

(1) Policy in Progress...

blasted the unity government for what they marginalising the Mujahideen.

Speaking at ceremonies marking the 27th anniversary of the former Soviet Union's troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, the ex-jihadi commanders said the unity government had failed to bring peace and stability to the country, calling on people to be prepared for the country's defence.

Former jihadi leader Mohammad Ismail Khan a day earlier warned the security situation could worsen if the government did not reform the framework for Afghan forces.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the 27th anniversary of the Soviet military withdrawal in Herat City, Khan hit out at the US policy towards Afghanistan.

Resentful at mujahideen's marginalisation, the former energy minister claimed the war in Afghanistan had intensified despite the presence of foreign forces over the past one decade and a half.

The current situation had resulted in abject poverty in Afghanistan, forcing a large number of youth to vote with their feet and seek asylum in foreign countries.

"We have repeatedly criticised the continuation of war and poor governance in Afghanistan; we have already floated suggestions to Afghan leaders and foreign generals, but they paid no attention," he alleged.

Khan linked increased civilian casualties in 2015 to weak governance. He warned the situation could deteriorate further if the framework for the Afghan security forces was not reformed.

But Javed Faisal, deputy spokesman for the Chief Executive Office, said the Mujahideen were part of the government and they were in service of the people as part of political parties and civil society groups.

He said CEO Dr. Abdullah was himself a Mujahid and the government was working on a policy through which more mujahideen could be brought into the government's fold. He said the unity government was working on a mega reform plan through which different institutions of the government would be reformed.

Also, president's special representative for reforms and good governance Ahmad Zia Massoud on Saturday said the Afghan security forces needed nationwide people's support in battling insurgents.

Massoud was addressing a gathering of more than 2000 people including former mujahideen and religious scholars during a visit to northeast Badakhshan province.

He alleged some circles during former president Hamid Karzai's government wanted to pave the ground for militants to advance.

But Khalil Noori, a military affairs analyst, said the country's armed forces should be kept away from political, tribal, linguistic and ethnic differences.

He said the armed forces should remain a neutral institution and should enjoy the support of every individual and leaders of the country. He believed if the government implemented a proper strategy, the country's situation would improve. (Pajhwok)

(2) Watchdog Set...

KABUL - An influential global watchdog is all poised to launch a detailed analysis on the risks of corruption in Afghanistan on Wednesday (Today).

Transparency International (TI) said in a statement on its website it had carried out the UNDP-supported analysis jointly with the Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

It is focused on graft in government, public and private sectors, media and civil society, identifying key vulnerabilities and providing recommendations.

Carried out in consultation with key actors across all sectors of the country, the assessment provides a spring board for urgently-needed reform.

Pacific SrirakPlipat, TI regional director for Asia, Integrity Watch Afghanistan Deputy Director Tim Gray will launch the report at a press event in Kabul

Corruption is fueling the war and undermining the effectiveness of billions of dollars in international aid, according to the watchdog. (Pajhwok)

(3) Lapis Lazuli ..

completed over the next two to three months.

The project's implementation would start with the construction of a 36 kilometres railway line from Aqina port to the Andkhai district centre, he said. A second railway line, costing \$200 million to be provided by the Asian Development Bank

(ADB), would connect the port with Hairatan in Balkh province.

At meetings with military and civil officials of Faryab, he gave the go-ahead to the creation of security, cultural, infrastructure development, transport and protocol committees for the inauguration of work on the rail project.

The railroad would connect Afghanistan through the Silk Route with Europe and South Asia - a project to be inaugurated by the leaders of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan at the Aqina port in the next three months, Kargar announced.

He said: "This project is of national and international importance. Its inauguration has historic value for Afghanistan and help improve our economy. Besides boosting the transport sector, it will generate job opportunities for a large number of Afghans."

Around 3.5 million tonnes of cargo would be transported through the port in the first year after the railroad's construction, he said. The amount of goods transportation through the route will increase to 10 million tonnes till 2020. The railroad will be an alternative to Iran and Pakistan ports.

