

(1) No Compromise

It quoted Abdullah as saying that the Afghan National Police (ANP) with the support of government and the people of Afghanistan had been able to bravely face the challenges. He assured the conference participants of Afghanistan's continued cooperation with the international community but said no compromise would be made on the country's national interest.

Interior Minister Noorul Haq Ulumi briefed the participants about his priorities, security challenges and plans how to overcome the challenges.

He said improved law and order situation in provinces, professionalising the police, ensuring respect to human rights, enhanced border security and elimination of poppy crops topped his priorities.

He said the Taliban, the Haqqani network and Daesh were terrorist groups and wanted to destabilise Afghanistan. He said police and other security forces were committed to dismantling terrorists.

Speaking on the occasion, NATO top commander in Afghanistan, US General John Francis Campbell, said the first fighting season absent NATO troops was about to begin, calling it a test case for Afghan forces.

He welcomed the appointment of Ulumi as the minister for interior, describing him the best option for the position under current circumstances. (Pajhwok)

(2) Pakistan's Army

urgency was a common challenge for both countries, calling the joint cooperation vital for both nations.

"We must use these opportunities," Abdullah said. "We must fight against terrorism for our welfare and prosperity of our countries."

On the other hand, Afghan political and military experts urge the Afghan government to tread the waters lightly with Pakistan's promises. "Afghanistan should never believe in Pakistan's promises, instead they should await their actions," military expert Atiqullah Amarkhail said.

"Afghanistan should act carefully and consider the national interests. If Pakistan's efforts are based on honesty, then it will be in favor of the country."

This is the fourth visit of Sharif, two of which were a result of the Peshawar school attack that the country claimed was plotted in Afghanistan. More than 140 people were killed with most of them students after a number of armed insurgents attacked a military-run school in Peshawar city on Dec. 16 2014. The attack was claimed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

After holding meetings in Kabul and Islamabad, the military of both countries decided to launch coordinated anti-insurgent operations in border areas. This move made by Pakistan is something many hope is fought sincerely and seriously.

This comes as Pakistan has long been accused of backing insurgent groups and interfering into Afghanistan's affairs.

Recently in an interview with a British newspaper, the Guardian, Pakistan's former military ruler Pervez Musharraf said that his government had sought to undermine former Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government in order to stop India from stabbing Pakistan in the back. (Tolonews)

(3) UN Focuses

own families," said Afghan singer Ms. Farzana.

Coexistence, tolerance, peace and youth mobilization against corruption were the focus messages of the UN-sponsored concert.

"Youths of the country should speak out against inequalities in society and they shouldn't remain silent. In the past, it was not like this, but the youth don't effect change, because they lack hope, confronted by all the problems in the country," famous Afghan singer Wahid Qasemi said. "Singing is the only way that helps to convey any message to the people including the message of peace, it is the only means that support us to convey the message of peace to the world," said Aryana Saeed, a female Afghan singer.

The idea for the musical event in Bamyán was originally received with mixed feelings. While local clerics were opposed to it, civil society groups spoke out in favor and agreed to help organize.

Ultimately, with the UN's leadership, the concert was held successfully, although heavy security was needed. (Tolonews)

(4) Ghani Visits

Afghan-Iranian committee would be formed aimed at promoting bilat-

eral relations in various areas.

Shariatmadari said Iranian interior minister would be representing his country in the new high-level joint committee between the two countries. "We have witnessed change and great achievements in Afghanistan. We are sure the country is moving towards a positive direction," he added.

Ghani assured the visiting dignitary that he would soon appoint one of his cabinet members to represent Afghanistan in the committee.

"This committee should evolve strategy to combat terror, drugs and promotion of bilateral volume of trade and commerce," Ghani added. (Pajhwok)

(5) Complacency about

perverse spending incentives that encouraged rapid disbursement of funds, and political moves by elements in the Afghan government to avoid or discredit anti-corruption efforts.

"Complacency on corruption put the international mission at risk. No matter how much money is spent, missions and assistance measures are unlikely to be successful without recognising and addressing corruption threats," said Mark Pyman, Director of TI-DSP. "Corruption is not a new challenge, nor is it specific to Afghanistan. Unless we equip ourselves to be better prepared, future missions are doomed to repeat old mistakes."

The report calls for anti-corruption and integrity-building measures to be included from the outset of planning for future interventions and assistance. The report proposes a framework for policy makers to address corruption issues better in future assistance and missions:

1. Equip policy makers and those involved in implementation with the knowledge and tools to understand corruption risk and how to address it.

2. Recognise the threat of corruption from the outset of a mission, and include a requirement to tackle corruption in the mission mandate.

3. Adopt a common anti-corruption approach across all institutions involved in the mission, fully involving civil society.

