

(1) Jamiat Agreed...

person should be appointed. The JI assured that all issues would be resolved within a week, but the story turned different," the CEO said. Abdullah said he still believed all issues should be resolved without causing any harm to the people and the government's dignity.

"As it was heard I was accused of 80 percent behind the approval of the resignation, I think I was 100 percent responsible. Besides all other engagements I have right now, I have to be also careful about my teeth," the CEO said, as he referred to Noor remarks of breaking his teeth.

Abdullah said the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) was a historic move which best suited the situation of Afghanistan and the only applicable option.

"Unfortunately, the agreement of NUG was not implemented in the past three years. Had it been implemented, there would have been fewer problems today", he believed.

He said efforts had been made to undermine the executive branch of the government and some individuals even tried to introduce themselves as the best option, but they failed and, "We patiently witnessed their failure."

Abdullah recalled he had been in touch with the president regarding the formation of NUG and introduction of Cabinet ministers and had held consultations with him.

Earlier, Atta Mohammad Noor, the JI secretary, and former governor of Balkh province had said Abdullah lost support of JI.

Last week, President Ashraf Ghani accepted Noor's resignation and introduced Eng. Dawood his replacement as Balkh Governor.

However, Noor he had said he submitted his resignation last year based on some conditions.

On Saturday, Noor told a gathering in Mazar-i-Sharif that his party Jamiati-Islami gave legitimacy to the last presidential election which had otherwise no legitimacy.

Noor accused CEO Abdullah of 80 percent contributing to the making of conspiracies against him. (Pajhwok)

(2) Investors Claim ...

Hashimi, an employee for of the firm said. "These workers will face serious financial problems if the company stops its activities."

This comes after Presidential Palace announced last week that President Ashraf Ghani has accepted the resignation of Atta Mohammad Noor as governor of Balkh.

Following the president's statement, Noor refused to accept President Ghani's decision in this respect. (Tolonews)

(3) China Seeking ...

Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Foreign Minister of Pakistan Khawaja Asif will attend the meeting.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said last week that China will always support Afghanistan and Pakistan to live in friendship and achieve common development.

She said that during the Chinese foreign minister's visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan in June, the three countries agreed to establish the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' trilateral dialogue mechanism, which will serve as a platform to enhance talks and cooperation among the three states.

Hua said the three countries will have in-depth discussions on three topics: mutual political trust and reconciliation, development cooperation and connectivity, and security cooperation and counter-terrorism. (Tolonews)

(4) Army Chief ...

He added: "Only in November, we conducted over 1,273 airstrikes in various regions of the country against the Taliban leadership, their logistic resources, gatherings and training camps."

Afghan Minister of Interior Affairs Wais Ahmad Barmak, who was also summoned by the Wolesi Jirga, said those operating under Daesh label in Afghanistan are not the fighters coming from Iraq and Syria, but it is a group which has been created by the intelligence agencies of regional countries.

"Daesh is not a trend which comes from Iraq or Syria. Findings show that Daesh is one of the forces which has been created by the intelligence services of the regional countries," Barmak told MPs.

Meanwhile, MPs criticized security agencies over insecurity and lack of advancement of Afghan forces on the

battleground.

"You (MPs) send a delegation there. I am ready to pay fine if they had advanced even for one meter from eight kilometers over the past nine months," said MP Esmatullah Shinwari.

"How a huge number of Daesh militants including foreign fighters managed to infiltrate to the northern Afghanistan and from which way they entered the country?" asked Sharifi Balkhabi, an MP.

"You show me one district or village in 34 provinces of Afghanistan where security is restored following the return of (Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin) Hekmatyar," said Abdulhai Akhundzada, an MP.

Kabulov this week said there are more than 10,000 Daesh fighters in Afghanistan.

"Russia was among the first to be sounding the alarms in connection with the emergence of Daesh in Afghanistan.... Daesh has significantly increased its power in the country recently. According to our estimates, the number of militants exceeds 10,000 and continues to grow, particularly due to new fighters arriving from Syria and Iraq," Kabulov said.

