

(1) Member States ...

Nawaz Sharif which was attended by the ministers from TAPI member states.

During the course of meeting, it was decided that a consortium leader would soon be finalised for the project's immediate commencement.

Terming the project "very important for all countries of the region", Sharif said Pakistan was keen to expedite the deal. "Pakistan would be happy to play a positive role in this regard," Sharif remarked.

Sharif told the meeting Islamabad was facing a shortage of gas, and this project would help the country in meeting the deficit. He further added, "We all should take this opportunity seriously so that we can fulfill our obligation to our people." It was stressed that all stakeholders should take necessary steps to start the project at the earliest as the cost would rise with the passage of time. The visiting ministers of the member countries shared similar views and called the project of vital importance for all the states involved in the project.

Oil ministers of the four countries had met at the last steering committee meeting in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) on November 20, 2014 and set themselves a three-month deadline to resolve all pending issues so that work on the ambitious project can start by 2015. (Pajhwok)

(2) Nearly 700...

of Interior (MoI), TOLONews reports and the desk monitoring other media outlets," said TOLONews researcher Abbas Hussaini.

During the period, the insurgents launched different types of attacks 36 times with nine suicide bombings. However, most of the casualties occurred to ANSF resulted from roadside mines.

The report detailed that 800 people were injured in a month with most of them civilians.

"Such studies are helpful to the security institutions," a University Professor Mohammad Amin Haidari said. "This shows the people want their safety to be assured and the security agencies should take such reports seriously."

According to the report, southern Kandahar province, once the Taliban's center during their regime, suffered most of these insecurity incidents while Panjshir, Daikundi and Bamyan provinces were recorded with zero insecurity incidents.

In addition, the report indicated that 85 militants joined the peace process in eight events during the last month. (Tolonews)

(3) Obama Admin....

militant groups within and around the boundaries of Afghanistan has intensified forcing the White House to rethink the complete drawdown of U.S. troops. If the decision of the U.S. is to keep more troops back, the Afghan forces would be backed by their foreign counterparts in countering terrorism.

"Threat still exists in Afghanistan," MoI spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said. "We have always supported the support of our international partners, particularly the United States of America."

If the White House agrees on the deployment of troops post-2015, it is said that the U.S. will keep the Kandahar military base open where they will continue training ANSF.

On the other hand, military expert Atiqullah Amarkhail emphasizes the need of properly equipping the ANSF and not putting much stress on foreign presence in the country.

"The Afghan government needs to concentrate on equipping the ANSF instead of pushing for the presence of U.S. troops," Amarkhail said.

This comes at a time where previously U.S. President Barack Obama announced that from the total number of 9,800 troops in Afghanistan only half would remain in Afghanistan by the end of 2016 and that too for providing security to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had also showed willingness of U.S. troop presence in the country after 2015. (Tolonews)

(4) Uruzgan PC...

end help end the impasse as soon as possible. They threatened otherwise the civil society activists and media representatives would keep continue their protests.

A representative in lower house Ubaidullah Barakzai rejected the accusations saying that provincial council election did not come within his jurisdiction.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News that further delay in electing provincial council administrative board for senate would leave negative impacts on government's performance.

Provincial police chief Matiullah Khan also rejected accusations saying that he had nothing to do with the issue.

A provincial council member Abdul Karim Khadimzai said the only problem was differences between the two candidates for upper house or Meshranho Jirga.

Acting governor Amanullah Taimori expressed concern over delay in provincial council decision and said that no one could prevent provincial council members if they demonstrated seriousness to solve the problem. (Pajhwok)

(5) No Formal...

President Ashraf Ghani order's to establish a special electoral reform commission. "So far, no formal work has been started to bring electoral reforms," Ashna said. "Because no decree has been issued as per the political agreement."

Both the teams (Ghani and Abdullah) have done work separately in this regard, he said, adding they have finalized their plan.