4. Spend less, disclose more. Measure success through outcomes and effectiveness, not funds spent.

5. Strengthen oversight by national and international bodies.

On the positive side, once the problem was recognised, several good anti-corruption measures were put in place in Afghanistan. These included the Afghanistan Independent Joint Anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, a group of respected Afghan and international experts; a full time international anti-corruption support group; and a task force to examine potential fraud and corruption in international contracts. Such mechanisms could be replicated in other fragile environments.

General David Petraeus, the ISAF Commander from 2010 onwards, stated in an interview for the report: "We could've started doing what was done in 2010 sooner. As you begin to ramp up in Afghanistan and ...pour substantial amounts of additional forces, funds, civilians, and other assets into the country, that is the time to increase focus and elements to try to identify and then deal with the cancer that is corruption."

Afghanistan ranked 172nd out of 175 countries in the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index. A poll by the Asia Foundation found that Afghans' faith in the integrity of their institutions is worsening. It is unclear how much money from the international mission in Afghanistan has been used as intended.

Total US spending on the war since 2001 exceeds \$760 billion; with \$686 billion spent on Operation Enduring Freedom and \$104 billion on reconstruction funds. Adjusting for inflation, spending on reconstruction funds has been greater than the Marshall Plan. Despite billions of dollars allocated for military training, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan reports that just 29 per cent of Afghan army units have the level of training required to allow them to operate independently with advisers. (Agencies)

(6) Danish Woos

industries (ACCI) said that the total volume of goods Kabul imports from Iran stands at \$1.6 billion while the value of exports to Iran by Afghanistan is \$60 million.

Iranian Deputy Chief Executive Dr. Mohammad Shariatmadari was also present on the occasion. He said Iran wanted to enhance political, economic and cultural ties with Afghanistan.

(Pajhwok)

(7) Suspicions Grow

distribution, their entire operation has ground to halt.

"All of our work is finished, from 'A to Z', we are waiting for a presidential order to start distribution," another member of the ID Office staff, Project Manager Ajmal Hameedi, told TOLONews.

The national unity government had originally promised to roll out the new ID cards quickly upon taking office, linking their distribution to the government's broader commitment to improving rule of law and ensuring better elections in the future. However, just as no action has been taken on the electoral reforms promised by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, nothing has been done to move the IDs project forward.

According to Nasrat Rahimi, a spokesman for the MoCIT, the delay in distribution is a result of nefarious circles inside and outside the country. "There are countries who are directly and indirectly preventing the development of the project; they are interfering to prevent its implementation, and there are also circles within who are preventing its implementation," Mr. Rahimi said on Tuesday.

Although electronically scannable ID cards are a staple of all developed countries, used for practical public purposes that extend far beyond voting, proponents of the project in Afghanistan have painted them as critical to improving the country's electoral process and combat electoral fraud. Members of the international community, including key sources of aid and support for the Afghan government, have pushed for implementation of the ID project. "The more delay in the process, the more we will lose international supporters as well as the trust of the people in the process," civil society activist Abdul Wudood said.

But the trust may already be gone. When asked about the ID cards delay, residents of Kabul shared deep misgivings about the interests at stake and why individuals in power would push back the distribution plans.

"We want the national unity government to not politicize the process and start the distribution of the electronic ID cards," one resident named Farid said on Tuesday.

"What was the reason behind the fraud in the presidential elections?" asked Hameedullah, another Kabul resident. "It was because one person had more than one voting card; if these electronic ID cards are issued, fraud will be prevented in the upcoming elections."

The Afghan Census law, which ratifies the ID project and calls for implementation, was approved over a month ago. (Tolonews)

(8) Police Chiefs

improve the trust of the people."

"National unity government is determined to move forward with national reconciliation process, but this process must be shared with the people of Afghanistan with full transparency in order to protect the prides and achievements of the Afghan people," Abdullah said. "We strongly value the cooperation of other countries with the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan, but no one would be allowed the right to veto sovereignty of Afghanistan's foreign policy and its international relations."

Ulumi, who won a vote of confidence from the Parliament last month as the interior minister, urged the police must be separated from politics.

"No other interests are acceptable anymore that affect police efficiency," Ulumi said, stressing the need for more female presence in the police ranks.

The third person to deliver his speech was acting Defense Minister Nazari who called on improved coordination between the security agencies. He noted the ANSF had the ability to confront the armed insurgents.

Despite the end of the NATO combat mission in the country, Gen. Campbell stated at the event that they would keep supporting Afghanistan for "many many more years."

"Without your enthusiasm and diligence, the people will suffer at the provincial level," Campbell said, urging the ANSF to focus on "training, shooting and communicating." Meanwhile, Gen. Salangi assured that the security forces would not allow the insurgents to take control of any areas of the country.

