

(1) TAPI Seen...

Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan, Omar Zakhilwal, meanwhile said: "This is what should guide and define our region: TAPI, CASA, ..., greater economic integration and interdependency greater regional prosperity, harmony, peace and stability!"

The ceremony to mark the start of work in Afghanistan of TAPI was attended by high-ranking government officials including the Afghan President, the Turkmen President, Pakistan's Prime Minister, and India's Minister of State for External Affairs, along with the NATO and US Forces Commander in Herat.

The launch of the project was widely welcomed and people across the country said it would help build the foundation of economic development in Afghanistan.

Even the Taliban welcomed the move and declared its support.

In a statement issued by the group it said the Taliban "views the project as a vital foundational economic element for the country and considers its proper implementation as good news for the Afghan people."

As work on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project started in Herat province, Afghans said this was a major boost for the country's and that it brings empathy and solidarity among the people.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held in Herat on Friday to launch the start of work on the Afghanistan section of pipeline that will feed natural gas to the three countries from Turkmenistan.

Attending Friday's ceremony was President Ashraf Ghani, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Mobashar Jawed Akbar India's Minister of State External Affairs, NATO and US Forces Commander Gen. John Nicholson and other high-ranking officials.

Addressing the event, Ghani said Afghanistan will do everything it can to complete the project.

At the same event, Pakistan Prime Minister said his country is committed to long-term economic goals which guarantee stability in the region.

Abbasi wished Afghanistan success for its economic projects and said, "your development is our development, security in Afghanistan is security in Pakistan".

Turkmenistan President meanwhile stressed the need for increasing his country's cooperation with Afghanistan.

He said the implementation of the TAPI project is a huge achievement for countries involved, adding that the project will have a good impact on Afghanistan's security and economy.

He vowed to provide more opportunities of development projects in Afghanistan.

India's Minister of State External Affairs said his country is committed to supporting the project.

Whenever the security of TAPI was mentioned in the media, the Taliban were projected as the main enemy and primary threat.

But on Friday the Taliban issued a statement and announced their support from the project.

The Taliban said: "The Islamic Emirate declares its support for the implementation of the said project passing through areas under our control and calls all sides involved to be mindful of the principled policy of the Islamic Emirate".

Previously, a breakaway group of the Taliban insurgents also announced its support to the development project.

The Afghan government meanwhile says it has stepped-up security measures to secure the pipeline project as it is a major economic opportunity for Afghanistan.

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

The pipeline passes through Herat, Farah, Nimroz, Helmand and Kandahar provinces of Afghanistan.

TAPI will transport gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India via a 1,814km pipeline.

In Afghanistan, the TAPI pipeline will be constructed alongside the Kandahar-Herat Highway in western Afghanistan, and then via Quetta and Multan in Pakistan.

The pipeline will be 1,814 kilometers long and will have the capacity of transferring 33 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India through Herat, Farah, Helmand and Nimroz provinces of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, industrialists and religious scholars have also said the Afghan people in general must be mobilized to support the TAPI project.

According to factory owners, industrial townships in Herat will be the first to benefit from the project.

Analysts said the TAPI project can bring changes in people's lives in Afghanistan and that it will have a positive impact on the country's economy.

"By implementation of this project, poverty will be decreased to some extent. Investment will increase, and industry owners and investors will work here," economic affairs analyst Taj Mohammad Talash said.

"This project will reduce the unemployment rate. It will provided a great chance for improvement of agriculture, industries and energy sector," economic affairs analyst

Sayed GhiasSaeedi said.

While Afghanistan start of construction of the Afghanistan section of TAPI, economic commentators welcomed the project and said it was a milestone in the country's economic development.

Herat residents also welcomed the project and said they will support its implementation. The residents said they will do whatever they can to ensure the project is completed.

"This big economic project is a unique project in Afghanistan's history," Nisar Haris, head of Herat People's Association said.

