

(1) Commission

results at that time, as both candidates had agreed that based on our country's national interests, not to announce the results. We, based on our country's national interest, respected this suggestion. Now it is our duty to release them."

In the end, roughly 800,000 votes of more than 7 million overall ballots separated the candidates, according to the commission, which faced heavy criticism over its handling of the vote.

More than 850,000 ballots were invalidated after months of recounting under the supervision of the United Nations. Of those invalidated votes, more than 567,000 were cast for Ghani, while more than 284,000 were cast for Abdullah, who now serves in a custom-made role as chief executive.

Efforts to broker a power-sharing agreement dragged on in 2014 over Abdullah's insistence that the results, which he regarded as fraudulent, not be released, according to officials at the time.

On Wednesday Abdullah's office criticized the election commission for delaying the release of the certified numbers. (Reuters)

(2) Ghani Names....

Human Right Commission (AIHRC).

He is a well-known lawyer with extensive experience in criminology and investigation. He had attended various national and international conferences and events on human rights promotion and protection.

Before joining the AIHRC, Hamidi was member of the Emergency Loya Jirga and responsible for developing rules and regulation for election.

He worked closely with the Judicial Reform Commission in training of lawyers and judges on international human right law and standards.

In addition, Lt. Gen. Abdul Rahman Rahmani had been replaced by Lt. Gen. Mohammad Ayub Salangi as new senior security advisor at the ministry of interior. (Pajhwok)

(3) HPC Urges

its new leader Gilani had once again called on the insurgents to pay heed to the calls for peace by the Afghanistan government and people.

The statement said the armed opponents should renounce violence and take the path of intra-Afghan negotiations for reaching their goals and should join hands with Afghans in rebuilding their country

It said the appointment of the HPC new leadership showed the unity government's commitment to achieving a lasting, just and dignified peace. With the appointment of the new leadership, the HPC would intensify its efforts at paving the ground for direct talks.

The HPC said the unity government identified the peace process as its top priority and there was no doubt in the unity regime's intention to bring about peace and stability to the country.

Looking at the peace process's national, regional and international aspects, the unity government has been able to bring about a mobilization in this regard.

This fact was proved by the creation of the four-nation group and international consensus in support of the Afghan peace process, which raised hopes for early direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, it said.

The four-nation group including Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US on Tuesday held its fourth meeting in Kabul and announced that Pakistan will host direct talks between the Afghan government and Taliban in early March.

But the Taliban's Qatar office said it had not been contacted by anyone regarding the peace talks in Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(4) Sharif Welcomes ...

upon all the Taliban groups and Hizb-e-Islami party of former Prime Minister, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, to join the process. Both have not yet made any decision.

"Afghanistan must have an environment where Afghan migrants return back to their country with respect, honor and dignity on the right time," a statement from the PM's office said.

He expressed his hope that Pakistan's engagement in sincere and consistent efforts for promoting peace and reconciliation through an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process would bring lasting peace in Afghanistan.

The Quadrilateral Coordination Group has been making good progress in right direction, the Prime Minister noted with satisfaction and also offered help to Afghanistan in its infrastructure development.

Pakistan believes that terrorism is a common enemy and Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work together to rid the two countries of this menace, Nawaz Sharif emphasized.

Afghan parliamentary Speaker, Abdul Raouf Ibrahim, said that friends of Afghanistan are friends of Pakistan and enemies of Afghanistan are enemies of Pakistan.

He also said Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif's stand is very clear and his policy and vision is appreciable towards peace process, the PM office statement said.

Ibrahim, speaker of the "Wolesi Jirga" or the National Assembly, arrived in Islamabad on a four-day visit as the head of a 12-member MPs delegation for talks to boost parliament-to-parliament cooperation.

The Afghan delegation on Wednesday witnessed proceedings of the Pakistan's National Assembly and also held talks with Pakistani lawmakers. (Xinhua)

(5) 19 Taliban ...

forces defused 20 landmines. But the Taliban claimed 11 US soldiers and 15 Afghan troops had been killed in the ongoing fighting. The group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said drones and gunship helicopters struck rebel positions.

