (Tolnews)

(16) One Killed in ...

investigation into the incident."

In the meantime, the provincial governor Mohammad Asim Asim has confirmed the claim and said that "the incident will be investigated seriously but that it's not yet clear what the motive of the operation was."

However, he did not provide further details about the night raid. (Tolnews)