Faryab Governor Syed Anwar Sadaat said preliminary work on the Lapis Lazuli railway line had already been launched and arrangements to hold a ceremony for welcoming foreign guests were also being made.

"Construction of the rail track will transform the fate of our nation and play a vital role in strengthening Afghanistan's and regional economy," he remarked, calling insecurity a major challenge to the implementation of the project.

Sadaat said the Taliban militants might create insecurity to torpedo the project. However, senior government leaders are determined to take all possible measures for the implementation of the project.

The corridor connects Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey via road and rail, providing an appropriate transit trade route across Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Central Europe. It will also connect South Asia to European countries.

When built, the railroad will remove trade barriers, harmonise customs systems and boost trade between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. It will help cut transaction costs and expand market access. (Pajhwok)

(4) Halt Arming ...

and other media workers were also attacked by the Taliban, who showed contempt for the most fundamental principle of international humanitarian law, the UN alleged.

Patricia Gossman, HRW researcher on Afghanistan, said if the Taliban wanted to be seen as serious about seeking peace, they should state unequivocally they would no longer target civilians as defined by the laws of war.

In a dispatch, she wrote the Afghan government should also take substantive measures to limit the use of artillery, bombs and other weapons with wide explosive effects in populated areas.

She urged the government to stop arming militias, including national uprising forces, which fell outside the regular chain of command. With a dismal record of abuse, the militias have exacerbated tensions rather than provide security for civilians.

"Unless both sides take urgently needed corrective measures, the next UNAMA report for the first six months of 2016 will likely reflect an even higher toll of civilian suffering," Gossman warned. (Pajhwok)

(5) War Victims' ...

buried. I ask the government and the Taliban to stop it. We, the poor people, have no more the strength to afford the loss of our loved ones." She said she had four sons and all of them were killed due to the unending conflict, leaving her to struggle with bitter realities of life.

One of her sons was killed 30 years back by the then government, another was killed during the Taliban government, the third during the civil war and the fourth was killed in the recent devastating bombing in Shah Shaheed area of Kabul.

Notebooks, pens and other stationary of two children each 14 and nine years old who were killed in the Shah Shaheed bombing were also put on display at the exhibition.

Zabihullah, father and uncle of the slain children, said both were working in a medical store when the suicide blast took place and claimed their lives.

Khatira Safi, head of Human Rights and Democracy Afghanistan, told Pajhwok Afghan News the exhibition was aimed to raise awareness about sympathising with relatives of

war victims and avoiding a repetition of such incidents in future.

She said they had been working to collect heart-touching stories of war victims since 2011 and they had since collected 1,200 different belongings of individuals killed in bomb explosions and suicide bombings. She said also they planned to build a museum where these materials would be preserved. (Pajhwok)

(6) Ismail Khan Hits...

the presence of foreign forces over the past one decade and a half.

The current situation had resulted in abject poverty in Afghanistan, forcing a large number of youth to vote with their feet and seek asylum in foreign countries.

"We have repeatedly criticised the continuation of war and poor governance in Afghanistan; we have already floated suggestions to Afghan leaders and foreign generals, but they paid no attention," he alleged.

Khan linked increased civilian casualties in 2015 to weak governance. He warned the situation could deteriorate further if the framework for the Afghan security forces was not reformed.

He suggested the government ensure security in the country or implement the suggestions it had received from jihadi leaders. Khan insisted peace talks should be led by real representatives of Afghanistan.

Former provincial council head Syed Waheed Qataliallo hit out at the government for its poor performance. He claimed the mujahidin had always in line with Allah's commands and people's aspirations.

"We have no fear about the future because we have nothing to us to lose. We are worried by increasing insecurity. Businessmen are under threat and villages are falling to terrorists. We cannot tolerate this," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(7) ISIL Planning ...

been informed that between 40,000 to 50,000 ISIL terrorists will be dispatched to Afghanistan from Turkey," Baghlan MP Mohieuddin Mahdi told FNA on Tuesday.

