

(1) 'No Progress' ...

cement factory had been signed with a private company eight years ago. However, the government later terminated the contract with the company over violations.

According to ministry of mines and petroleum technical teams from the ministry of mines and petroleum are currently trying to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the mines to establish the scale of financial losses and then it will submit its report to the high economic council

"The requirements set by the ministry of mines and petroleum in the contracts have to be met. If the requirements are not met over certain issues, then there is a legal procedure to be followed. Our technical and economic teams then work to find out the extent of the financial loss and other aspects. The report is then prepared," said Mutfi.

There are concerns that illegal extraction is still underway at these mines due to the absence of a government presence in the regions where the mines are located. NRMN officials have said that the contracts for these mines had been signed in a transparent manner. The NRMN added that the government had not accessed the mines due to security issues. "Unfortunately, during this period, coal has been extracted illegally by the local lawbreakers," said Ibrahim Jaffari, a member NRMN.

According to MoMP the contracts of 14 small and big mines have been terminated due to problems with the contracts. They called on the government to take steps and ensure transparency at the affected mines. (Tolonews)

(2) Efforts Underway..

The selection committee started its work on the selection of IEC chief four days ago. The committee is expected to refer the names of three candidates to the government in a few days. (Tolonews)

(3) Trump Administration ...

not permanent and only affected military assistance until the Pakistani government took stern action against groups including the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network.

In line with the new approach, funds will be allocated for a particular purpose and released after that target is achieved. The targets identified with the allocation can be strategic as well as issue-specific. The aid suspension will include equipment and the transfer of security-related funds, with possible exceptions for US national security reasons. "We are still working through the numbers," said Nauert.

The US had already suspended \$255 millions in security assistance from the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) fund. The Congress has also cut by 50 percent the \$700m set aside for reimbursing Pakistan for supporting US war efforts along the Pak-Afghan border.

The suspension will now affect the remaining \$350m in this account, known as the Coalition Support Fund. The aid cuts come as the US seeks more cooperation from Islamabad as part of its strategy for Afghanistan.

Also on Thursday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson placed Pakistan on a special watch list for severe violations of religious freedoms. For the first time, a 'Special Watch List' has been created for countries that "engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom but may not rise to the level of CPC (Countries of Particular Concern).

With details still being worked out on the additional funds, Nauert referred questions to the defense department. Those funds typically paid later in the year require US certification. (Pajhwok)

(4) Pakistan Use ...

continued to provide support for these groups, the Pakistanis went after terrorist insurgent groups, really, very selectively, and used others as an arm of their foreign policy.

The US security advisor said this was not a blame game, as some would say. "This is really our effort to communicate clearly to Pakistan that our relationship

can no longer bear the weight of contradictions, and that we have to really begin now to work together to stabilize Afghanistan."

He added in a way, that would be a huge benefit to Pakistan, as well. "What's frustrating at times is we see Pakistan operating against the interests of its own people by going after these groups only selectively, by providing safe havens and support bases for Taliban and Haqqani network leadership that operate out of Pakistan as they perpetuate hell in portions of Pakistan and in Afghanistan."

McMaster said the Pakistanis were upset when the US wanted know how the money was going to be spent while recalling his trip some years back to Pakistan when Hillary Clinton was secretary of State.

The US then offered Pakistan \$7 billion aid package. "They were very upset. So, you have that incredible sort of disconnect that did not seem to me to be outrageous that we'd want to know how our money was going to be spent. On the other hand, when you don't give money to these countries, someone else steps in, so that's the risk," he said. (Pajhwok)

(5) Pak-US Tensions to ...

that India played a very negative role in connection with bringing peace in Afghanistan as well as the region.

He went on to claim that used the Afghan soil against Pakistan and supported terrorism in the country, which is evident from the arrest of Kulbhusan Jadhav.

This comes as the US President Donald Trump on Monday criticized Pakistan in strong words for harboring the terrorist groups despite receiving billions in aid to support the counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan.

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" Trump said in a Twitter post on Monday.

The Afghan and US officials have long been insisting that the leadership councils of the Taliban and the notorious Haqqani terrorist network are based in the key cities of Pakistan where from they plan and coordinate attacks in Afghanistan. (KP)

(6) Hekmatyar ...

and insists that he remained the incumbent governor of the province.

On the issue of the electronic National Identity Cards (e-NIC), Hekmatyar said: "We agree that the nation and nationality be both added to the ID cards. No issue regarding the ID cards must cause a delay in holding of the election." He called on his supporters to be patient until the holding of the election.

Regarding the Daesh militant group, Hekmatyar said that Daesh fighters are infiltrating into Afghanistan from Iran and rejected rumors that his party members were involved in cooperating with Daesh.

On the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban, he said that the government had failed to engage in purposeful talks with the Taliban, adding that certain circles within the government are trying to weaken the government.