Afghan infantry also shelled Taliban bases in the area, Mujahid said, adding the fighters had made a tactical retreat. Five Taliban were killed and three others wounded and some civilian homes destroyed in the airstrikes.

Barez, however, rejected the participation of NATO soldiers in the ongoing offensive and said the operation was being carried out by the 209th Shahin Military Corps personnel. (Pajhwok)

(6) No one...

between the Taliban and the Afghan government would take place in the next two weeks in Islamabad.

But the Taliban's Doha office told Pajhwok Afghan News that they were unaware of the decision and that no one had contacted them in this regard.

The office said the Islamic Emirate had clarified its stance about all affairs of Afghanistan during a conference organized by the Pugwash organization in Qatar last month, calling on all participants to help the movement expel foreign troops from the country and establish Islamic system.

The Taliban expressed their unawareness about likely peace talks in Pakistan two days after the Pakistani military chief, Gen. Raheel Sharif, visited Qatar and urged the Qatari leadership to encourage the Taliban leaders for peace talks with the Afghan government, sources said.

Analysts say Pakistan is a good choice to be a venue for the peace talks but they are skeptical about participation of key Taliban leaders in the negotiations.

One of them, Khushal Khalil, told Pajhwok Afghan News Pakistan had influence over Afghan Taliban as most of their top leadership was residing there.

He said the Taliban could easily come to peace talks in Pakistan where such parlays would yield positive results. When asked if the Taliban would appear for talks in Pakistan, he said it depended on how much Pakistan was giving importance to the peace talks and how much the country was interested in making the process a success.

He believed the Taliban would somehow attend the peace talks in Pakistan because Islamabad, if wanted, could bring them to the negotiating table the way it brought them to the talks in Murree.

Another analyst, Javed Ghafoor, held similar views and said Pakistan could play a key role in reviving the Afghan peace talks.

He said the Afghans and the Afghan government believed that Pakistan was behind all the conflicts and misfortunes in Afghanistan and the talks in Islamabad would be beneficial in the presence of China and the US.

Ghafoor said it was possible that some Taliban representatives may join the direct talks in Islamabad but he was not optimistic about the participation of high-level Taliban leaders.

But yet another political analyst Hassan Haqyar held a different view. He said the Taliban did not trust much Pakistan and the Afghan government also always accused the neighboring country of interference in Afghanistan's affairs, therefore Pakistan as a venue for the talks was not a good choice.

"Because the hosts enjoy much influence on the guests, that's why I think Pakistan is not a good choice to be

the venue for talks."

Haqyar did not believe anyone from the Taliban's Qatar office and Mullah Akhtar Mansour's representatives would attend the talks in Islamabad. (Pajhwok)

(7) Atmar Hints...

that the government of Afghanistan will continue with its efforts to put an end to the ongoing violence led by the Afghan militant groups.

He also praised the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) for their devotion and sacrifices, saying the government and elders of the country will always remember them.

The plane carrying 10,000 Ak-47 assault rifles from Russia arrived to capital Kabul this morning.

The delivery of the assault rifles is part of Russia's support to bolster the capabilities of the Afghan security forces to fight the menace of terrorism.

Russian President's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov said late in December last year "Russia has been consistently pursuing the policy of providing comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan in the establishment of a peaceful, independent, stable and self-sufficient state, free from terrorism and drugs."

The Afghan government has stepped up efforts to attract the regional as well as global support to equip the Afghan national security forces. (KP)

(8) EU, UN

medical aid organisation Doctors Without Borders also denounced the police measures. "European governments on this route continue to invent new and arbitrary criteria, with the sole goal of reducing the flow of people - at any cost, and in complete disregard of humanitarian needs," said humanitarian adviser Aurelie Ponthieu.