He noted that Baghlan province like other Northern Afghan provinces has been the scene of clashes between the terrorists and the government forces.

"The insecurities in Northern Afghanistan have not only been created by the Taliban, but by the ISIL," Mahdi said.

The senior Afghan lawmaker reiterated that there is a close cooperation between the Taliban and the ISIL in Afghanistan, and said, "When the terrorists took control over the city of Kunduz, the ISIL's flag was hoisted and in the second day Taliban raised its flag which shows coordination between the two terrorist groups."

He strongly slammed Saudi Arabia for supplying financial and logistical support for the ISIL.

The Northern city of Kunduz briefly fell to the Taliban in late September - the biggest victory for the group in 14 years of war.

In November, violent clashes between the Taliban's two rival groups in Southern Afghanistan resulted in the death of more than 50 fighters from both sides.

The Taliban splinter group had reportedly joined fighters from the ISIL group in Afghanistan.

In a relevant development in December, the Russian Defense Ministry said ISIL cells have sprung up in Afghanistan increasing terror risks in the region.

The situation in Afghanistan is becoming more acute with ISIL presence in the region, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said.

"All prerequisites are in place for us to confidently state that ISIL cells have emerged there. In addition to everything that went on before, we now have additional risks. We as Collective Security Treaty Organization allies," Shoigu said at a meeting with Tajikistan's Defense Minister Sherali Mirzo.

Afghanistan is in a political and social turmoil, as the Taliban and other extremist organizations such as ISIL take advantage of instability in the country.

The Taliban has boosted its operations in Afghanistan after NATO ended its military mission in late 2014 and launched a non-combat operation in the country.

In October, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the situation in Afghanistan was "close to critical" as the extremists' activity was gaining momentum. In line with his words, Shoigu said that Russia might resume patrols along the Afghan-Tajik border, which were fully suspended in 2005.

Earlier this year, US President Barack Obama said that the US forces would maintain presence in Afghanistan af-

ter 2016 because of the weakness of the government army and growing terrorist threat. (FNA)

(8) HPC Leadership ...

martyrs was peace and stability in Afghanistan. "We really want peace, a peace that equals all Afghans and makes them live in brotherhood and mutual respect."

The president said those seeking war should understand they had chosen a wrong path, a path leading to failure and misfortunes.

Those thinking they would impose themselves on others by force and intimidation were mistaken and were considered miscreants in the society, he said.

The president said elements who were shedding the blood of people and hell bent on war and violence had no future except failure and disgrace.

Ghani said he had completed consultations regarding the HPC leadership which would be announced soon and in which jihadi leaders and women would have a strong presence.

"Our mujahideen who were the heroes of the independence war will be the heroes of the peace procession." (Pajhwok)

(9) Afghan ...

months as the Afghan security forces assumed the full security responsibility from NATO-led troops since Jan. 1, 2015.

Wahidullah Tawhidi, spokesman for Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), the country's national power supplier, told local media earlier in the day that the DABS personnel had already supplied all needed materials near the site, adding that the electricity will be reconnected to Kabul within days.

Last winter, Kabul and others cities also experienced a severe power cut for more than two months after heavy snowfall and avalanches destroyed pylons in the Salang Pass, in Parwan province.

A 442-km high voltage transmission line from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan was completed in late 2008. It runs from the country's border with Uzbekistan towards Kabul through five Afghan provinces, transmitting some 300 megawatts of electricity from the water-resource rich country. (Xinhua)

(10) 108 Afghan....

insecurity and unemployment forced him into leaving Afghanistan. Emal Ahmadzai, a talented journalist with Pajhwok Afghan News, also cited insecurity as main reason behind his decision to leave Afghanistan.