"This project can help bring security and social welfare," Majla Hakak, a resident of Herat said.

"All people are proud of this project. It is a matter of pride for us," Herat resident Sayed Ahmad said.

Dozens of residents of eastern provinces celebrated the inauguration. They came out to Jalalabad city roads and danced to the beats of local songs.

The residents said they hope the project will bring more employment opportunities to the country and that it will improve Afghanistan's economy.

"We announce our support to this project and will try to make this project successful. We urge government to implement other projects here too. Our message to the world is that we as a nation want peace, not war," Hedayatullah Zahir, head of Watanpal Civil Society Organization in Nangarhar, said.

"From one hand this project will create jobs for the people and on the other hand, it will directly improve people's lives," Mohammad Hanif Gardiwal, a tribal elder from the province, said.

In addition, residents of eastern Khost province also announced their support for TAPI and welcomed the project and called for the implementation of more economic projects in the country.

"People of Afghanistan must support the project, because this project benefits a lot of Afghanistan and we must support this project so it is implemented," said Anamullah, a Khost resident.

The culture and information ministry's youth affairs department deputy head Kamal Sadat, want the government to provide job opportunities for the young people with the launch of such large-scale development projects.

Reports indicates that the plan was devised over 20 years ago - during the Taliban time. However it is only now being rolled out.

The pipeline is not just a gas project, but also a fiber optic line - all of which will go towards job creation.

Afghanistan is expected to earn 500\$ million USD in transit duties annually from the project. (Tolo news)

(2) ARG Sent...

the fact finding team was made up of members from different government institutions and that the report was sent to the AGO. The AGO in turn issued arrest warrants for five people but said the report went straight to the Presidential Palace.

Sources meanwhile said so far 10 people have been arrested in relation to the hotel attack and five others have been banned from leaving the country.

The Attorney General's Office refused to give details about the findings saying only that the fact-finding team sent its report to the Presidential Palace, not to the Attorney General's Office.

The Presidential Palace has refused to comment in this regard.

"Afghan government has on obligation to share information. When the government does not share credible information with the media, it means that the enemies of the Afghan people will share the opposite of such information and they benefit from this gap," AINUDDIN Bahaduri, a member of the Access to Information Oversight Commission said.

Following the attack, the interior ministry said that it was possible some people from inside the hotel had helped the insurgents.

"The past experiences have proved that as much as we can be flexible against the enemy, they become bolder in killing the people," said Massoud Treshtwal, head of Afghanistan's Legal and Political Studies Institute. (Tolo news)

(3) Death Toll...

suspicious and when they confronted him he detonated his device.

No confirmation was given on the type of device used but unconfirmed reports indicate the bomber had been wearing an explosive vest.

This comes on the heels of the ministry's recent launch of its new security plan for Kabul city which has seen a marked increase in road closures and check points.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack. (Tolo news)

(4) Afghan MMA...

was marred by indiscriminate shooting in Kabul after the match.

Gun fire could be heard throughout the city for at least half an hour after it started.

Baz Mohammad Mubariz and Ahmad Wali Hotak both won their fights against their Ukrainian and Scottish rivals respectively.

Hotak went into the cage to fight his Ukrainian rival first and won on points after three rounds.

The second match was between Mubariz and an MMA fighter from Scotland. He also won the match on points in three rounds.

Mubariz returned home last week from a long-term training session in Thailand. He

was trained under the supervision of Thai, US and Brazilian trainers over the past two months.

His fight was scheduled for January 16 but was delayed, Mubariz told TOLO newslast week. (Tolo news)

(5) NATO Renews...

protect Afghans and it will protect Europe. It will protect America and Canada. Our North Atlantic Alliance is firm on this subject," Hutchison added.

Germany, Italy, Turkey, and the United States are RS framework nations, meaning they command the different regions in Afghanistan. They also represent some of the largest troop contributors to Resolute Support and the former International Security Assistance Force.