The organisation said 60 Afghans are trapped in a no-man's land between Serbia and FYROM. Serbian authorities say they must register in FYROM but FYROM authorities are refusing to let them back in. (AP)

(9) DABS Incurs

but the rebels denied hand in the sabotage act.

DABS chief said: "The enemy has the plan to keep Kabul in complete darkness, but the company used 100 megawatts of generator electricity and 100mg of electricity from Tajikistan."

Dilawari urged the Taliban to avoid targeting electricity installations that benefitted common people. He said the Taliban had not only destroyed the pylon in Dand-i-Shahabuddin area, but they also damaged several poles in Aman Tan area. All the damaged pylons had been repaired by DABS technicians, he said.

He said a delegation comprising officials from various departments had prepared a strategy on the protection of power pylons and they would present their plan to the president tomorrow.

Dilwari also said the power utility had incurred loss amounting to \$18 million during the past four months due to the depreciation of the afghani against the US currency. Uzbekistan supplies some 70 percent of Kabul's electricity. The power cut hit the city's water pumps, affecting water supplies. (Pajhwok)

(10) Noor-ul-Haq ...

as reports emerged earlier this month suggesting the interior minister has resigned from his position apparently due to differences he had with the government officials.

However, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) rejected the reports saying the interior minister has not resigned from his position. (KP)

(11) Germany, ...

Europe, which has struggled to find ways to accommodate the arrivals. Officials in Kabul greeted the returning refugees with signs saying "Welcome back, Afghanistan needs you."

"After a difficult way to Germany in the hands of people smugglers they realized their future is in Afghanistan and that they are needed in their home country," the German embassy said in a statement.

Many Afghans made their way to Germany, but in recent months the German government has launched media campaigns to dissuade would-be refugees from making the trip, warning of dangerous human traffickers and limited opportunities in Europe.

Afghans were 27 percent of the more than 100,000 refugees who made the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in January, second only to the number fleeing war-torn Syria, according to data collected by

the United Nations. (Reuters)

(12) Swedish Charity...

troops were involved had been confirmed by the U.N.'s assistance mission in Afghanistan, he said in a statement.

"Through information we received through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and information from our own staff, we believe it is almost certainly clear that international troops took part in the raid conducted against the clinic," the SCA said in a statement.

It said clinic staff believed that at least two people involved in the raid "spoke a language that sounded like English." It added that one person at the clinic said they wore "foreign uniforms."

Earlier, the SCA's communications coordinator Bjorn Lindh said the three were taken to a nearby bazaar and killed.

The SCA's Wednesday statement demanded the Afghan government and foreign forces provide a detailed explanation of the incident. "An independent investigation of the incident must be implemented," Holmstrom said.

UNAMA said in a statement this week that Interior Ministry special forces and international forces had conducted the operation.

The spokesman for the U.S.-NATO mission in Afghanistan, Army Col. Mike Lawhorn, says an investigation into the incident has begun.

The SCA incident follows the American military bombing of a hospital in the northern city of Kunduz by a U.S. AC-130 gunship on Oct. 3 which killed 42 people. The outgoing commander of U.S.-NATO forces in Afghanistan, Gen. John F. Campbell, said that attack was a mistake. (AP)

(13) Pugwash Secretary...

has arranged gatherings and seminars on the Afghanistan conflict in Qatar, France and the United Arab Emirates.

A source close to the Pugwash Council told Pajhwok Afghan News that the organization secretary general had arrived in Kabul a day earlier and he was expected to discuss with high-ranking Afghan officials the Afghan peace process.

Professor Ramusino, who arrived in Kabul from Islamabad, also held talks with Pakistani officials on the Afghanistan reconciliation process.

The latest conference Pugwash held on Afghanistan was in Qatar where members of the Taliban's Doha office and 40 representatives from Kabul were in attendance. Ramusino arrives in Kabul days after his organization opened its office in Kabul.

Sources close to the organization said the Pugwash office in Kabul would maintain constant contacts with parties to the Afghanistan conflict and would intensify its efforts for the national reconciliation.

