

(1) Atmar Underlines

The ongoing conflict in the country had regional and global dimensions and state and non-state actors, he said. "That is why it is the most distractive and protracted conflict in the history of Afghanistan."

In his election campaign, Atmar said he would focus on national unity, lasting peace, justice, good governance, economic growth and cooperation with the regional and international community. (Pajhwok)

(2) Indian, Afghan

projects were put into operation in this port."

Eslami pointed to the presence of India's deputy minister of transport in the Conference and said, "Participation of Indian transport officials in this conference indicate that India is interested in making huge investment in Chabahar port." Late in December, Iran, India, and Afghanistan held their first joint committee on following up the agreements reached between the trio states on finalizing protocols for transit, roads, customs and consular matters of Chabahar port.

The meeting was held in the port city of Chabahar, in attendance of Deputy Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization Mohammad Ali Hassanzadeh, as well as high-ranking delegations from the parties to the agreement.

The committee aimed at finalizing the protocol to harmonize transit, roads, customs and consular matters for making the route attractive and decrease logistic costs.

Reportedly, detailed discussions were held between the three sides on drawing the necessary provisions for the full operation of the agreement. Further details are yet to be revealed. In a related front, Earlier on October 12, Senior Iranian and Indian trade officials held a meeting in New Delhi to review ways to bolster bilateral relations, specially development of Chabahar port.

During the meeting in the Indian capital, Iranian Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development Mohammad Rastad and senior officials from India's Ministry of Shipping and Ports Association explored avenues for bolstering and reinvigorating mutual cooperation, in particular the development of Chabahar port.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the development of Chabahar Port as well as the time and conditions of implementing the main contract.

The Indian company, IPGL, has been tasked with administering and running the terminal of the first phase of 'Beheshti harbor' at Chabahar port as a mere operator.

Supplying the equipment for development of the port by the Indian company was also on the meeting's agenda.

During his two-day stay, Rastad visited Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT Port), a strategic Indian trade hub, and conferred with related officials on boosting ties between the JNPT Port and Chabahar Port.

Chabahar is the closest and best access point of Iran to the Indian Ocean. In May 2016, Iran and India signed a deal to equip and operate containers and multi-purpose terminals at Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar with the capital investment of 85.21\$ million and annual revenue expenditure of \$ 22.95 million on a -10year lease. (IRNA)

(3) Japan Donates

(OMAR) and Mr. Arifullah Azimi, Managing Director, Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan (AREA). The ceremony was witnessed by government representatives including Mr. Mohammad Shafiq Yousufi, Director of Afghanistan Mine

Action Coordination (DMAC) and Mr. Ahmad Riaz Sediqi, Director of NGOs Affairs of the Ministry of Economy.

Aforementioned projects will be implemented under Japan's "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GAGP)" scheme. The projects includes both mine clearance and conducting mine risk education (MREs) to targeted population of these provinces. Successful implementation of these projects will clear more than 1.6 KM2 of minefields and battlefields and will benefit more than 14,000 households saving their lives from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERWs) and giving them opportunities to transform lands marred by mines into productive resources for their livelihoods.

Mr. Keiichi HARA, Charge d'Affaires of Embassy of Japan in Afghanistan mentioned that mine clearance sets a basic condition for development such as infrastructure and agriculture, which contributes to the improvement of the economic situation in Afghanistan. Based on this belief, Japan has been assisting mine clearance projects through its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Project. Japan remains committed to assisting the efforts in the nation building by Afghan people and government.

Mr. Yousufi, conveyed gratitude to the generous support of Japan to the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan and stated that, since 2012 the contribution of the Government of Japan have helped in clearing 26.5 square kilometers of area which resulted in destroying more than 5,200 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines and almost 37,000 explosive remnants of war. The successful completion of these projects will also contribute to security, safety and development and will assist the Government of Afghanistan in fulfilling its clearance obligations under applicable international mine action treaties.

Mr. Sediqi, also thanked the government and the people of Japan saying Japan has proven to be a sincere and close friend with the government and people of Afghanistan in the course of the history and extended its helping hand to Afghans in the time of need. He added, it deems necessary to mention at this specific moment that the leadership of the Ministry of Economy is striving hard to facilitate the work of NGOs in the best possible manner with the aim of effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Japan has been assisting Afghanistan's nation-building efforts in various fields including infrastructure, agriculture and rural development, human resource development, health and education, and humanitarian assistance. Cumulative Japanese assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 amounts to more than 6.6\$ billion USD. (PR)

(4) Voting to Pick

Of them, 66 were introduced by political parties and 15 by civil institutions. Sixteen women are among them.