Kabulov also alleged that helicopters "without identifying insignia" are transferring fighters and delivering "Western [military] equipment" to the Afghan branch of the terrorist group. (Tolonews)

(5) HPC Convenes ...

from across the country.

"Peace is the only solution to the ongoing uncertainties in the country. We have taken steps for launch of formal talks with the Taliban," Khalili said.

"I also expect the Ulema (religious scholars) on both sides to work for peace and prove to the people that religious scholars can drive this country towards peace and security. It is our own duty to work for peace. We should not expect others to bring peace for us. It is the Afghans who will support us," Khalili stated.

At the same event, head of National Ulema Council Qiyamuddin Kashaf said with the start of inter-Afghan dialogue with the Taliban, other groups will not be able to take advantage from the war in Afghanistan.

"If we initiate Afghan-led negotiations with our Afghan brothers or Muslim brothers or the Taliban, I am sure that the Almighty Allah will help us to bar others' interference in the country's affairs," said head of National Ulema Council Qiyamuddin Kashaf.

"We have a difficult mission as religious scholar. We have to do it honestly to advance the peace efforts," said Qadir Alemi, a religious scholar. "We have to address the causes of continuation of war and violence," said religious scholar Ayaz Niazi, adding that women play a stronger role in the peace process.

Meanwhile, head of HPC secretariat called on religious scholars to explain their demands from government and the Taliban for peace.

"Vast participation of religious scholars in this event indicates that peace is the desire of everyone in the country," he said.

"Religious scholars should provide the High Peace Council with valuable consultation on how to advance peace in the country. Without peace there is no way to step towards the salvation of the country," said Abdul Salam Zaeef, a religious scholar and former official from Taliban regime before 2001. (Tolonews)

(6) Samangan ...

administrative chief, said 10,000 individuals from different provinces of the country were extracting coal from the mine.

According to the officials, coalmine reserves lie in the form of a belt along the Hindu Kush Mountain stretching from Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Samangan, and Bamyan to Sar-i-Pul. (Pajhwok)

(7) Pak, Afghan, ...

Afghanistan has long accused Pakistan of harboring and supporting militant groups that carry out attacks across shared borders, which Islamabad rejects.

Afghan and Pakistani troops have clashed across the boundary between the two states, which Kabul does not recognize as an international border. (ATN)

(8) Air Cargo Route...

second air corridor from Afghanistan to another important city in India and this is based on demand from traders," Rasa said.

In addition, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) said that the establishment of air corridors between Afghanistan and India is key

to boosting exports to India and also to the rest of the world.

"When we look back at our exports in the past six months the total volume of our exports in which the air corridor had a significant role, we have seen a dramatic increase and it totals - in the six months - to about 398\$ million USD," said Atiqullah Nusrat, deputy head of ACCL.

"The government must manage air cargo routes properly between Afghanistan and India so as to increase the country's export level," said Nabi Sadat an economic analyst. This comes amid ongoing talks between government and the private sector to open up other air cargo routes to foreign countries.

But some businessmen have said that government needs to focus on attracting investment for the packaging sector for agricultural products if it wants to increase its exports. (Tolonews)

(9) Islamic State...

a spokesman for the interior ministry, said at least five people had been killed and two wounded.

Islamic State's local affiliate, which first appeared in eastern Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan in early 2015, has become increasingly active and has claimed several recent suicide attacks in Kabul.

It has frequently fought Taliban militants and has been heavily targeted by U.S. air strikes and Special Forces operations in its main stronghold in Nangarhar province.

But there remains considerable uncertainty about how the group operates and the exact nature of its connections with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. (Reuters)

(10) Senior Taliban...

commanders of the group were killed and three others were wounded after Afghan Air Force targeted their hideouts in Alingar district in Laghman province," the statement said.

"Weapons, vehicles and an hideout of Taliban militants and their coordination center were destroyed during the operation," the statement added.