A member of the Pugwash office in Kabul, who wished not to be named, told Pajhwok Afghan News that their office would operate in Afghanistan for the sake of bringing peace and stability to the country.

He said the Pugwash office would make efforts at paving the ground for direct talks between the government and the Taliban.

He said former minister Anwarul Haq Ahadi, Mirwais Yasini, Haji Farid, Haji Roohullah, Syed Ishaq Gilani and some more Afghan politicians were members of the Kabul office.

Media office of the Afghan Millat party, led by Ahadi, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the visiting Pugwash delegation would hold talks with Ahadi on the Afghan peace process tomorrow. (Pajhwok)

(14) Russia Gives...

adviser Hanif Atmar said at an event marking delivery of the arms shipment. "This important donation is from an important friend of Afghanistan in a crucial time for Afghanistan and the region."

The guns and ammunition were provided under an existing security agreement between the two countries, he added.

Russia's ambassador, Alexander Mantytskiy, told the gathered military and security officers that his country is willing to work with Afghanistan to combat problems like terrorism and drugs.

Wednesday's delivery comes as Russian officials say they have become impatient with the failures of Washington's policies in Afghanistan.

While never a member of the coalition, Russia cooperated with the United States for years by allowing military supplies to travel through its territory, and in other areas such as counter-narcotics and weapons supplies. That cooperation has disappeared

amid political rifts over the wars in Ukraine and Syria. Top Russian officials, openly critical of the lingering American presence, have said they are seeking deeper ties to the Kabul government, as well the Taliban. (Reuters)

(15) Taliban Advances...

contingent in areas surrounding the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, as well as around a key route linking Kabul, the state capital, and the western city of Herat.

"We have withdrawn our forces from Nawzad and Musa Qala based on military plans," said Mohammad Rasoul Zazai, a spokesman for the 215th army Corps.

S Army Colonel Michael Lawhorn, a spokesman for NATO's Resolute Support mission in Kabul, welcomed the "tactical decision," saying it would make the government forces more mobile and allow them to combat the Taliban "more effectively."

Merza Khan Rahimi, the governor of Helmand, praised the step as well, explaining that "it is normal during fighting to move forward or retreat." He added that abandoned districts could be reclaimed by the state army at any time.

Official US statistics are less optimistic. Almost a third of the country, ravaged by the long-term conflict, may find itself in the hands of the Taliban again.

The evacuation of Afghani troops from the north of Helmand also opens a pathway for the Taliban into the neighboring Kajaki district, where a US-built hydroelectric dam, supplying all nearby regions with electricity, is located.

After an international military coalition left Afghanistan in 2014, state forces gradually lost control of Helmand, encouraging the Taliban in its continuing offensive.

The militant group seeks to oust all Western-backed entities, re-establishing Islamic rule in the country. (Agencies)

(16) Protest Staged

Wednesday afternoon, chanting against what they called the government's failure to secure the release of their love ones.

Taj Mohammad, a resident of eastern Kunar province, said: "My son Zar Mohammad is among the missing soldiers. I don't have any information about his fate so far."

Jamshed Habibi, former provincial council head whose relative is also among the captives, blamed the government's unconcern for the soldiers in Taliban's captivity.

But the Ministry of Defence (MoD) insisted it had been striving to pave the way for their release. Brig. Gen. Dawlat Waziri, MoD's deputy spokesman, said it was the ministry's responsibility to make possible the release of the soldiers. (Pajhwok)

(17) The Supply of ...

a separate attack that cut the electrical supply from Tajikistan, had left much of the capital without power through several winter weeks.

The United States' action ensured that the lights were on in Kabul in time for a meeting on Tuesday of a four-nation group that is working to restart the Afghan peace process, according to The New York Times.

The so-called Quadrilateral Coordination Group, made up of diplomats from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States, issued a statement after the discussions inviting the Taliban and other antigovernment groups to meet with representatives of President Ashraf Ghani in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, by the first week of March.