"Our forces will fight until the last drop of their blood," Salangi said, noting that the security forces were in war against, roughly, 40,000 Tali-

ban fighters. (Tolonews)

(9) Govt. Spokesmen

calling as necessary matching policies under which the spokespersons could coordinate their activities.

"It shouldn't be like one of us say the Taliban are terrorists and the enemies of Afghan people while the presidential spokesmen call them political opponents," he continued. Rahimi said such variations in official versions would make people thinking that differences among government officials continued to exist. "There should be a clear understanding among officials regarding all major and important national policies," he suggested.

Defence Ministry spokesman Gen. Mohammad Zahir Azimi said better coordination among government authorities and organs was the need of the hour.

"The Presidential Palace and the CEO's office should develop clear policies based on which the spokespersons of the unity government could communicate clearly with the media and the masses," he added. (Pajhwok)

(10) 3% Increase

attending school will only increase when security conditions improve and better facilities and opportunities are provided for the girls.

"During the time of the Taliban, female presence in schools did not exist," spokesman to the MoE, Muhammad Kabir Haqmal said. "Today, 42 percent of our total student body is female. If security is maintained, conditions improve, and proper services and facilities are provided the number of females in school will be balanced with the male students."

Several teachers have become optimistic about the gains the females of the country are making by taking the first step of education.

"People's awareness has risen," Rona, a teacher, said. "People now understand the importance of education and are encouraging their girls to get one."

During the times of the Taliban regime, girls were not allowed to attend school, but after the fall of the group and the gains in the past 13 years the presence of females in schools has increased by 42 percent. (Tolonews)

(11) Tajikistan Supplies

are implementing a project that provides a reliable electricity supply to a remote region in the border area between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The transmission lines will be built in Tajikistan to supply four Tajik villages and 17 Afghan villages with reliable, cross-border power. Costing EUR 6.3mn, the project is jointly funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and Norway.

The remote Afghan villages have been receiving electricity sporadically by local hydropower systems or diesel generators, as they are not connected to the Afghan national power grid.

The project will be implemented by the PATRIP Foundation (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan Regional International Program), formed by the KfW Development Bank and the German Federal Foreign Office more than three years ago, and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). (Wadsam)

(12) 79 Ailing

News the children would be flown to Germany under the 1989 agreement between the Peace Village International and the ARCS. Treatment of the selected 79 children was possible in Germany.

Afzali said: "The treatment will continue until the children become healthy. Additionally, families of these children will be trained on how to take care of their children after they return."

She said doctors with the Peace Village visited Afghanistan twice a year to meet ailing Afghan children, diagnose their diseases and recommend them for treatment in Germany.

She said the treatment of each child cost €6,000 and more than 4,000 children had so far been sent by the ARCS to Germany.

Hasibullah, an 11-year-old resident of Qaisar district of Faryab, who has one of his legs broken, told Pajhwok Afghan News he had undergone five surgeries, but to no avail.

Hasibullah is among the selected children to be sent to Germany for treatment. He said on return home from Germany recovered, he would join his school again. He wanted to become an engineer in future.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross provided the ARCS with 17 Land Cruisers and 15 million Canadian dollars in assistance, with each vehicle valued at

\$500,000.

ARCS deputy head Muhammad Zahir Walizada told a press conference the donated vehicles would be used during natural disasters in volatile provinces. The Canadian aid would be used for capacity-building of ARCS staff over the next five years, he said. (Pajhwok)

(13) Afghan Conflict

said the Afghanistan dispute was of international nature, which needed global community's since cooperation to be settled.

He said the pullout of Soviet troops in the late 1980s was indeed the success of Mujahideen and it was the day of independence.

He said Afghans were celebrating the withdrawal of Soviet troops at a time when the withdrawal of US and other foreign troops was underway from the country.

"The Afghan political elites should learn from past experiences and don't allow the political process to be derailed," he warned.

He called upon the country leadership to work hard toward achieving progress and development of the country. He said was only served the interest of anti-state elements. "The leadership of the country should seek a political solution to the dispute," he remarked.

He stressed all parties to the conflict should cease fighting and shun their differences. All Afghans should forget about their past differences and come forward to rebuild their country.

Agha Jan believed the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan would be a great opportunity to establish peace in the country. (Pajhwok)

(14) 20 Police Personnel

up inside the canteen, he said.

Logar Police Chief Abdul Hakim Ishaqzai told the police force suffered "heavy casualties" amid reports that dozens of police personnel were gathered for lunch in the canteen.

Wishing not to be named, a doctor at Logar hospital, said 20 wounded policemen had been referred to Kabul for treatment.

In the wake of stringent security measures, it could not be ascertained how militants managed to enter the facility. As usual, police said the investigation was underway. (Pajhwok)

(15) 10 Policemen

This was a 2nd deadly attack in which insurgents targeted police since yesterday.