"Basic works will be started in the coming days and that based on the political agreement," he said, noting that Ghani has asked the second vice president to collect the plans from both the teams.

The European Union had earlier warned that holding of the coming parliamentary elections with the same electoral system would likely create crises in the country.

Also, the election advocacy groups criticize the government for delaying the process, calling for immediate establishment of the special commission as agreed by both the NUG leaders.

"We are missing the opportunities and we have had no improvement so far in this regard," said Yousuf Rashid, the executive head of Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA).

He urged on a non-political trend of reforms in the election law and the structure of electoral bodies and that in consultation with the civil society and election monitoring groups.

Based on the agreement between Ghani and Abdullah, Ghani after taking oath of his office would establish a special commission to bring reforms in the election system, something according to the analysts not deemed so far.

The election experts warn if the parliamentary elections are held with the same system, the country will face new and dangerous crises than the last time during the presidential election. (Tolonews)

(6) Islamabad Wants...

in a steering committee meeting of a trans-Afghanistan multilateral energy project called TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) pipeline.

Saba had to represent Afghanistan in the 20th meeting of the kind on the \$10 billion nearly 1,800-km-long proposed pipeline project that aims to export up to 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year and integrate economies of the four partnering nations.

A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan said that later in the day, Dr. Daud Shah Saba, minister for Mines and Petroleum, of Afghanistan called on Sartaj Aziz, the Adviser to the prime minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs. Dr. Saba is visiting Pakistan as the head of the Afghan delegation to the Steering Committee Meeting of the TAPI gas pipeline project in Islamabad.

The Adviser noted that the TAPI Gas pipeline project was important for economic benefits to the respective countries. He acknowledged the progress made so far towards taking the project to the implementation stage. Dr. Sabab briefed Aziz on Afghan government's policy to attract foreign investment in the mineral exploration sector. Aziz offered Pakistan's cooperation in joint geographical survey, exploration of natural resources, and training facilities to the Afghan professionals.

Both sides agreed on the need to establish a joint working group for promoting cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the field of mining and geology. (Pajhwok)

(7) China to Help ...

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a daily news briefing that China agreed to support relevant initiatives for projects including the Kunar hydropower plant and strengthening road and rail connections between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The planned 1,500 megawatt dam on the Kunar River was previously supported only by Pakistan, which could buy some of the electricity it generates. In 2013, Pakistan said it would also

build a motorway connecting the Pakistani city of Peshawar to Kabul, as well as a railway line from Chaman to southeastern Afghan city of Kandahar.

China's involvement could speed up work on these projects. Siraj said the amount of Chinese financing for the dam and other projects would be decided in later trilateral meetings.

At the meeting, the diplomats also discussed ways to bring Taliban militants to the negotiating table, following a Chinese proposal late last year for a "peace and reconciliation" forum.

"The three sides resolved to make concerted efforts in maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan," Pakistan said in a statement.

China has growing interests in Afghanistan, which offers a possible route to the sea from China's landlocked west.

China wants the country to be stable, both to help it exploit mineral resources and to weaken militants it says operate in the far western Chinese region of Xinjiang, which borders both Afghanistan and Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(8) Govt. Intends ...

the available water resources. Massoud expressed these views at a maiden meeting of the Supreme Council for Water Affairs Management since the unity government's formation in Kabul.

The council, comprising officials from eight government departments, has an overall coordinating and supervising role for the ministries and agencies dealing with water development and has a decision-making power with regard to national plans and policies for the water sector.

The special representative said though Afghanistan had received huge financial aid from the international community during the past 13 years, nothing special had been done to manage the country's water resources or build a big hydropower dam.

Massoud said Afghanistan's waters had a special importance and the issue needed to be considered a national one. He said Afghanistan had previously been lacking a strong political will to manage and store the country's water resources and to resolve the water issue in coordination with the Supreme Council for Water Affairs Management.