"I can say it with strong belief and honesty that if the government had the capacity of attracting the Taliban, and there was no obstruction of their way, many of the Taliban would join the peace process," said Hekmatyar.

"The Afghan nation and government have a strong and firm commitment to peace, Hekmatyar is one of the examples of that. Unfortunately, the opponents have no commitment to join the peace process, they have only wasted the time," Said Asif Sediqi, second deputy of Senate

This comes a week after Amrullah Saleh, the former head of National Directorate of Security (NDS) in a Facebook post accused Hekmatyar of coordinating with

Daesh and of efforts by him to release the Daesh inmates from jail.

"It is just part of the defamation by some liars We don't have any kind of political or party-based relations and will not think about it. We don't have relations with the Taliban nor with Daesh or Al-Qaeda or any other party. If I say that Daesh comes from Iraq and Syria to Afghanistan through Iran, it will not be an exaggeration," added Hekmatyar.

He alleged that some people are trying to prevent the release of over 91 Hizb-e-Islami prisoners from the jails. Hekmatyar warned against dividing the government among ethnic groups, saying such a move could lead to the disintegration of Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(7) Suicide Attacks in ...

"We sent letters to security forces and informed them that we have sessions every week and they should maintain the security of our gatherings," Sayed Esa Hussaini Mazari head of Tabyan Cultural Center said.

Thursday's evening suicide attack in Banaee area in Kabul's PD9 was the third deadly attack happening in Kabul in the last two months. Sources said nearly 20 people were killed and 30 others have been wounded.

"It is because of poor leadership in intelligence. Those who are leading the intelligence departments, have no attention to Afghanistan's national interests," former military officer, Assadullah Nadim said.

Religious scholars meanwhile said killing innocent people is against humanity and the principles of Islam.

"Killing of innocent civilians has no place in Islam," said Fazel Hussaini, a religious scholar.

"A big number of the religious scholars are not doing their jobs," religious scholar Sayed Mohammad Hashim said.

Daesh militant group claimed responsibility for two other attacks in Nangarhar and Herat provinces.

TOLONews findings show that Daesh operatives have carried out over 15 suicide attacks in Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat provinces in 2017. (Tolonews)

(8) Demand for ...

Saqib's daughter, Somaiya Saqib, said she is learning dress designing skills in India.

"There is no place in Afghanistan to train me in designing therefore I went abroad to learn designing skills," Saqib said.

She said they are trying to design good quality dress and want to provide job opportunity to more women.

"If women have the skill and the money, they should not hesitate to start the business and use their skills," Saqib said. (Tolonews)

(9) President Inaugurates ..

changed the electricity plan.

"Ghazni and Maidan Wardak provinces benefited the electricity today, Logar, Paktia, Nangarhar, Kunar, Bamyan and the whole country would have access to this service tomorrow as result of this plan, we would witness further development in the energy sector," he said.

"Foreign advisors told us that we should import electricity for 10 years and do not invest on domestic production of the energy, but the current electricity plan would help us to produce our own energy besides importing it," Ghani said. He said that the government first goal was to have a single electricity network and secondly to self-sustain Afghanistan in the electricity area as well as transit 15,000 megawatts of electricity from central Asia to south Asia.

The third goal is the provinces that cannot access the electricity network should be provided with solar generated energy, he said.

About natural gas generated electricity, the president said that Shebrghan and Mazar-I-Sharif cities were provided with 90 megawatts of gas generated electricity with the private sector investment, what he said would positively impact the northern part of the country.

"Water is our dignity, we should protect it, DABS and our sectorial ministers should not be responsible for social di-

mensions," he said. (Pajhwok)

(10) Flexibility, ...

Due to operational security, the Pentagon did not provide a specific percentage of US supplies going into Afghanistan through multiple routes.

Currently, there are about 14,000 US forces in Afghanistan. As such its supply needs are far less than when it once touched more than 100,000 troops during the Obama administration.

"Due to the lower level of US troops, supply needs are lower. I cannot state specific decreases, however," remarked the Pentagon spokesman. (Pajhwok)

(11) Conflict in ...

to prevent conflict, ICG noted the political discord today was particularly severe, with President Ashraf Ghani accused by his critics of monopolising power in the hands of a few advisors.

It added America's regional diplomacy had so far centered on pressuring Pakistan; yet the calculations that motivated Islamabad's support for the insurgency were unlikely to change.

"The Taliban also now enjoy ties to Iran and Russia, which claim to view it as a bulwark against an Islamic State branch in Afghanistan that is small but resilient -- and also capable of mounting high-profile attacks.

"Washington's militarized approach and diminished diplomacy risk signaling to those countries that it seeks not to stabilise and leave Afghanistan but to maintain a military presence."

