

(1) Afghanistan-Turkmenistan...

said that the Strategic Partnership Agreement is a milestone and will increase relations between the two nations.

"In line with this agreement, relations between the two countries will remain sustainable and based on mutual respect and mutual interests," Ghani said. In addition, president Berdimuhamedow said his country strongly supports the resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan through diplomatic means and that Turkmenistan is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in this regard.

Ghani said terrorism is a serious problem in the region and the world and there is a need for cooperation and coordination to tackle the issue.

Currently, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan are cooperating on a number of areas including energy and commerce and over the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline project.

The Turkmen leader has said that the implementation of TAPI project will create over 12,000 jobs in Afghanistan and that the country will gain \$1 billion in benefits from the project annually.

All You Need to Know About TAPI TAPI project was inaugurated by leaders of the four countries - Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India - in January 2016.

The 1,814-kilometer gas pipeline from Turkmenistan will pass through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. At least 816 kilometers of the pipeline will cross Afghanistan.

The pipeline will run through Herat, Farah, Nimroz, Helmand and Kandahar provinces and will be built alongside the Kandahar-Herat Highway in western Afghanistan. From it will go to Quetta and Multan in Pakistan.

The final destination of the pipeline will be the Indian town of Fazilka, near its border with Pakistan.

The project will cost \$22.5 billion.

The project is implemented by the TAPI Limited Company - a group of firms from Afghanistan and Turkmenistan including Afghan Gas Enterprise, Turkmen Gas State Company, and two private companies from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Share From TAPI Afghanistan is expected to earn more than \$400 million USD in transit duties annually from the project.

According to President Ashraf Ghani's Office, the project will create thousands of job opportunities for Afghans.

Afghanistan will annually get 500 million cubic meters of gas from the project in the first ten years. The amount will increase to one billion cubic meters of gas in the following ten years and 1.5 billion cubic meters of gas in the next 10 years after the completion of the project.

Berdimuhamedow said that Turkmenistan will host a meeting of Lapis Lazuli transport ministers conference later in May this year. (Tolo news)

(2) Afghanistan to...

In his words, the achievements in the field of education are not small and the challenge of teaching is still there and added private schools should be taken into account in education.

Education Cannot Wait Director Yasmine Sherif said through this program would support 500,000 girls and boys for three years in resuming their education.

"Our focus is vulnerable children from wars, migrations and natural and abnormal conditions, such as droughts and floods, which have forced children to leave school," Sherif said. (Pajhwok)

(3) 2019 will be...

stable regime, armed forces, and security agencies. It would have resisted further if at least some limited economic assistance had continued," he said.

Moscow supports the talks between Washington and the Taliban because, without their agreement, it will be very difficult to find an appropriate Afghan settlement, he said.

Elections that can change everything Kabulov recalled that the Taliban do not recognize the acting Afghan gov-

ernment, saying that the issue could be solved if someone respected by the group comes to power.

However, Kabulov had his doubts about whether the militant group would allow holding elections in the territories under its control.

"Everyone would like to know that. Ideally, we would like them to take part in the elections," the diplomat said.

The major obstacle for the Taliban's participation in the presidential race is that the group rejects the legacy of about a quarter of the articles of the Afghan Constitution, Kabulov said.

"They would not want to recognize the government elected under this Constitution. But it is all right, it is just a phase. We must be patient and give them a chance to negotiate, any advice, even friend's one can be perceived as pressure. Let them choose their own leadership," Russian envoy said.

He said the fact that the militant group controls about 70 percent of Afghanistan does not tell much about the elections for "in Afghanistan, for centuries, those who controlled the capital and the largest administrative centers and regions, ruled the country."

For the Afghan presidential hopefuls, Kabulov spoke highly of the country's former interior minister, Mohammad Hanif Atmar.

"Everyone in Afghanistan knows that this is a prominent politician with a broad base of political support. He has one undeniable advantage: he held high positions in both the government of Hamid Karzai and the current administration. He is brilliant, by Afghan standards, top manager, who knows the problems of Afghanistan and knows how to deal with them," Kabulov said, adding that Atmar also has good relations with Washington. Russian-Taliban relations

Russia views the Taliban as "a part of Afghan society, with their political and ideological opinions and beliefs which considers their country as occupied by foreigners who pose a threat to both, the country and religion", Kabulov said.

"They represent a very wide range of Afghans, their main support - the rural population, which is religious, accustomed to ideas of Islam and its laws," he said.

The memory of the Taliban's ruling works against them now, Kabulov said.

However, he vowed, "the current generation of the Taliban leadership understands and openly declares that it does not require a monopoly because the attempt of any force to claim a monopoly is a wide gate to the civil war". Kabulov also said "the time has come to lift the sanctions" on the Taliban for "limiting the diplomatic maneuver of the Taliban movement, will not help promote national reconciliation".