He said currently Afghanistan's 97 percent water was not used inside the country and flowed into neighbouring countries. Only the remaining three percent of water was properly used in Afghanistan, he said. (Pajhwok)

(9) US Confirms ...

Monday, "US forces in Afghanistan conducted a precision strike in Helmand province, resulting in the death of eight individuals, including Abdul Rauf Khadim, a former Taliban commander" who is believed to have loyalties to ISIL, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

On the presence of ISIL in Afghanistan, Kirby said the group "are looking very sharply to see if they're expanding in other areas outside Iraq and Syria, and we know they have those designs," but described their activities in Afghanistan as "nascent at best." The Pentagon's assessment, he noted, is that "Khadim" decided to swear allegiance to the ISIL probably no more than a couple weeks ago. And he didn't have a whole lot of depth to any network resources or manpower when he did it." And while Khadim "is proof" that repatriated detainees can go back to the battlefield, Kirby said, the Pentagon still believes, as does the US president, that Guantanamo "should be closed." He further asserted that the confirmed deaths of the militants are "both reminders that we're going to continue to use all the tools at our disposal, financial, diplomatic, certainly military, to dismantle Al-Shabaab and other groups, networks that threaten US interests as well as the interests of our allies and partner nations." (KUNA)

(10) Pai Appointed as ...

has gained extensive experience in international work, concerning the situation in Afghanistan and Africa in particular. She has worked, for example, as Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Finland in Kabul. She has extensive experience in conflict affected areas and was instrumental in starting Finland's twinning cooperation with Afghanistan relating to UNSC resolution 1325. (Pajhwok)

(11) Afghanistan, ...

recently appointed as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, thanked Swedish government for their continued support to Afghanistan, particularly in safeguarding human rights,

empowering judicial institutions and training Afghan security forces.

He said Sweden could play an instrumental role in extraction of mines and investments in mining sector.

Both leaders agreed that terrorism is a big challenge and it is important to join hands to facilitate peace in Afghanistan and the region. (Agencies)

(12) Afghanistan Could...

take a bad turn," he said.

With a small U.S.-led force due to withdraw in two years, Grenier said he fears that the United States and other Western governments will fail to funnel financial aid to Kabul after their soldiers leave and abandon the Afghan government. (Pajhwok)

(13) President Ghani...

relations with India broadly speaking. "I believe that the president would have a trip to India and he will not contradict all the works of the former president, we need the equipment and should get it from anywhere."

Some analysts have said the rescinding of the arms deal request is part of a broader effort by the national unity government to improve Kabul's ties with Islamabad, which have been strained for years.

"Without considering the political balance while forging relations with regional countries and the world, particularly India, as an ally and strategic partner and one of the major donors to Afghanistan and funding source of big projects, this could lead Afghanistan to crisis and deadlock," military analyst Jawed Kohistani said.

Afghanistan and India have enjoyed increasing close relations in spheres such as the economy, trade and military cooperation. India is one of the top five donor countries to Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(14) NDMA ...

disasters.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Pakistani NDMA Chairman, Major General Asghar Nawaz extended warm welcome to the Afghan participants on their arrival in Pakistan and hoped that the training course would help to establish a common understanding among disaster and development practitioners of ANDMA to improve collaboration among various disciplines and integrate risk reduction consideration in development plans and decision.

He assured ANDMA of full support for enhancing their capacities for timely response toward disasters.

He also appreciated JICA for its collaboration to organize this training course that would help the participants to understand the importance of DM.

The inaugural ceremony of training course was also attended by Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Hiroshi Inomata, Deputy Director of South Asia Division 2 JICA, Member DRR, NDMA Ahmed Kamal and other officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan and Kazakhstan being co-leads developed an implementation plan for CBM on Disaster Management to serve as a platform for developing and implementing practical cooperation through activities and programs in the field of disaster management. (APP)

(15) Pakistan May...

former Al Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden to the US, Al Jazeera reports. In an interview on Al Jazeera's Head to Head show, the former ISI chief cast doubts over the intelligence agency's official line that it was unaware of the Al Qaeda chief's whereabouts prior to his killing.

