

(1) Donors Agree...

in the electoral process, and will allow the organization of elections to move from planning to implementation," said Scott Smith, head of UNAMA's political section, noting that UNAMA has pledged the international community's support as a partner throughout Afghanistan's electoral preparations. Under Resolution 2344 (2017), the Security Council requested UNAMA to support Afghan authorities in the organization of elections, and to strengthen the integrity, sustainability and inclusiveness of the electoral process.

UNAMA remained committed to working with Afghan institutions as they implement reforms to enhance transparency and build trust in Afghanistan's democratic processes. Stressing recent progress by the IEC in reaching out to political actors, Smith called for political actors to cooperate with the electoral management bodies.

"All Afghans have a stake in successful elections, no matter who wins," he said. "The IEC has demonstrated that it can respond to constructive criticism but it also needs the support of stakeholders."

The second Project Board meeting followed the first meeting on 4 October 2017, where UNAMA, along with the IEC and the ECC, signed a project document providing the legal and financial framework allowing the UN and donors to support and strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions and operations. (Pajhwok)

(2) MPs Insist on...

population registration in which the inclusion of the nationality and ethnicity information was not included. The law was then criticized by a number of people and the president issued a legislative decree stating nationality and ethnicity information should be included.

The decree then was rejected by parliament but was approved by the senate.

To resolve the disagreements in this regard, a joint committee was formed by parliament and the senate to decide on the issue. The committee approved the inclusion of nationality and ethnicity in the new e-NIC.

On Saturday, however, a number of MPs said they are against the inclusion of the nationality and ethnicity information in the e-NIC.

They said four members of the committee were absent when the decision was made and that it contravened article 100 of the constitution.

Two weeks ago 12 members of the joint committee approved the president's legislative decree.

"It looks like the previous law had all the standards that the identity cards in other countries have. But the president instead of approving that law and instead of understanding the legal problems has amended the law without approval of both houses (parliament and senate)," MP Fawzia Kofi said.

"There are dozens of issues that you should include in the agenda. Otherwise, disagreements will rise up in a way that handling it will be a problem for you," MP Abdul Wali Niazi said. However, some other MPs said the population registration law has been approved and there is no need to discuss it.

They said the new e-NIC should be distributed as soon as possible.

"This law has completed all its legal and principle steps," MP Abdul Hai Akhundzada said.

"Let's stay united. If there are problems in these e-NIC, please write my name as Habib Afghan Hazara," MP Habib Afghan said.

Mirdad Nejrabi, Najia Aimaq, Abdul Wadood Paiman and Abdul Qayyum Sajjadi are members of the joint committee who were absent from the meeting of the committee where they decided on the fate of the new e-NIC. They then were accused of treason by the parliament speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim over being absent at the meeting.

"You should have informed us that the joint committee members has a meeting in a specified day. I as a member of the committee had not received any message or letter in this regard," MP Abdul Qayyum Sajjadi and a member of the committee said.

"50 signatures have been collected in regard to the joint commission and e-NIC and you should include it in the agenda," MP Zahir Sadaat said.

"Right now, there are not enough MPs present and you should explain what is your letter about," Ibrahim said. Meanwhile ousted Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor said the e-NIC should be issued based on the law that has been approved by Ghani. "The issuance of e-NIC should start

within a month based on parliament's decision and president's approval without any changes," Noor said. (Tolonews)

(3) Afghan Goods...

improve the quality of their products in terms of packaging and other standards.

According to local investors, Afghanistan's exports have increased 10 times following the opening of the air corridor between Kabul and New Delhi. The businessmen said Afghanistan's fresh and dried fruits are being sold on Indian markets for 30 percent more than what they are for in Afghanistan. "This corridor has been very critical for us to increase our exports. Now, we can even send fresh vegetables and fruit in less than two hours to India and from there to the world's markets. This year, for the first time, we were able to export Afghanistan's okra to the Italian markets," said Mohammad Salim, responsible for the process and packaging of the new Kinda fruit company.

