

(1) MPs Accus...

On Tuesday, the president marked in his first 100 days in office, with a poll showing his popularity has sharply declined after the unity government made uneven progress in three months.

The lower house once set President Ghani a week-long deadline to introduce cabinet picks to the assembly for a trust vote. But the deadline passed unmet.

Then the assembly sent a delegation to hold talks with the president and the chief executive officer on the delayed cabinet.

At today's session, Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said President Ghani had promised to lawmakers that he would introduce the cabinet in a week's time.

"Today his deadline expires, but no candidate arrived in the house. Now it is up to you (MPs) what decision you take," Ibrahim told the house.

Outspoken lawmaker Ramazan Bashardost from Kabul said: "It is not a national unity government, but a barbaric regime. Now the time has come where we should take a decision."

"The nation is on the verge of destruction, but they are engaged in a power struggle that this person should be from this tribe and that person from that province."

The MP said one should ask Ghani how many votes he had collected to become a president. "We can say it is a national treason under Article 69 of the Constitution."

The article says "accusations of crime against humanity, national treason or crime can be leveled against the President by one-thirds members of the Wolesi Jirga."

The article adds "if two-thirds Wolesi Jirga members vote for charges to be brought forth, the assembly shall convene a Grand Council (Loya Jirga) within one month.

"If the Grand Council approves the accusation by a two-thirds majority of votes, the President is then dismissed, and the case is referred to a special court." Bashardost said the unity government had been formed against the Constitution in the US Embassy in Kabul and the government had no credibility in public eyes.

He asked his colleagues to endorse his views and sign a petition in which he had accused the president of "a national treason."

Bashardost placed the document on a table in front of the administration board and asked MPs to sign it.

The petition was signed by MPs Bashardost (Kabul), Batkash Seyawosh (Kabul), Ghulam Hussain Nasiri (Maidan Wardak), Syed Mohammad Musa Janab (Badghis), Abdul Rahim Ayubi (Kandahar), Bibi Hamidi (Kandahar), Latif Padram (Badakhshan), Azizi Jales (Sar-i-Pul), Zaki Sangin (Parwan) and Abbas Ibrahimzada (Balkh).

But Speaker Ibrahim said the issue should be included in the house agenda and should be discussed from a legal perspective before making a decision. Qazi Nazir Ahmad Hanafi from western Herat province said the president was running government's affairs against Article 160 of the Constitution.

"The Constitution gives him 30 days, but it has been more than 90 days, the president is yet to start his job in a right way. He should have at least introduced a few cabinet nomi-

nees."

Hanafi suggested lawmakers to continue thumbing desks in protest until the government introduced cabinet nominees.

Some lawmakers suggested the president and the chief executive should be impeached and a Loya Jirga called into session.

Speaker Ibrahim said the Wolesi Jirga had tried its level best to convince the government to introduce the cabinet, but it did not happen. "Whatever the consequences are, the government will be responsible," he remarked. (Pajhwok)

(2) Ghani Dismisses ...

reshuffle in Herat came amid increased kidnappings, robberies and targeted killings of businessmen and government officials. (Tolonews)

(3) Cabinet Nomi...

Manawi for the position of Interior Minister, Ghulam Jilani for the position of Minister of Finance, Sardar Mohammad Rahimi for the position of Trade and Commerce Minister, Qurban Haqjo for the position of Minister of Economy.

Sadat Mansoor Naderi has been nominated for Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, and Najeeba Ayobi has been nominated for the position of Women's Affairs Minister.

President Ghani and CEO Abdullah have also met with Mahmood Saiqol, Seyer Ahmad Majhoor, Barna Karimi, Faizullah Zaki, Sardar Rahman Oghli, Syed Hussain Alimi Balkhi, Zalmai Younusi and Dr. Feroz and Gul Zia.

However, it is yet not clear to which government positions the above individuals have been nominated. This comes as the Government of National Unity was expected to announce the cabinet by today. However, the introduction did not take place due to unknown reasons. (KP)

(4) Regional Cooper...

efforts and problems facing Afghan refugees in Iran.

Atmar said regional countries had now realised that terrorism was not a problem of Afghanistan alone, but it posed great threat to them.

He said fears had increased that besides new terror groups, Al Qaeda, Pakistani, Afghan Taliban and the Islamic State threatened stability of the entire region, not only of Afghanistan.

Due to these fears, Atmar said regional countries had increased mutual cooperation to counter terrorism and had launched efforts on their own.

To a question by this reporter about Iran's role in fighting terror, Atmar said: "I am sure Iran has realised terrorism can approach them in view of the ongoing conflict in Iraq and Syria."

About Pakistan, the advisor said the country's political and military leaders had considerably increased cooperation with Afghanistan in fighting terrorists.

"I can say with confidence that recent terrorist attacks in Pakistan have led to some changes in the country's policies." Atmar said he hoped regional cooperation in the ongoing fight on terrorism would further increase.