Afghan security forces took over the lead for combat operations from ISAF in January, 2015, and RS became exclusively a TAA mission.

In 2017, Afghan forces denied the Taliban any of their stated battlefield objectives—preventing them from capturing a single provincial capital—and have continued to pressure insurgents across the country throughout the winter.

"What we are seeing is a lowering of ambition of the Taliban," said Gen. Nicholson. "Following the announcement of the U.S. South Asia Policy, the enemy made another decision to lower their ambition again and resort to terrorist attacks and to avoid the kind of fights where they have lost so heavily."

"So this exposes the hypocrisy of the Taliban, who every year talk about the desire to decrease civilian casualties and now are directly targeting civilians and taking credit for it."

Gen. Scaparrotti and the ambassadors also visited Train, Advise, Assist Commands North, West, and Capital. German-led TAAC-N in Mazar-e-Sharif includes 21 allied and partner nations and works closely with Afghan partners from the 209th Afghan National Army Corps, and the 707th and 808th Afghan National Police Zone.

Italian-led TAAC-W in Herat advises Afghan partners from the ANA 207th Corps and 606th ANP Zone. Turkish-led TAAC-C advises Afghan forces securing Kabul, including the 111th Capital Division and Kabul City Police Centre.

"Afghan Security Forces continue to improve their expertise and capabilities day-by-day," said Gen. Scaparrotti. "NATO remains committed to supporting them as they develop their capabilities, strengthen command and control, and prepare the next generation of military leaders."

At the NATO Summit in Warsaw, 2016, NATO Allies and Resolute Support operational partners committed to sustain the NATO-led Resolute Support, to continue national contributions to the financial sustainment of the Afghan security forces, and to strengthen the Enduring Partnership between NATO and Afghanistan through political dialogue and practical cooperation. At their meeting in November 2017, Defence Ministers from NATO Allies and Resolute Support operational partners committed to increase the strength of the Resolute Support Mission from around 13,000 to around 16,000 troops; they also confirmed they will continue to fund the Afghan Security Forces until at least 2020.

In July, 2018, a NATO Summit will be held in Brussels where heads of state and government from NATO Allies are expected to reaffirm NATO's continued commitment to Afghanistan.

NATO's support to the Afghan Security Forces and institutions is key to supporting the implementation of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's roadmap to further develop the Afghan security forces and institutions. The roadmap, unveiled by the Afghan National Unity Government in early 2017, outlines a plan for securing and maintaining control of %80 of the population, as well as committing to continuing reforms on good governance within the Afghan security apparatus.

"We are in a win-win situation if we, all together, concentrate on protecting stability to this country," said Ambassador Zimmermann. "A stable Afghanistan will be to the benefit of each and every player in this region—this needs to be understood—that ultimately a peaceful and stable Afghanistan will be to the betterment of us all." (Pajhwok)

(6) Ghani Vows...

says at least one person has been killed and six others have been wounded.

The militants also launched coordinated attack on an army base in Farah province late last night with the ministry of defense saying at least eighteen soldiers were martyred in the attack.

On the other hand, the local officials in Helmand are saying that two soldiers were martyred and nine others including civilians were wounded in three separate suicide blasts in Lashkargah city and Nad-e-Ali district. (KP)

(7) Indonesian...

He said his country was trying to contribute in the Afghan peace process by developing joint consensus among Ulema.

The joint conference of Afghanistan and Pakistan ulemas is expected to take place in Indonesian next month.

Arif said his country provided education facilities for Afghan students in 20 universities in different fields. He extended invitation to deputy CEO for trade exhibition

which will be held in Indonesian next month, said Ibrahim, adding the CEP accepted the invitation.

Separately, a delegation from Nangarhar met Indonesian envoy in Kabul and assured them cooperation in different areas, said Attaullah Khogyani, the governor spokesman. The delegation was headed by Nangarhar Revenue Department Head. (Pajhwok)

(8) HPC Supports...