We will recall that Taliban militants cut a supply of electricity from Uzbekistan to Kabul in late January, blowing up several power pylons in Baghlan province.

The attack on a power line from Uzbekistan to the Afghan capital had plunged large swathes of Kabul into darkness as nearly 70 percent of Kabul's electricity is imported from Uzbekistan. (Asia-Plus)

(18) Taliban's Siege ...

Faizabad, Gajgin, Chapak, Charmaq and Gosha villages, the town's administrative chief said.

Ghausuddin told Pajhwok Afghan News the district centre was currently under siege and tank snatched by rebels destroyed. Two militants have been killed so far during clashes.

Security forces and civilians had suffered no casualties, he said, adding hundreds of residents had left their houses after the Taliban informed them about fighting in the area.

Although there were enough security forces to resist against the militant onslaught, reinforcements were needed to retake control of the villages, Ghausuddin said.

Mohammad Sadiq Saadi, the youth council head for Dokin village, said around 300 families had been displaced from the district centre to Farah City, the capital of the province. (Pajhwok)

(19) Stopping...

during which the Syrian leader confirmed Damascus' readiness to facilitate the ceasefire's implementation, the Kremlin said in a separate online statement.

Putin also had a telephone conversation with King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The Kremlin said the latter welcomed the reached agreements and expressed readiness for joint work with Russia to implement them. (Xinhua)

(20) Kerry Issues ...

the next days," he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington.

If a political transition to a government to replace the current administration does not unfold in Syria, there are options, Kerry said, in a reference to undefined contingency plans believed to include military action.

The next month or two would show if that transition process was serious and Assad would have to make "some real decisions about the formation of a transitional governance process that's real," Kerry said. (Reuters)

(21) Abe to Ignore...

this end, Suga said that communications between Japan and its main ally the U.S. would continue as well as its special cooperation, and through the Group of Seven countries' mechanisms, Japan would jointly stand up to the challenges facing the international community. (Xinhua)

(22) Brexit would will happen," Tusk said. The major groups in the European Parliament have thrown their weight behind Cameron's commitment to stay in the EU, even though they chided the Conservative leader for making an internal party dispute a divisive issue across the entire 28-nation EU. (AP)

(23) 11 Killed ...

cobra helicopters. According to initial reports, nine PKK militants were killed in the operation.

Operations in the curfew-declared district have been ongoing along with the participation of about 4,000 policemen, gendarmerie and special operation teams, local media reported.

Turkey's southeast has seen the worst violence in two decades since a cease-fire between the government and the PKK collapsed in July 2015. (Xinhua)

(24) Israeli Security ...

United States, and three others were brought in for activities of "popular terrorism," meaning protesting and rock throwing at Israeli security forces, according to the Israeli army.

The IDF did not provide the reasons behind the arrest of seven other suspects. The previous night, the IDF arrested 19 people in the West Bank.

The Israeli police arrested on early Wednesday two Arab Israeli vendors, Palestinians living in east Jerusalem, after finding pipe bombs and ammunition in their stand at the Old City of Jerusalem, police spokeswoman Luba Samri said.

A police sapper neutralized the explosives and the suspects were detained for questioning, Samri said. (Xinhua)

(25) PM Calls ...

the UNHCR head seeks to further support Greece to assist incoming refugees, as well as NATO's upcoming operation in the Aegean Sea in an international attempt to stem the refugee influx, according to the press release.

Wednesday's meeting was held as Greece was under increasing pressure this week with thousands of refugees remaining stranded in the country, after several neighboring Balkan countries and central European states have introduced additional restrictions in cross-border movements. (Xinhua)

(26) UN Promises...

socio-economic consequences on a population that has already been impoverished. He noted that over 240,000 Burundians have fled into refuge in neighbouring countries due to the crisis. The UN chief urged Burundians to work together and protect dividends of peace, stability and reconciliation that were achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord signed in 2000, and the subsequent ceasefire agreements. (Xinhua)