Durrani was of the view that Osama Bin Laden's position was revealed to the Americans in exchange for an agreement on "how to bring the Afghan problem to an end".

Responding to a question whether the Abbottabad compound, raided by the US in May 2011, was an ISI safehouse or not, the former ISI chief said: "If ISI was doing that, then I would say they were doing a good job. And if they revealed his location, they again probably did what was required to be done."

Lt Gen (r) Durrani added that the comments were only his opinion and that he did "not know what had happened".

Osama bin Laden was killed in a firefight with US forces in Pakistan's garrison city of Abbottabad on May 1 2011, ending a nearly 10-year worldwide hunt for the then chief of the Al Qaeda militant organisation.

Contrary to reports, Pakistan officials deny that the ISI protected Osama bin Laden or that it had played any role in the May 2011 raid in Abbottabad. (Pajhwok)

(16) Experts Urge...

ties between Kabul and Islamabad have faced major ups and downs over the past decade. Leaders in Afghanistan have developed a deep-seeded distrust for their counterparts across the border, largely based on the duplicity of the Pakistani government in condemning terrorists and supporting peace in Afghanistan with words, but then providing training and support for Taliban militants seeking to overthrow the Kabul government. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, officials have raised issue with Afghanistan's growing ties with India.

Thus, analysts have suggested the Afghan government look to trade and transit economic policy to gain leverage over Pakistan. Specifically, they have argued the following steps should be taken:

1. Afghanistan must focus imports to the Iranian Chabahar Port rather than Pakistan's Karachi port
2. Exercise transit privileges in energy and commerce sectors
3. Better manage the flow of water from Afghanistan to Pakistan
4. Impose tariffs on Pakistani goods
5. Shift the import zones from the eastern and southern parts of the country to the north and west

"Pakistan is a geographical reality and our neighbor, therefore, we can't change this geography, so how can we reach desired ties with it?" asked Faramarz Tamanna, the Chairman of the Center of Strategic Studies Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "In the initial phase, we need to enter from a political stage to an economic stage and seek the satisfaction of Pakistan on bilateral and multilateral agreements in order to convince them to support us in fighting terrorism, extremism and restoring peace."

Others have advised that only the level of Taliban violence during the summer fighting season will be able to accurately show just how much Pakistan has bought into the national unity government's attempts to improve ties and urge Islamabad's support. (Tolonews)

(17) ACA Claims ...

Army claims to be fighting terrorists in the cyber for Afghanistan.

They have a slogan on their social media page "Live For Afghanistan or Leave Afghanistan!"

They are claiming to have been united against the enemies of Afghanistan.

A slogan on their social media page reads "We Never forgive never forget never spare. we are Afghan Cyber Army (ACA) standing united against enemies...."

Stars and Stripes also said that they interviewed Afghan Cyber Army who told Stars and Stripes that they are working out of Afghanistan. (KP)

(18) Taliban Militants...

the presence of Daesh fighters grew in several parts of the country.

"Taliban are now operating under the name of Daesh by raising their flags," Jawzjani said. "The number of these militants has reached 600 causing insecurity in a number of districts."

The rumors about the sightings of the newly-emerged militants began from southern Helmand and Nimruz provinces where some local officials and army commanders confirmed the news. (Tolonews)

(19) Gen. Hamid ...

due to insubordination, had rejoined hands with Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, but Mullah Abdul Qayum Zakir had parted ways with them.

He said Mullah Zakir had been banned from meeting his commanders and comrades.

He said previously Taliban insurgents would attack Afghan posts from across the border after crossing through Pakistani posts and would flee back to Pakistan after attacking Afghan forces and emplacing bombs. He said it seemed recent bloody terrorist attacks in Pakistan had forced the country to become sincere in cooperation with Afghanistan in the anti-terror fight.