Referring to recent remarks of the National Security Advisor (NSA) in Saudi Arabia regarding possible closure of Taliban's Qatar office, he said: "The HPC would like the closure of every Taliban office which could not prove effective in making peace efforts." He told the Taliban that the HPC was ready for talks with them anywhere in the world but such talks should be led by Afghans. He, however, said international terrorist groups hell bent on killing innocent people would be crushed and the HPC would not talk with them. (Pajhwok)

(9) Key Actors...

and India at a regional level," the minister added.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, the United Nations, the European Union and some international organisations have been invited to the conference

The UK, Germany, France and Italy have also received invitations, according to the foreign minister, who said: "Taking into consideration the fact that we are located in the same region, all Central Asian states will be attending."

Since President Donald Trump's takeover, US policy on Afghanistan and the region had become more active and clearer, Kamilov Kamilovtohe Kamilov remarked.

Meanwhile, Russia supported Tashkent's initiative to host the international conference on 'Peace Process, Cooperation in the Sphere of Security and Regional Interaction.'

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said: "The idea of holding the forum was put forward by our Uzbek friends at a special session of the United Nations Security Council in January."

"Today we have been discussing preparations for that milestone and major event," Lavrov said, adding all current formats needed to be mobilised to push for a solution to the Afghan crisis.

"Among them are so-called Moscow format and the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group [Shanghai Cooperation Organization plus Afghanistan]." (Pajhwok)

(10) \$9m Contracts...

the cultivation of saffron and an increase in its production had significantly improved. Marketing for saffron at the global exhibitions could boost the export of what is known as red gold.

The statement added that Afghanistan had been regularly taking part in the Dubai exhibition since 2011 with the help of USAID. (Pajhwok)

(11) Diesel, Gas...

cost 1,600af, 50kg of Kazakhstani flour 1,100af, 16 liters of Khurshid ghee 1,020af and 24kg of Pakistani rice 2,000af, the same rates as last week's.

Meanwhile, Noor Ahmad Khairkhwah, a tea seller in Kabul Mandavi, said a kilogram of Indonesian green tea cost 280af and the same amount of African black tea 300af -- same prices as last week's.

Ahmad Wali Panjsheri, who owns a grocery store in Dahn-i-Bagh area, sold a -49kg bag of sugar for 1,800af, a -16litre tin of ghee for 1,100af, a -50kg sack of Kazakhstani flour for 1,180af, -24kg Pakistani rice for 2,400af, a kilogram of green Indonesian tea for 300af and the same quantity of black African tea for 350af.

The price of Russian gold edged down. Haji Fawad Ahmad Salehzada, a jeweler in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Russian gold dipped from 1,950af to 1,900af while the rate of the same quantity of Arabian variety stood at 2,400af.

According to Sadaqat Money Exchange Service in Sara-I-Shahzada in Kabul, one US dollar accounted for 69.10af and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 611af this week, against last week's rates of 69.05af and 607af respectively. (Pajhwok)

(12) 2nd Round...

campaign was launched just two weeks after a previous drive because the virus spread was possible during this period of winter.

Anti-polio vaccination is the only effective way to prevent children from paralysis and the disease could not be treated once it affected a child, the source said.

According to the MoPH, three cases of paralysis have been registered in Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces this solar year. (Pajhwok)

(13) 7 Rebels Killed...

who wished to go unnamed, said the shopkeeper was killed with a silent gun.

The attacker managed to flee after the attack -- the third targeted killing in Ghazni City just over the last three days. (Pajhwok)

(14) Taliban, IS ...

Officials said the deadliest of the several attacks occurred in western Farah province, where Taliban insurgents in a pre-dawn assault killed at least 20 government forces before capturing their base in BalaBaluk district.

Separately, two early morning suicide bombings targeted Afghan forces in the troubled Helmand province.

The first attack occurred in the Nad Ali district where a driver in an explosives-packed armored personnel vehicle, known as a Humvee, targeted an Afghan National Army base. Officials citing initial reports confirmed the blast killed at least four soldiers and wounded several others.