Sadiqullah Tawhidi, head of free media advocacy group NAI, said the continued insurgency and social insecurity to blame for the immigration of youth, including media officials from Afghanistan.

He said asylum seeking by media men soared after Taliban's attack on workers of Moby Group.

He lamented the government was taking no effective steps to protect media outlets from attacks, adding that only Tolo and ITV had been provided security. (Pajhwok)

(11) Security Forces...

claimed six soldiers were killed, a dozen wounded and three others captured during fighting.

Sher Mohammad, a resident of Sher Baig village, said scores of domestic animals had been lost as a result of the ongoing fighting in the five villages. He said residents had fled the area and migrated to other places. (Pajhwok)

(12) Deadly Clashes ...

District last night leaving several killed and wounded.

Fractions happened in Taliban after the group's Supreme Leader was confirmed dead last year.

The two major groups formed after the news is Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour's group and Mullah Mohammad Rasoul.

Another group has also announced its split from the main group under the leadership of Mullah Obaidullah in Paktika province however it does not have as many followers as Mullah Mansour and Mullah Rasoul. (KP)

(13) 5 Afghan ...

har province earlier this month. In another development, security forces detained six militants, including two local commanders of the notorious Haqqani group, in eastern Khost province, according to provincial governor Hakam Khan Habibi.

The security forces also found and seized weapons and ammunition after capturing the militants, governor Habibi told reporters earlier on Tuesday. (Xinhua)

(14) 93 Killed, ...

News that 309 people, including 188 men, 34 women and 98 children, sustained injuries in 177 traffic accidents during the year that ends on March 21.

Dozens of people have been arrested in connection with the accidents and their cases referred to the prosecutor's office, Khan said, adding police were looking for some drivers who fled the scene after accidents.

The official, however, said traffic accidents had decreased compared to last year amid efforts to enforce traffic rules and reduce tragedies.

In order to streamline traffic, Khan said they had organized a series of courses aimed to impart traffic rules to road users and a result of these courses, 3991 persons were issued driving licenses during the year.

The traffic official linked fatal accidents on highways to not following traffic rules, speed and rundown condition of roads, saying most accidents on the highways often involved the 303 public transport buses.

Accidents inside the city mostly involved motorcycles, three-wheelers and the illegally imported right-hand drive cars.

Khan said traffic police had impounded dozens of illegal vehicles and forced owners of three-wheelers to attend the training courses to learn traffic rules and obtain official certificate for driving.

In order to prevent accidents on the highway, he said they had fixed the arrival and departure timings of the 303 buses travelling between Kandahar, Kabul, Herat and other provinces.

This led to a decrease in traffic accidents on the highways and drivers involved in accidents that had occurred on highways had been detained and convicted, he said.

He blamed most of traffic accidents involving motorcycles and other vehicles on their driving by underage boys.

Khan called on parents not to allow their underage children to drive vehicles on city roads.

He also said the municipality had launched installing traffic signal lights at squares in the provincial capital and the signals could help reduce traffic accidents.

Khan said his department had a total of 99 personnel including 12 officers and the rest staff sergeants and they were trying to increase the number of sergeants.

During the ongoing solar year, the traffic department issued 3,991 driving licenses against 2.9 million afghans and road permits and renewal earned 6.4 million afghans and all the money had been submitted to the central bank, he said.

About reforms in the department, he said, residents and shopkeepers in various areas had been given phone numbers to contact him if a traffic official was seen misbehaving or committing negligence in duty.

Kandahar residents say traffic rules are most often violated by government officials particularly security personnel, an issue that has created many problems for people.

Izzatullah, who lives in the fourth police district, said many times security personnel had been seen driving on the wrong side of one-way road.

He said security officials often fled the scene after hitting another car or person and had rarely been arrested or prosecuted. The resident said unruly traffic in the city could be blamed on negligence in duty by traffic officials.

Another resident, Mohammad Arif, said he had many times seen government officials and security personnel driving illegally imported vehicles. He said traffic officials could not take action against these persons.