The statement did not provide further details.

Taliban has not commented on the report. (Tolonews)

Pope Francis Calls for Two-State Solution for Israelis and Palestinians

ROME - Pope Francis called for a «negotiated» two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict in his annual Christmas Day address in Rome on Monday.

Tens of thousands of people gathered in the Vatican to listen to the head of the Catholic Church deliver his fifth «Urbi et Orbi» («to the city and the world») message in which he called for peace in Jerusalem.

«We see Jesus in the children of the Middle East who continue to suffer because of growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians," he said. «Let us pray that the will to resume dialogue may prevail between the parties and that a negotiated solution can finally be reached, one that would allow the peaceful coexistence of two states within mutually agreed and internationally recognized borders.»

It was the second time the Argentine pontiff has spoken out publicly about Jerusalem since U.S. President Trump stoked regional tensions by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Francis also called for an end to conflicts in the rest of the Middle East, Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Ukraine, Korea and Venezuela.

Francis warned the assembled faithful that «the winds of war are blowing in our world and an outdated model of development continues to produce human, societal and environmental decline.»

He also raised the plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar and Bangladesh, two countries he visited four weeks ago.

«It is my hope that the international community will not cease to work to ensure that the dignity of the minority groups present in the region is adequately protected," he said.

Popes usually deliver the Urbi et Orbi at Christmas and Easter. The address also offers a pardon for sins, which is valid for anyone who follows the speech in person or remotely. About 50,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square for this year's message, according to the Vatican. (Agencies)

Philippine mall fire: Firefighters find bodies of all 37 workers killed in blaze

DAVAO, Philippines - Philippine firefighters have found all 37 bodies of employees of a U.S.-based company who were trapped in a blaze that gutted a shopping mall in southern Davao city on Saturday.

Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio said that firefighters initially found one body at the NCCC Mall on Sunday, but that extreme heat and thick smoke prevented them from retrieving the bodies of the 36 other employees until Monday.

Reuters news agency reports that six people were rescued at the scene and taken to a local hospital.

Senior Superintendent Wilberto Rico Neil Kwan Tiu, regional director of the Bureau of Fire Protection, relayed the news to the employees' relatives, who broke into tears. They were told the bodies would be identified by authorities then turned over to their families. All the dead were employees at a call center on the top floor of the four-story mall and run by U.S.-based Research Now SSI, which employs about 500 people. Its chief executive officer, Gary Laben, said the company would help with funeral arrangements and create a fund for contributions for the victims' families.

«This terrible tragedy has left us with heavy hearts," Laben said.

Duterte-Carpio and Tiu spoke at a Mass outside the burned mall, where the fire broke out Saturday morning on the third floor, where clothes, appliances and furniture are sold. The fire started after a storm hit Davao and flooded parts of the city.

Except for a grocery store on the ground floor and the call center on the top floor, the shopping areas were still closed to the public when the fire started mid-morning, preventing a bigger tragedy amid the peak Christmas shopping season.

President Rodrigo Duterte went to the scene of the fire and met with relatives of the trapped office employees late Saturday. He served as Davao mayor for many years before being elected to the presidency last year. (CBC NEWS)

Attack Fears Prompted UAE-Tunisia Female Passenger Row

LONDON - A row between Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates was triggered by fears of terrorist attacks, Tunisia says.

Since Friday, Tunisian women have reported being banned from Emirates flights to the UAE.

In response, Tunisia suspended Emirates airlines flights from landing in Tunis.

A Tunisian official said UAE authorities had received «serious security information about the possibility of a terrorist attack» by female Tunisian passport holders.

A spokeswoman for the Tunisian presidency, Saida Garrach, said that UAE carrier Emirates had received «clear instructions» to deny Tunisian women access to its planes.

She said that the information indicated that, with jihadists returning from Syria and Iraq, there was «a possibility of a terrorist attack involving either Tunisian women or women carrying a Tunisian passport».