A Taliban statement claimed responsibility, saying the attack destroyed the base and killed at least 25 Afghan soldiers, though insurgents often issue inflated tolls.

Just hours later, a vehicle-borne bomb was detonated in the provincial capital of Lashkargah, killing at least one person and wounding nine others, including civilians, according to officials.

The Taliban insisted the target was an office of the Afghan intelligence agency, and that the bomb killed several security personnel.

Visiting U.S. permanent representative to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchison, while speaking to reporters in Kabul, condemned what she said was a "fruitless" effort by the Taliban and called on the insurgents to join an Afghan peace process.

"We are not going to stand by and let Afghanistan be riven with violence again. So, we hope that the Taliban will see that this is a no-win game for them unless they come to the table and become part of something that would make Afghanistan stronger," noted Hutchison.

TAPI project

Farah and Helmand are among the provinces located on the route of a regional pipeline being constructed to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The multi-billion dollar project, known as TAPI, is expected to be fully operational within next two years.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Friday hosted leaders from the participating nations in the western border city of Herat where they jointly inaugurated construction work on the portion of the pipeline passing through Afghanistan.

President Ghani, who was still in Herat on Saturday condemned the violence.

"At a time when Afghans are celebrating the TAPI project, enemies of our homeland and people have martyred a number of our countrymen in terrorist attacks in Kabul, Helmand and Farah," Ghani told a meeting of provincial officials and business leaders.

The message for enemies of Afghanistan is that such attacks strengthen the government's resolve to fight terrorism and bring economic stability for its people, he added.

The Taliban in a statement issued Friday pledged to protect the TAPI pipeline, saying the project was negotiated and brought to Afghanistan when the Islamist group was ruling the country. But critics questioned the insurgency's claims in the wake of latest attacks.

TAPI will carry 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from the world's fourth largest reserves in Turkmenistan through a 1,814 kilometer pipeline linking the four nations and is expected to create up to 25,000 jobs for Afghans in addition to generating about 500 million dollars in annual transit fees.

Dubbed as the "peace pipeline," TAPI was conceived in the 1990s, but construction could not begin until 2015, mainly because of unending hostilities in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's tensions with rival India. (VoA)

(15) Rashid Khan...

clubs and is playing for Bangladesh's Camilla Victories, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Adelaide Strikers, Guyana Amazon Warriors and has recently joined English Sussex

Former national cricket player and current coach, HastiGulAbid, said that Rashid Khan started cricket as a batsman.

"Like some other Afghans, Rashid Khan had also lived in Pakistan's Peshawar city as a refugee with his family. He learnt cricket during his migration in Pakistan. Besides cricket, he was getting education and was a teacher in a course," he said.

Few years back when Afghanistan-A cricket team participated in a match in Peshawar, Rashid Khan made 70 runs against his rival team, Abid added.

Rashid Khan then joined the Kuchi team as opener and participated in domestic competitions, he added.

"I was a member of the selection committee that time when we added Rashid Khan as a member of the under 19 cricket team. Their first trip was to Pakistan, another top player who participated in the Pakistan match was FaridMalak who took seven wickets," he said. In his trip to Pakistan, Rashid Khan made fifty runs.

Rashid Khan was given chance in the national cricket team very soon after he shined in the U19 side, Abid added.

About the talent of Khan, Abid said: "He has natural talent, such ability could be found in a very limited number of players, only one could be found in thousands."

Cricket fans around the world are also amazed and comment about Khan's talent, he said.

Rashid Khan secured second position as batsman in T20 games and fourth position among all rounders in ODI matches.

He participated in 37 ODI matches and took 86 wickets as made 545 runs including two fifties. He also attended 29 T20 matches and took 47 wickets and made 100 runs. Khan had also played four first class (four-day) matches, taking 35 wickets. (Pajhwok)