Government officials said the relevant institutions continue their efforts to open air corridors with Kazakhstan and some Gulf countries - in addition to the current air corridor with India. "As per the demand of the investors, we continue our efforts to take action sooner for opening air corridors with other cities in India, the United Arab Emirates and with Almaty city in Kazakhstan," said Samir Rasa, head of the media office of the senior adviser for finance and banking to President Ashraf Ghani.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries said the country's exports have increased to more than 200,000 tons this year following the opening of the air corridor with India.

"The air corridor to India this year has dramatically increased our exports and we are trying to expand our business to the world," said Atiqullah Nusrat, CEO of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

The exports via the air corridor is currently funded by government. (Tolonews)

(4) Finance Minister...

is one of the reasons for the decrease in the national budget."

Meanwhile, some legislators called on government to investigate problems in the national budget and to assess ghost projects in previous fiscal budgets.

"We have heard about ghost police, but we are hearing about ghost projects now. This issue must be investigated by government," said Ramadan Bashardost, an MP from Kabul.

According to the Finance Ministry, the next fiscal year's budget is 357.691 billion AFs of which 267.769 billion AFs is the ordinary budget while 90.614 billion AFs is the development budget.

Figures by the ministry show that more than half of the national budget is funded by the international community's assistance to Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(5) Study Finds...

10 percent of water in 22 districts of Kabul is contaminated with nitrate substances, which according to the study, it can cause kidney damage and other ailments.

The research carried out by Fikr Organization of Psychosocial Development says that the water in first, second, seventh, 16th and 18th districts of Kabul is not fit for consumption. Therefore, it suggests that water in these districts must be boiled or processed before being used.

The report also found that the water in the third, sixth, ninth, 13th, 14th, 21st and 22nd districts of Kabul is fine for human consumption.

But the report suggests water in the eighth, 11th and 17th districts should also be treated before use.

According to the study, one third of the water in the fourth, fifth, 10th, 12th, 15th, 19th and 20th districts is contaminated with microbes and need to be boiled before drinking. Meanwhile, the study indicates that low-quality and unprocessed material used to heat houses are the main reason for the heavy air pollution in the city.

"People have less tolerance and acceptance when they face an argument. This would have different cultural and historic dimensions, but we cannot ignore the influence of environmental pollution on this matter," said Naser Seddiqi, a member of the watchdog organization at an event on Saturday. At the same event, Nisar Ahmad Harris, head of natural resources and environment of the Meshrano Jirga, the Upper House of Parliament, said the import of low-quality fuel is also one of the main reasons for air pollution. "The lowest quality and the worst fuel

is imported to Afghanistan. Our investors affect themselves and the people by importing such fuel," he said. Some Kabul residents said they are highly concerned about the air pollution and contaminated water in the city. "The air pollution is at the level which creates breathing problems when we walk out of our home," said Zabiullah, a resident of Kabul.

"We usually avoid walking out of home when we see the polluted air, particularly in the evenings," said Noor Ahmad, a resident of Kabul.

Kabul Municipality meanwhile responded to the complaints from relevant institutions and residents of the city.

"We have at least 3,200 kilometers of roads in the city, of which 52 percent is paved and 48 percent is dirt or requires reconstruction," said Jalil Sultani, spokesman for the municipality. Figures by Central Statistics Organization show that the population increase has also added to the problem. (Tolonews)

(6) Afghan Former ...

targeted by a series of Islamic State of Khurasan (ISKP) or Daesh attacks. The latest one which was carried out in Shiite dominated neighborhood of Kabul city claimed the lives of at least 50 people and injured more than 80 others. Gulbudin Hekmatyar, who struggled to fight against the government of Afghanistan and international forces in Afghanistan after 2001 for several years, once had declared allegiance to the Islamic State terror group before his reconciliation with the government.

Releasing the longtime detained Hezb-e-Islami militants and commanders and excluding them from prosecution is said to be a key terms of the peace deal with NUG.

Reportedly, dozens of Hezb-e-Islami prisoners are set to be released from the custody of Afghan government in the coming days.

Hezb-e-Islami Gulbudin Hekmatyar (HIG) has yet to make any reactions or comments regarding these recently remarks of Mr. Saleh. (ATN)

(7) Hekmatyar Assures...

The HIA would then back Taliban's legitimate demands, including the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan.

"If peace talks begin, we will back changes in current system and implementation of Shariah," he promised. But the Taliban should quit the conflict and come to the negotiating table, he continued.