Yesterday six policemen embraced martyrdom during a gun battle with insurgents in Maiwand District of southern Kandahar Province. (KP)

(16) 30 Rebels

southern region including Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul. The offensive would take six months to complete. The militants have suffered heavy casualties and many areas were cleared of roadside bombs, he said.

Taliban militants, however, have not commented yet commented on the operation.

(17) ANA Soldier

Directorate of Security (NDS) said. Mirwis Daudzai, the acting district chief, confirmed the incident. He said Khair Mohammad, the slain person was the resident of Darzab district, who had neither personal enmity nor was a government servant.

(18) 13 Policemen Dead

Panjwai districts confirmed 13 police officers had been killed in the firefight.

However, Taliban have not yet commented on the clash. (Pajhwok)

(19) Police Detain 13

recovered during the search operation from 11th police district," he said.

According to Stanikzai, the arrested men were being interrogated by police. (Pajhwok)

(20) 1 Person Killed, 2

claimed responsibility for the explosion on January 13 but there is no immediate claim of responsibility for this morning's explosion. (KP)

(21) Ukraine Truce

at all-night talks in the Belarussian capital Minsk on Thursday, fell largely on deaf ears.

"We do not have the right (to stop fighting for Debaltseve). It's even a moral thing. It's internal territory," said Denis Pushilin, a senior separatist representative, setting the goal of "destroying the enemy's fighting positions".

The leader of one of the two rebel-held regions in the east, Luhansk, said separatist fighters had started

withdrawing heavy weapons. But there was no sign of this in areas held by separatists in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic. "We will not do anything unilaterally. That would make our soldiers targets," Pushilin told Reuters in the city of Donetsk.

Ukraine's military reiterated in Kiev that its forces could not pull back their big guns until there was a total truce.

"In the last 24 hours there has been firing so there is no ceasefire and so there is no precondition for a pull-back of heavy weapons," Lysenko said.

The European Union kept pressure on Russia and the rebels by announcing a new list of separatists and Russians targeted with sanctions on Monday. Moscow promised an "adequate" response.

The United States said it was "gravely concerned" by the fighting at Debaltseve and that it was monitoring reports of a new column of Russian military equipment heading to the region.

"We call on Russia and the separatists it backs to halt all attacks immediately," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

Russia denies sending arms or troops to back the rebels in mainly Russian-speaking areas of east Ukraine despite what Kiev and the West say is clear proof.

The separatists said soon after the ceasefire came into effect they had no intention of observing it at Debaltseve, where they have been advancing since January.

Fighting began in east Ukraine after the overthrow of a Moscow-backed president in Kiev a year ago and Russia's annexation of the Crimea peninsula a month later.

Several hundred thousand refugees have fled the conflict, which has devastated Ukraine's already struggling economy, and relations between Russia and the West are at their worst since the Cold War. (Reuters)

(22) Record Flow

"There are obvious reasons: because of the geo-political situation in Syria and the Middle East, because in Libya one can say there is a failed state and there is no government able to have effective control of the territory, which makes it easier for organized crime to flourish there."

Leggeri said traffickers were becoming more aggressive.

In one case this month, smugglers pulled out guns to threaten an Italian coastguard crew which was trying to tow a wooden vessel filled with migrants into port. The traffickers, he said, wanted the boat back so they could use it again.

Frontex is in charge of an EU coastguard mission patrolling the Mediterranean, dubbed Operation Triton, which started work last November just as Italy wound down a much larger program, Mare Nostrum, that rescued more than 100,000 migrants in 2014.

The Mediterranean crossing claimed an estimated 3,300 lives last year, and earlier this month more than 300 people are believed to have died after leaving Libya in inflatable rafts.

The United Nation's refugee agency, the UNHCR, says Operation Triton is woefully inadequate, and urged Europe to take a new approach.

Leggeri said Operation Triton, which had been planned to run only until the end of January, would now carry on throughout the year, adding that it had already helped save up to 9,000 people.

The International Organization for Migration said on Tuesday that some 3,800 migrants had been rescued from the Mediterranean since last Friday alone.

ready and when I say 'we' it's Frontex but also the member states. We have to be prepared to face a very difficult year," he said. (Reuters)

(23) Iran Speeds Up

pressure on the Islamic Republic, slow down its scientific/technological progress, and contain its influence across the region and beyond.

According to Ayatollah Khamenei, even if Iran and the Group 5+1 (the US, Russia, China, Britain and France plus Germany) clinch an accord, the West will come up with new excuses to antagonize Tehran. The 10th round of negotiations between Iran and the six world powers was held in Vienna from November 18 to 24, where the seven nations decided to extend the talks until July after they failed to strike an agreement.

The latest round of the nuclear talks between Iran and the six world powers was held in February.

Both Iran and the G5+1 negotiators have underlined that cutting a final deal before the July 10 deadline is