But Khan said several security officials who were involved in traffic accidents had been detained and prosecuted in cooperation with the police and the 205 Atal Military Corps headquarters.

He acknowledged that most of illegal vehicles were being driven by government and military officials and that the traffic department was taking measures to prevent them.

He urged people to cooperate with traffic officials in reducing traffic accidents and preventing corruption in the department. (Pajhwok)

(15) 13 Insurgents...

the gunbattle was not immediately available. The Taliban and Islamic State have not yet commented on the clash. (Pajhwok)

(16) 2 Militants ...

Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Kabul on Sunday.

Out of the casualties 713 civilians were killed and more than 1,650 were injured by IED attacks across the militancy-hit country last year, according to the report. (Xinhua)

(17) Turkish PM ...

stated. The Turkish prime minister also said the People's Protection Units (YPG), the armed forces of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) of Syrian Kurds, will not be allowed to advance on Azez town in the neighboring country, declaring it a red line for Turkey.

"We will do what is necessary if they bid to advance," he said.

Turkish military hit targets of the PYD several times since last week, as Turkey considers the group affiliated to the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

Russia and Syrian regime uses PYD to change demography of Aleppo, forcing thousands of people to flee their hometown, Davutoglu said. (Xinhua)

(18) Russian Experts ...

opposition groups, backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United States and other countries, will observe a ceasefire," Korotchenko told Xinhua. Noting that all efforts for peace in Syria should be supported, Korotchenko said that to resolve the Syria crisis, the priority should be the total destruction of the Islamic State (IS) and other terrorist groups.

Viktor Kremenyuk, an expert with the USA-Canada Institute at the Russian Academy of Science, said that although Moscow and Washington are the main drivers at the ISSG meeting in Munich, neither side would like to make concessions regarding Syria.

Other regional countries involved in the issue, like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, are unwilling to back down either, he added. (Xinhua)

(19) UN Peace ...

week. The outcome of Munich talks were planned to pave the way for the resumption of the Geneva talks between the Syrian government and opposition, whose first round collapsed soon due to the "lack of progress."

Achieving unhindered humanitarian access and a cessation of hostilities were among a number of preconditions the Syrian opposition set ahead of the first round of talks in Geneva, and the success of materializing those two things would strengthen the negotiations ground and also help alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, who have been reeling under the pressure of the nearly five-year-old conflict. (Xinhua)

(20) Greece's ...

Athens has repeatedly complained to European partners that while they give stern warnings to Greece to do more concerning the protection of its borders otherwise be expelled from Schengen by June, they do not add adequate pressure on Ankara to meet its obligations. (Xinhua)

(21) Merkel Says ...

Tusk is making clear that the bloc's 28 leaders are heading into a summit this week that could fundamentally alter the political course of the continent.

Negotiations with Britain are still finely balanced over whether the EU can make the necessary reforms for Prime Minister David Cameron to support remaining an EU member in a national referendum on the issue. (AP)

(22) Ukraine's ...

already considering Tuesday holding a vote of no confidence in the government after first listening to Yatsenyuk account for his 2015 performance and his plans for this year. A stony-faced Yatsenyuk arrived in parliament just moments after the president's statement was released.

"In order to restore trust in the government, the president asked the prosecutor general and the prime minister to quit," presidential spokesman Svyatoslav Tsegolko tweeted.

"It is not clear that successful reforms can only be conducted by a government that enjoys sufficiently high public support?" Poroshenko added in a statement on the presidential website. (AFP)

(23) High-Ranking...

weeks which resulted in the assassination of Aden's former governor, several high-ranking security officers and judges.

Yemen, an impoverished Arab country, has been gripped by one of the most active regional al-Qaida insurgencies in the Middle East and the affiliates of the Islamic State.

The security situation in the country has deteriorated since March when war broke out between the Shiite Houthis group, supported by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the government backed by a Saudi-led Arab coalition. (Xinhua)