He said Russia is ready to support a possible move to remove the sanctions, but the country will not lead such an initiative at the UN Security Council.

He said Russia's number one priority is to facilitate "the Afghan reconciliation", adding that peace in Afghanistan is "a safety assurance" for Russia itself and its allies.

Kabulov said Moscow will host more meetings on the Afghan settlement but only "when we feel that there will be an effective output, not for show". (AA)

(4) Rivalries of...

Some Afghan politicians, however, said that the United States should continue its peace efforts with engagement of regional countries.

Jawed Ludin, Former Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs said that ignoring the role of regional countries in the peace process would not help peace talks and that the U.S. should build a regional consensus.

The U.S. has so far held at least four rounds of talks with the Taliban as part of the diplomatic efforts to reach into a political settlement in Afghanistan. The representatives of both sides are expected to hold another of talks in Qatar on February 25. (ATN)

(5) Afghanistan's...

contracts which the Afghan investors

signed at the agricultural fair valued up to \$35 million.

"So far, Kandahar figs have had the most selling and figs selling contracts have been signed that value up to \$10 million," said Rustami.

Fig is produced in most of Afghanistan big provinces such as Herat, Balkh, Farah, Zabul, and Jawzjan. But southern Kandahar province is known as the center of fig production as almost 6,000 tons of dried figs worth almost \$34 million was exported to India through the province. (Tolo news)

(6) 1,300 Most...

Pajhwok the current winter was very snowy and would reduce drought but it was also a challenging season for poor families.

He was happy over the assistance given to families in need. "We have no money to buy food or warm clothes for our children and this aid will somehow help protect children and others from the biting winter," he added.

The aid distribution comes after 50 to 80 centimeters of snow was measured in some parts of the country. (Pajhwok)

(7) Afghanistan Defeats...

Nabi was awarded the match of the match for his performance in both departments. He scored 49 runs from 40 balls on the batting side and took 2 wickets on the bowling side for the Afghan team. (KP)

(8) China to Form...

until Afghans have discord among themselves.

"As long as we remain fragmented, this is my message again to Kabul, as long as Afghans remain fragmented on that side, nothing is going to move forward. And they would have missed the boat and a chance to come together, agree on the redlines," Samad said. President Ashraf Ghani in his recent visit to Turkmenistan this week said a number of regional countries support insurgency.

Speaking at the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Ghani said a number of countries are not respecting sovereignty of other nations and that by sending suicide bombers interfere in the internal affairs of those nations.

"The wider Asian region, unfortunately, is marked by lack of respect for sovereignty. For consistent interference, it rages as far as direct state sponsorship of terror and sending of suicide bombers to some countries," said Ghani.

Ghani said insurgency is a threat against the region and the world adding that an alternative to this phenomenon should be presented to the region and the world.

Ghani left Kabul for Ashgabat on Wednesday afternoon and on Thursday he and his Turkmenistan counterpart Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

The two countries also signed seven Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on cultural exchanges between Turkmenistan Academy of Science and National Archive of Afghanistan, railway project, aviation, customs, petroleum, gas and energy transfer.

Ghani said that the Strategic Partnership Agreement is a milestone and will increase relations between the two nations. (Tolo news)

(9) Khalilzad Discusses...

that he met Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal and Ibrahim Kalin, an advisor to Turkish president.

"Turkey has a deep, rich relationship with #Afghanistan. Turkey is considering what it can do to facilitate the current peace process," he tweeted. Khalilzad told TOLONews on Monday that the integration of a strong and unified negotiating team under Afghan government's umbrella is needed for achieving a breakthrough in the strides for peace in Afghanistan, but he rejected rumors that the talks had hit a deadlock.

He said he did not have direct contacts with the Taliban since his last meeting with them in Doha, Qatar, last month, and that the Taliban delegation said at the time that they will talk about these issues with their leadership.

This comes as the next round of Qatar talks is expected to be held on Monday - Feb. 25. (Tolo news)

(10) IEC Secretariat...

One of the candidates, Obaidullah Barakzai, said there had been widespread rigging in the October parliamentary elections across the country, particularly in Kabul and not only the election commissioners, but secretariat officials were also involved in the fraud.

"We the protesting candidates demand the removal of Independent Election Commission (IEC) secretary (Ahmad Shah) Zamanzai and other officials because currently these officials are trying to hide evidence and documents of their fraud," he said.

Barakzai played an audio clip which he claimed was of Khalil Safi who could be heard demanding \$300,000 from Barakzai to ensure his victory in the election but Barakzai offered his three-room home and a car worth above \$500,000.

But the voice in the clip replies: "Dear Haji Wakeel sahib. I talked to them, but they are afraid no one should get informed, such things (home and car) are not accepted."