He also urged the government to change its policy and bring Taliban to the negotiating table. Most of the people, who had been oppressed and their houses and land grabbed, had been forced to pick up guns. (Pajhwok)

(8) Ghazni Gets 10mw...

has provided 100 million afghanis for the construction of electricity supply facilities in Ghazni City and with this project all residents of Ghazni City would benefit from the utility.

Currently, about 27 percent residents of Ghazni City were being provided with electricity. One kilowatt is accounted for 30 afghanis while the private sector purchased one kilowatt against 59 afghanis.

Jan Mohammad, head of the Da Afghanistan Breshana Shirkat (DABS) for Ghazni, said earlier the residents of Ghazni used diesel for generating power which was not successful and could not facilitate all the people.

He promised the electricity rates in Ghazni would be the same as Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(9) Over 3 Million...

achieved by the students. And if the children have not reached the expected results, we will find the reason and we also will find solutions," MoE acting minister Mohammad Ibrahim Shinwari said. "Our attention will be on the 3.5 million children. How we can get them back to school and this means we have to look at different modalities. Such as the modality of doing community schools in areas where there are no formal schools, and also working with the government on a policy for girls education, and for teachers' training especially female teachers. That is something which is very critical for UNICEF," UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan, Adele Khodr said.

Currently around 1,200 schools are closed due to insecurity around the country. According to the education ministry, out of those 3.5 million children that have been deprived of education, 75 percent are girls. (Tolonews)

(10) Ousted Afghan...

Ghani's office announced two weeks ago that the president had accepted

Noor's resignation and named a replacement. But the ousted governor swiftly rejected the move, saying he had submitted his resignation months back and linked it to acceptance of a list of demands.

While chairing Saturday's meeting of government officials at the governor's office in Mazar-i-Sharif, the provincial capital, the powerful politician from the ethnic Tajik minority community again defended his position.

Noor insisted that nominating his successor and appointment to certain provincial posts in Balkh were among his demands.

He went on to assert he would not quit until his Jamiat-i-Islami party and its allies negotiate a resolution with the Ghani camp in the coalition government.

"And if an agreement is not reached I will remain as governor of Balkh for as long as the National Unity Government is in power," Noor told the meeting. His political party has also urged the president to review his decision and vowed to use "all options" in support of Noor.

The ousted governor claimed he has transferred "some authority" to his deputy to ensure smooth functioning of the provincial government but vowed "I will come every day" to the United States brokered a political deal between Ghani and his election rival Abdullah Abdullah after the 2014 presidential election ended in a deadlock that had brought Afghanistan to the brink of ethnic-driven chaos. The deal made ethnic Pashtun Ghani president and created a new post, similar to prime minister, for Abdullah, a central leader of Noor's party, which represents mostly Afghan Tajiks.

But the political standoff has apparently refueled the ethnic-based divisions, worrying Afghanistan's Western partners.

Most secure Afghan province Balkh has been the most secure of all 34 Afghan provinces under his leadership, claimed Noor, while defending his long tenure.

Using the Arabic acronym for Islamic State, he tried to give credence to allegations officials in Ghani's camp have links to the terrorist group.

"They want to bring Daesh here. I will never allow Daesh to come here, I have suppressed Daesh and will continue to suppress them," Noor said in a speech Afghan television stations broadcast live.

The presidential office has repeatedly and vehemently denied the allegations as politically motivated.

The Afghan parliament has also been divided over the governor's dismissal, with some fearing the deepening political strife is helping insurgents and IS terrorists to further their extremist agendas in Afghanistan.

In a recent speech, Noor also accused Abdullah of plotting his removal and condemned him as a "snake up our own sleeve", charges the Afghan chief executive has rejected.

Analysts see the deepening crisis, stemming from traditional tensions between Tajiks and majority Pashtuns, as detrimental to political and security gains Afghanistan has achieved with the support of international community over the past 16 years.

The political standoff is also undermining efforts to organize parliamentary elections, officially scheduled for next year, and the 2019 presidential poll, amid criticism the Afghan government has not taken enough steps to introduce key electoral reforms to ensure there is no repeat of the crisis of the 2014 presidential election.