Yousuf Rashid, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) executive director, said of the 84 candidates picked by political parties and election watchdogs, 14 would be picked through voting by 18 presidential candidates.

He added every presidential candidate could vote for 14 aspirants. On February 12, the president fired all IEC and IECC members after amendments to the Election Law. (Pajhwok)

(5) Afghan Women

Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, a Taliban representative in Moscow meeting, had said the Taliban would respect all rights of women which Islam has granted them.

He had said Islam had granted women with all fundamental rights such as

doing business, holding a possession, right to inheritance, education, work, choosing a life partner, security, health and life.

Karima Salik, women's affairs director for Bamyan province, said: "We want rights what Islam has given us, we are Muslim, Islam does not stop women from getting education or work, so women should have their presence in all parts and this issue should be clearly talked in peace negotiations."

"We are tired of the war, we want peace and stability because women are mostly affected in the war, we want both sides to let us talk in peace negotiations and hear our demands and give us role in decision making," she said.

Salik said women were given only a symbolic role in peace talks done so far and they were offered a limited time to express their views.

She stressed that the number of women in the upcoming consultative Loya Jirga should not be limited.

Zarqa Yaftali, head of Women and Children Rights Research Organization, said that Afghanistan would never have a stable peace unless women were given a wider role in peace talks.

She urged high participation of women in the upcoming consultative peace jirga and an end their symbolic role in peace negotiations.

Raihana Ahmadi, a police officer in Kabul, said the Afghan women were tired of the war and they wanted peace in the country - a peace which could protect women's achievements and freedom.

"Peace with the Taliban is a serious risk, we fear the Taliban would again stop women from work and education," she said.

On the Taliban statements about women's rights, she said, "We want them to be clearer, talk in details and make clear commitments."

She said women should be given similar expression opportunity as men in peace negotiations and they should be given time to provide their own views about peace.

Ahmadi said the number of women in peace negotiations was limited compared to the number of men and women had no role in the decision making sphere.

Some women say they should be provided awareness about elections to increase their presence in the democratic process.

Shinkai Karokhel talking about women's role in October 2018 Wolesi Jirga elections, said, "Despite insecurity and cultural problems and lack of their awareness about voting, the females voted in great numbers and played their role in the elections."

She said public awareness programs for women for the next presidential elections should be increased. She said unfamiliarity of women with the voting process was a major problem in the Wolesi Jirga polls.

Karima Salik said women played an important role in past elections as they did not rig the polls and voted for trusted figures.

"In October elections, I saw women in Bamyan polling stations voting for their interested candidate despite their families opposition not to go outside," she said. She also said women's lack of awareness about voting process was a main problem, asking the government to provide awareness to women ahead of the next presidential election.

Zarqa Yaftali said a high number of women participated in the last Wolesi Jirga polls and many women run as candidates. But she said women still faced problems such as bad traditions, insecurity and low awareness.

Raihana Ahmadi, about women's role in elections, also said a high number of women voted in the Wolesi Jirga polls despite many problems.

Current situation of women Afghan women say efforts have been made for improvement of women's livelihood during the past 18 years, but these efforts are not enough and more

work is required. Karima Salik said the living standard of Afghan women was getting better with each passing day as they had now access to education and work and had the ability to participate in politics, cultural and economic activities.

However, she said the Afghan women, particularly in remote areas, needed further services.

Karokhel also said women's life significantly changed compared to what it had been 17 years ago.

"We have women as ministers, ambassadors, deputies, district chiefs and in other high ranked positions, which is a pride and we want to have more attention to improvement of their livelihood," she said.

Zarqa Yaftali said despite some developments in women's lives, they were still struggling with insecurity, bad economy, lack of education and lack of health services.

Raihana Ahmadi also said women's lives had positively changed compared to their situation 18 years ago.

"We now can work, get education, do business and travel abroad, I work as a police officer which shows women's lives have improved," she said.

However, she said the work women did was still not enough and they needed further opportunities. (Pajhwok)

(6) The Benefits

Asia Business Journalism Platform. It will have a Steering committee that with members from all member countries. SABJP secretariat will be responsible to undertake cooperation and coordination roles and responsibilities.