She added that while Tunisia understood the concerns of the UAE, it could not «accept the way Tunisian women have been treated».

President Beji Caid Essebsi also said that the rights of Tunisian women could not be violated «whatever the justification».

The UAE had said on Sunday that «security information necessitated taking specific procedures» without mentioning a possible terrorist attack. But female travellers from Tunisia said they had been given no reason for not being allowed to board Emirates Airline flights to the UAE.

The Tunisian government said their officials had to intervene on a number of occasions to help female passengers stranded in its capital Tunis and in Abu Dhabi.

Amid growing anger, Tunisia suspended Emirates airlines flights to Tunis.

Tunisia's transport ministry said the ban would remain in force until an «appropriate solution» had been found. (BBC)

Alexei Navalny Barred from Competing

MOSCOW - Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been

formally barred from competing in next year's presidential election.

The Central Electoral Commission has said Mr Navalny was ineligible because of a corruption conviction which he says is politically motivated.

He has urged his supporters to boycott the March vote.

Mr Navalny, 41, was widely regarded as the only candidate with a chance of challenging President Vladimir Putin.

«We're declaring a strike by voters. The procedure that we're invited to take part in is not an election," Mr Navalny said after the decision, adding that he would lead protests across the country.

Known for his anti-corruption campaign and protests against Mr Putin, Mr Navalny was given a five-year suspended sentence in a retrial earlier this year on embezzlement charges.

Reacting to the widely expected decision, Mr Navalny said the case was intended to block him from «speaking the truth» about the situation in Russia, and that barring him from running would deny millions of Russians their vote.

«Only Putin and the candidates that he personally chose, ones who don't pose the slightest threat to him, are taking part [in the vote]," he added. He said he would launch an appeal in Russia's Constitutional Court.

Mr Navalny said on Sunday he had gathered the 500 signatures needed to secure his candidacy, hoping that this would pressure the election commission into allowing him to run.

Mr Navalny was first sentenced in 2013 accused of embezzling timber worth 16m roubles (500,000\$ 330,000£) from the Kirovles state timber company while working as an adviser to Kirov's governor.

The verdict was quashed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which said he was not given a fair hearing. A retrial earlier this year gave him the exact same sentence.

Mr Putin is seeking a fourth term that would see him become the longest-serving Russian leader since Joseph Stalin. He still retains a massive approval rating and is almost certain to ease to victory in the election. (BBC)

Local Firm Rejects 'Toxic Substances' In Nestle Products

kabul - Officials of Habib Gulzar Non-Alcoholic Beverages Ltd. on Monday rejected the rumors that say the quality of the Nestle dairy products is low and there are toxic substances in the products.

The Habib Gulzar company imports Nestle products to the country.

"We reject these accusations and we want government to stop such issues against the Nestle products," Zabihullah, operation manager of Habib Gulzar company, said.

Social media users have been posting about the toxic substances in Nestle milk and cream during recent weeks. The users ask their friends not to use the Nestle products.

In addition to this, the Interior Ministry in an official letter sent to a number of government departments alarmed its departments for the existence of toxic materials in Nestle dairy products.

The Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish said on Monday that the letter was sent for a precaution.

"We have received the information (about the Nestle products) therefore we informed our departments about it," Danish said.

Meanwhile, deputy head of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Khan Jan Alokozay, said such 'negative propaganda' by government will affect investment in the country.

"Nestle products are known for their quality in the world. The products have no problem and no one else can produce the products using the Nestle's name," Alokozay said.

Habib Gulzar company meanwhile said they are planning to invest 30\$ million USD in the country to establish the Afghanistan branch of Nestle products.

He said they will not implement their plan if the propaganda is not stopped.

"We are jointly investing with Nestle in Afghanistan. We as a main partner of Nestle want to work in Afghanistan and if such accusations are not stopped, the investment may stop," Zabihullah said. According to Gulzar company statistics, Afghanistan imports almost 40 types of Nestle