Noor supported Abdullah during the presidential election campaign but has since criticized him for not pressing Ghani to deliver on his commitments under the U.S.-brokered deal and give Jamiat-i-Islami its due share in the coalition government. Other party officials have also made similar complaints against Abdullah.

On Thursday, an IS suicide bomber struck a big gathering of members of the Afghan Shi'ite Muslim community in Kabul, killing more than 41 people and wounding around 100 more.

This was the seventh suicide attack IS carried out in the city in just over two months, underscoring growing strength of the terrorist group in the Afghan capital. (VoA)

(11) MPs to Grill...

candidates in areas where government has no any mandate."

Safi asked the administrative board of the lower house to summon the IEC officials to brief legislators in this regard.

Wagma Safi, a public representative from eastern Kunar, also criticized the IEC for selecting improper polling stations in the province because many of the stations considered were in insecure areas.

He asked for revision of polling cen-

ters in the province, saying: "The government should not be allowed to maneuver the future elections in its own benefit."

Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, the Wolesi Jirga speaker, said: "Similarly such polling stations are specified in insecure areas of northern Kunduz province as well."

He dubbed the act by IEC as questionable, saying the polling places should have been specified in coordination with people.

Ibrahim said the house would summon IEC officials in next sessions to clarify the matter to lawmakers. (Pajhwok)

(12) US Plans...

transport. Orbital ATK advertises the AC-208 Eliminator as a mini-gunship equipped with 70mm (2.75in) guided rockets and Lockheed Martin AGM-114 Hellfire missiles. The aircraft also comes with sensors, target designers, data links and self-protection systems.

The company would deliver the seven aircraft for inspection and approval to the 645th Aeronautical Systems Group, the Air Force notice says. (Tolonews)

(13) Imports from...

to increased imports via Hairatan port from Central Asia.

Customs Director Abdul Rahman Rasikh told Pajhwok Afghan News most of Afghanistan's customs revenue came from taxes on imported business goods. He called Hairatan port one of the most essential trade hubs.

According to him, imports through the port were more than exports. He said during the current year, the Balkh port collected revenue of 12 billion afghanis, recording a 16 percent increase over last year.

Rasikh called increased imports through the Hairatan port a key factor behind enhanced revenue levels. He added the import of steel, grains, timber, flour and fuel had recently increased.

Falling imports through the Torkham port was another reason behind surging imports through Hairatan, the director explained.

Frequent border closures by Pakistan over the past two years and transit problems between the neighbours had resulted in the decrease of imports through the Torkham crossing point, he added.

Traders in Balkh also say most of business goods, which earlier used to be imported through Torkham, are now coming from Central Asia and entering the country through the Hairatan port.

One trader named Mohammad Nasim confirmed to Pajhwok Afghan News the level of imports through Hairatan had gone up during current year.

One of the reasons behind increased imports through Hairatan was the decline in imports via Torkham, he said. Imports through Torkham into Afghanistan had slumped by 80 percent this year.

On the other hand, some businessmen linked the rising imports through Hairatan to the stable security environment in Mazar-i-Sharif.

A trader, Mohammad Nabi, said the security situation in Mazar-i-Sharif and on the Kabul-Mazar Highway had positively impacted trade via Hairatan.

He said while considering the relatively good security situation, businessmen were willing to import and export goods through Hairatan. "As a result, the revenues of the Customs Department has jumped this year."

However, Rasikh said exports through Hairatan were almost zero.

With the construction of a rail link between Afghanistan and China, Afghanistan's exports would see a boost, but it didn't happen, he added.

According to him, the prevailing transit issues between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan have left negative effects on exports through Hairatan. He revealed exports worth two million af had taken place this year.

Afghanistan is connected to Central Asia through Hairatan, Aqina and Sher Khan ports.

Trade through Hairatan has considerably increased and improved over the past few years.

The important aspects of the port include the railroad extension from China and the \$400 million investment in the petroleum and gas sectors. (Pajhwok)

(14) 5 Khost Policemen...

officials had links with robbers. He complained the police headquarters had yet to take any serious action.

A resident of Khost City, Qais, said law should be enforced in order to prevent robberies and curb the movement of illegal gunmen. (Pajhwok)