The Benefits of South Asia Economic Integration □ A Journalism Summit was organized and convened by the Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State (DOA).

(7) Pakistan Warns

killed 40 Indian paramilitary troopers. "Indian aggression can disturb joint efforts to establish peace in Afghanistan," Qureshi was quoted as telling Pompeo.

"India is jeopardizing the peace in South Asia for its political purposes and elections," said the Pakistani foreign minister.

He added that Pakistan is desirous of peace in the region, but will not compromise on its territorial integrity. (Xinhua)

(8) Afghan Airliner

Kam Air's flight was not the only airliner which was prevented from crossing Pakistan's airspace, he said, adding that other airplanes were also forced to return to Kabul when they were not allowed to enter the neighboring country's airspace.

The Afghan government so far has not commented in this regard.

Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority said it has shut its airspace to all commercial flights as military tensions with India escalates.

The tensions between Pakistan and India worsened after on Tuesday New Delhi said that Indian air force jets carried out air strikes on militant camps inside Pakistan.

According to the New Delhi, 12 Indian fighters targeted a hideout of Jaish-e-Mohammad group in Balakot area in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. "Air Force carried out aerial strike early morning today at terror camps across the LoC (Line of Control) and Completely destroyed it," minister of state for agriculture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Twitter.

The Indian media reported that the Jaish-e-Mohammed group was involved in Pulwama attack on February 14 that killing 40 India's CRPF personnel. In reaction to the airstrikes, Pakistan military said they will retaliate.

On Wednesday, a spokesman of Pakistan armed forces said that Pakistan has shot down two Indian jets.

Indian media also on Wednesday reported that India has shot down an f16- fighter of Pakistan, but Islamabad has rejected the claim. (Tolo news)

(9) Taliban Accused

a few days ago has been slow going. Naqibullah Dadqiq said so far 15 Taliban insurgents including their shadow district chief for Sancharak have been killed and 20 others wounded during the operation. Without giving details, he said foreign rebels were also fighting in Taliban ranks in the area.

Qari Yusuf Ahmadi, a Taliban spokesman, rejected the fighters had torched civilian homes but destroyed a number of ALP posts. No civilian or property suffered harm in the clash, he added.

"It is propaganda of the enemy or may be the ALP wants to take privileges from the government by giving such statements," he said. (Pajhwok)

(10) Protesters

of the protest, said he and other candidates decided to launch a peaceful rally but unfortunately it was not allowed by police citing security threats.

"We planned to stress over the invalidation of vote, halt to the recount process and trial of commissioners and those who committed fraud during election and share our concern with the UNAMA, but we were not allowed," he said.

He said the democratic right of the people had been undermined in the Kabul election and demanded all the votes to be invalidated.

Erfan accused the election bodies commissioners over bribe and favoritism and said: "A fake list of winners had been published and shared by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) which is not acceptable to us."

Mahmood Haidari, another protester, termed the polls as rigged and fraudulent and claimed the IEC and Independent Electoral Complaint Commission (IECC) facilitated rigging and fraud during polls.

IEC spokesman Abdul Aziz Ibrahim said inspection and recount of 120 polling booths from Kabul was underway following the direction of the IECC.

He said the inspection process was underway in the presence of representatives from political parties, Wolesi Jirga members, election watchdogs and IECC. (Pajhwok)

(11) Seventeen Gendarmes

Today, 17 of them will leave; the next ones will leave in three weeks' time, as they are vetted to handle NATO classified intelligence. They will provide a training mission to the Afghan law enforcement troops, will join the peace-keeping troops there that include soldiers from the Romanian National Defence Ministry. For their six-month mission, they will be accommodated at a military base in Kabul," said Dan.

She added that this mission is proof that the Romanian Gendarmerie is commended for what it does and for the expertise it provides internationally. "I am proud and honoured, and I am glad that today we could join them to wish them easy mission and safe return home to their families and colleagues. And I am also glad that, despite all the difficult moments we have had to overcome, at least for the last seven months, Mr President Iohannis himself has understood the importance of the representation of the Gendarmerie in war zones and approved by a decision of the Supreme Council for National Defence (CSAT) the deployment of this contingent of expertise to Afghanistan, in contract to the actions (...) aimed at affecting the image of the Romanian Gendarmerie you may remember the steps taken even internationally to withdraw the Gendarmerie from the war zones and even to disband it," said Dan. (Agencies)