However, he said they needed to wait until to know if Pakistan was really sincere in cooperation. (Pajhwok)

(20) Husband Cuts....

a part of your body so that you won't be able to show it to the doctors or police and also, you won't be able to marry again" Doctor Fariba Baha, a doctor in the hospital said that Rahima was brought to the hospital in critical condition but now she is feeling better. Abdul Qadir Rahim from the Human Rights Commission in Herat province while condemning the action asked government for punishment for the culprit.

Security officials are searching the culprit in suspected areas, according to Herat's Police Headquarters. (KP)

(21) Over 500 KG of...

watching the tournament. Hasib Sediqi, spokesman for NDS-Afghanistan's intelligence agency, said that the attack was plotted by Qari Omari and Mullah Rahimullah who had received instructions from Abdullah Billal, the Haqqani Network named governor for Paktika Province. (KP)

(22) Small Pharma ...

lion U.S. dollar capital.

Yaqub said that now his firm is supplying different kinds of ordinary medicines labeled "Made in Afghanistan" to the local markets.

"We started with just eight kinds of medicines but now we have 17 brands of locally-produced medicines that we supply to the local drugstores," Yaqub said.

Yaqub said that he hopes the Afghan people would buy locally-made medicines to make small businesses like his to succeed. He said the products that they make can compare with foreign-branded ones in efficacy and quality but are cheaper.

Although 13 years after its fall from power, the threat of the outlawed Taliban is still present in Afghanistan and suicide bomb attacks still continue in different parts of the country. Yet despite these threats, there has been a perceptible improvement in the business climate in the country, especially with the installation of the new unity government headed by President Asraf Ghani.

According to Yaqub, the Afghan government should support small entrepreneurs like him through grants and low-interest loans so that the country would become less dependent on imports. It is also important for the government to ensure peace and stability in the country for the business community to prosper, Yaqub said. (Xinhua)

(23) 73 Insurgents ...

the operations were carried out in Takhar, Kunduz, Zabol, Uruzgan, Logar, Pakhtiya, Badghis and Helmand provinces where 11 different types of IEDs were also defused by Afghan National Security Forces. (FNA)

(24) New Farah...

Military Corps commander in the western zone. Nang addressed a gathering of about 300 local residents in a mosque of the district centre's Qala-i-Kohna village.

The residents spoke about problems they were facing and criticised the government for paying no heed to their concerns. He informed plans had been chalked out in connection with improving local economy and security in the district and the plans would be implemented soon for the sake of positive changes in people's lives. (Pajhwok)

(25) Bomb Blast ...

people. He said that the injured included three policemen and two civilians. The wounded, he said had been discharged from the hospital. (Pajhwok)

(26) 2 Rebels Dead...

manders of Khurasan group were killed in a drone strike in Khas Kunar district last night. He said that civilians suffered no casualties in the attack. A week ago, a school and a health clinic were blown up and destroyed in Nari district of Kunar. (Pajhwok)

(27) Ukraine Peace...

tack that killed 11 people deep in government-held territory on Tuesday, could be intended to force Poroshenko to accept a deal recognising the rebel advance. "There are a number of problems which remain to be resolved ... but it is very likely to go ahead," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told France Inter radio. "It is really a last-chance negotiation." Emergency services at the scene said another person had died in hospital following the attack, while two people were seriously wounded. There was no immediate comment from rebel authorities or the Kiev-controlled regional administration. (Reuters)

(28) Greece PM ...

Tuesday that if negotiations with the eurozone fail, the country will go to a "Plan B", which could involve asking for funding from the China, Russia or the United States. (AFP)

(29) President Xi to...

Meanwhile, Xi expressed the hope that the China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue and China-US High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE) that will be held in the United States this year will achieve as many positive results as possible under the joint efforts of the two sides. (Agencies)