Another protesting candidate Daud Kalkani said the president should sack and investigate the IEC secretariat officials because they were trying to do away with evidence of their crimes. (Pajhwok)

(11) Hekmatyar Says...

The HIA leader called the October Wolesi Jirga elections as 'fraudulent' and voiced on all the parties concerned to work for transparency in the next presidential election.

"I urge all Afghans to come forward and choose a legal way, shun negative competitions and not think of reaching power with foreign arms," he said. Hekmatyar said some candidates were using government resources for their campaigns, a practice he said should be stopped. He regretted creating new provinces had become part of electioneering.

He said such campaigns created problems as residents of areas such as Muqor district of Ghazni province staged rallies to demand their district be promoted to a province.

About the July presidential election, he advised the Afghans not to vote for "a traitor, corrupt, looter and failed figures" and "those who sold the country."

He said the current electoral system should be changed for the next parliamentary elections because the system was unsuccessful. "The electoral system should be changed in a way that every electoral district has one representative and in which refugees are given the right to vote and no votes are lost."

The HIA leader said the new Wolesi Jirga or lower house of the Parliament would represent only 'eight percent' of the people because only around one million people had voted in the elections.

Hekmatyar said he supported every effort for peace in Afghanistan but convening a consultative Loya Jirga would not solve problems. "We support any type of efforts for peace and ask all the warring sides not to create problems for peace and stop emphasis on war," he added.

He asked the Taliban to agree to a long-ceasefire and intra-Afghan peace dialogue so it would help in establishing a government which was acceptable to all the Afghans and rescue the country. (Pajhwok)

(12) 50pc Water...

Hussaini, talking about the results of his study in Kabul, said the investigation included technical and legal analysis and study of books, documents, internet sites and satellite images.

"When we looked at satellite images we saw our neighboring countries Iran and Turkmenistan have significantly developed their agriculture and they wastefully used the river's water," he said.

"The next issue is controlling the water, satellite images show around 27 dams are active in the Karakum Desert Qaraqum basin in Iran, another dam is under construction and a sur-

vey for 11 more dams is underway, unlike in Afghanistan where only one dam is built, one is under construction and two are under survey," Hussaini added.

He said 50 percent of the Harirud River water had declined. "Wasteful use of water by Iran using deep wells has seriously affected our ground water," he said, asking the government to take up the issue with Iranian authorities.

Legal part

Hussaini said regulations and conventions explain how a border water and cross border water should be used, but these regulations were not necessarily followed by countries but joined each other according to their policies.

"One important option in these international regulations is the historic usage of water, it means anyone who is historically using the water of a river has the right to be prioritized, accurate information of Harirud River shows its main user was Herat desert and Iran and Turkmenistan only received floods and a limited water," he added.

He said another issue in legal area was that water had now become a national security issue. "The water issue is directly related to national security in today's world," he added.

"Lack of water in a region cause problems in people's lives and gradually lead to discomfort and insecurity, some people believe water is more important than foreign assaults," he said.

Hussaini saw best solution to water disputes was negotiations but a country entering such talks should prepare a professional and politically-equipped team which should also have accurate figures and only water should be the subject of discussion.

"It is not justice when residents of Herat lack enough water for drinking while the neighboring country grows cotton, vegetables and others and even export them to other countries," he said.

Sultan Mahmud Mahmodi, advisor to the Ministry of Water and Energy, appreciated the survey and said the ministry would use statistics of the study.

He said the water level in Harirod basin had decreased from 1.6 billion cubic meters to 1,373 million cubic meters due to wasteful usage of ground water by Iran.

Mahmodi expressed concern over the shortage of ground water in the country and said increase in population, climate changes and flood were causes behind the declined ground water. (Pajhwok)

(13) Taliban Prevent...

brother and countrymen, he said that when he returns to his own village he would face problems," said another brother of the victim, Noor Mohammad.

Some clerics in Khost said they cannot conduct prayer services at funerals because of threats by the Taliban.

"The Taliban have imposed conditions for clerics," said one cleric in Khost Maulavi Matiullah.

Meanwhile, the council of religious scholars in Khost has confirmed the problem. "We have asked the Mullah Imams about the issue several times, they say that their homes are located in mountains and plains and they can not perform funeral prayers because of threats," said Maulavi Shah Mahmood, head of Khost Religious Scholars Council.

"Those who live in the villages can not perform the prayers because of threats," said Maulavi Ezharuddin, head of Khost Hajj and Pilgrimage department. Previously similar reports were received from Paktia where the clerics also refused to perform funeral prayers for dead security force members. (Tolo news)

(14) Traders Block...

governor's spokesman, Attaullah Khogyani, told Pajhwok that the issue would be shared with the provincial administration and the Ministry of Finance for solution.

Torkham is a major commercial town and trade route between Afghanistan and Pakistan. (Pajhwok)