ICG agreed that sustained US support might reinforce the morale of the Afghan National Army. A precipitous withdrawal, in contrast, could trigger chaos, it maintained.

The Trump administration was asked to keep open lines of communication to the insurgency open and explore the contours of a settlement with Afghanistan's neighbours and other regional powers. "As it stands, that strategy sets the stage for more violence while closing avenues for de-escalation. Afghan civilians will pay the price," the report concluded. (Pajhwok)

(12) Ghani Denounces ...

statement from his office, the president warned: "The criminals involved in acts against Islamic values and humanity should know they can't hide in any part of the country.

"They will certainly face a strong response from the brave and valiant national defence and security forces," Ghani said, ordering a probe into the incident. (Pajhwok)

(13) Families Recount ...

Officials from Kabul Police and Ministry of Interior at a press conference on Friday said the suicide bomber exploded his explosives while security forces had gathered in the area to control the demonstration launched by shopkeepers.

"The suicide attacker came from the side where the protestors were standing and then targeted police force members," acting Police Chief Mhammad Salim Ehsas said. The Ministry of Interior gave different figures on casualties of the attack. Sources said at least 20 people were killed in the attack. "Thirteen police force members lost their lives in the attack. We had 16 wounded policemen. Two civilians were also wounded in the attack. No local resident was wounded in blast," interior ministry deputy spokesman Nusrat Rahimi said. Reports say that before the suicide attack, a civilian was killed in police gunfire as they tried to stop the protest.

The civilian was killed after police closed the shops in Banaee area, claiming that they sell drugs and alcoholic drinks. The shopkeepers however rejected the allegations and launched a protest which turned violent. (Tolonews)

(14) Afghan Air ...

with new GBU-58s munitions. With assistance from the advisors, Afghan pilots employed the munitions on the training range hitting all targets attempted. The AAF will continue to incorporate new technologies as their offensive capabilities grow through 2018 and beyond."

This comes as the U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Lance Bunch, the director of the future operations, had earlier said that the Afghan forces conducted their combat operations through 2017 with the lowest level of support from the coalition forces in the 16-year war here, and yet has had some of the most success they've ever had, showing they are, in fact, leading the fight and we are there to advise and enable them.

He said "Key pieces that you're seeing is that the Afghan Air Force itself, one of the more lethal organizations they have, and one that we're looking to triple in size by 2023, is conducting significantly more air operations in direct support of the ANDSF on the battlefield, to the tune of 500 more sorties this year than they did the year before."

"And so we are currently able to work with and enable the Afghan National Defense Forces as they conduct successful combat operations on the battlefield. We're working with the Afghan Air Force to continue to build their capacity," Gen. Bunch added.

According to Gen. Bunch, the first four UH-60 Black Hawks were delivered to the Afghan Air Force, and the first six pilots have already graduated from training.

"We expect to have eight full crews at the beginning of the fighting season in 2018. And those Black Hawk helicopters are just the first of up to 159 that we're going to provide them," he said. (KP)

(15) Torkham ...

port on corruption charges. Investigators from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) arrested the individuals.

Dr. Lal Mohammad Durrani, deputy head of the provincial council, says whenever an investigative team comes to Torkham, some officials tried to strike a deal with them.

When the investigators refused to cooperate, the men violently responded and even fired at them, he alleged, saying a team of the Provincial Council was attacked earlier this month.

Torkham Commissar Qaseem Shinwari and border police commander in the eastern zone could not be reached for comments. (Pajhwok)

(16) Afghan-Pakistan ...

trade between the two nations could be enhanced to \$7.5 billion annually if the two governments removed hurdles at different levels.

Sarhadi, who is also president of Frontier Customs Agents Group Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, sought a dispassionate review of the Pak-Afghan Transit Trade Agreement, which needed rectifications. In 2014-15, he recalled, bilateral trade had witnessed an increase of 65 percent and the volume had crossed the figure of \$2.5 billion.

However, Kabul-Islamabad hostilities, unfavourable business conditions and shifting of a major portion of trade to the Chabahar Port in Iran triggered a precipitous decline in trade between the two states.

The trade volume is further shrinking, according to Sarhadi, who stressed the need for relaxing customs rules, facilitating the transportation of goods and modifying the transit trade agreement. (Pajhwok)

(17) NDS Seizes Poor ..

standard and high quality product, he said.

Khogyani said one person was detained in connection of the issue and he was currently under investigation.

In a different incident, the governor's spokesman said that two militants and a kidnapper were arrested during an operation in Ghanikhel district of Nangarhar on Wednesday night. (Pajhwok)

(18) 5 Taliban Militants...

is among the relatively volatile provinces in northern parts of the country where the anti-government armed militants are actively operating in a number of its districts.

Several militants including key members and commanders of the anti-government armed militants were killed in similar operations in this province earlier last month. (KP)