He said the increase in regional cooperation against terrorism and military pressures had suppressed the Taliban, who had in return increased their attacks. "The more Taliban increase their attacks, the newest government strategies unfold," he said.

"I don't say attacks from militants would sharply decline in the near future, but I can say Afghan forces can defend their people and soil."

Atmar said besides discussing other issues of mutual interest with Iranian officials, they would pave the ground for the presidents of the two countries to visit each other's countries and open a new chapter in their relations.

He said Iran had agreed to conclude a strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan and teams of the two countries were working on it. (Pajhwok)

(5) Taliban Untrue...

civilian casualties and today they were repeating the same mantra.

Haqyar said suicide attacks and bomb blasts by insurgents often resulted in most civilian casualties. (Pajhwok)

(6) China Moves...

had informed Afghan officials about the details of the ongoing talks.

A senior Afghan official familiar with the matter told The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) the Taliban representatives presented negotiation positions, including amending the Afghan constitution, giving them control of government ministries and removing them from international sanctions list.

The delegation included Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, a minister of planning in the Taliban regime, the official added.

Taliban have not officially commented about the visit, but sources close to the group have confirmed that their representatives have travelled to China twice. Another official talking to Pajhwok Afghan News on condition of anonymity, said the government was aware of the visit but no tangible progress had been achieved so far.

He confirmed, earlier the Taliban representative had also travelled to Kabul for parleys with Afghan officials.

The meeting represents a rare example of China helping to mediate in another country's internal conflict, and the latest indication of Chinese ambitions to gradually supplant the US as guarantor of security in Asia.

High peace council secretariat Masoom Stanekzai has welcomed China's mediation in the matter and said recently some neighboring countries had launched efforts to resume the suspended peace talks between Afghan officials and the Taliban.

He said after President Ashraf Ghani's visit to China in October last year, the Chinese officials have become more interested in Afghan peace process. (Pajhwok)

(7) Attack on ...

were injured. Ghairat noted their initial investigations showed that the attackers were Pakistani nationals.

Meanwhile, the Taliban in a statement claimed responsibility for attacking the police academy. (Tolonews)

(8) Survey Shows...

o 2,448 randomly selected respondents, who included both men and women in all 34 provinces. Reached by phone between December 27, 2014 and January 3, 2015, the respondents were asked to choose one of four possible answers; 'Very satisfied', 'Moderately satisfied', 'Not satisfied at all' or 'No opinion'.

The poll results indicate 30.4 percent of the Afghan population is 'moderately

satisfied' with President Ghani's performance, while the largest portion of those surveyed - 32 percent - said that they were 'not satisfied at all'. Just one tenth of the respondents had 'no opinion' about Ghani's performance.

The survey also measured the degree to which Afghans were hopeful that President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah would be able to cooperate. Results show 32.5 percent of respondents replied that they were 'very hopeful' for cooperation between the national unity government leaders, who ran a close race against each other in 2013's turbulent presidential election. Meanwhile, 24.2 percent of respondents said they were 'moderately hopeful' and 20.3 percent said they were 'not hopeful'.

The last question of the survey addressed recent controversy over the labels used by government leaders for referring to the Taliban. Although President Hamid Karzai received heavier criticism in his last years in office for referring to Taliban militants as "brothers," Ghani has been the subject of some pushback since calling the group the "political opposition" in his first few months in office, which saw a flurry of aggressive insurgent attacks and offensives around the country.

According to the survey, 19 percent of Afghans believe that the Taliban should be described as 'enemies of the state', while 16.3 percent suggested 'terrorist' as the most fitting description. Coming in a close third, 15.3 percent of respondents said that 'angry brothers' would be the most appropriate label for the Taliban. Finally, just 12.9 percent endorsed Ghani's terminology of 'political opposition'.

The survey is the second poll gauging public perceptions of Ghani's performance that has been published since the national unity government took power in September of last year. The first took place after the president had been in office for a month, and the third is scheduled to take place after the president's first 200 days in office are complete.

The most recent poll comes amid a wave of criticism of the new government from Parliament, civil society groups and the general public. The inability to form a new cabinet within the first 100 days, as well as unemployment and the country's rapidly deteriorating security situation have been the points of greatest concern. (Tolonews)

(9) Tajikistan ...

Itar Tass in an interview, commenting on the possible intrusion of a group of the Taliban militants into Tajikistan.

According to him, Tajik special services have taken a number of measures to strengthen the most vulnerable stretches of Tajikistan's common border with Afghanistan.

"Close cooperation with colleagues from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member nations has been established on exchange of updated information about the purpose of concentration of armed militants near the border with Tajikistan and their plans," the source was quoted as saying.

"Intelligence data show that there is no threat of direct intrusion into Tajikistan. However, we should

keep our powder dry," said the source. "Besides, the Russian military base, which is an important element of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force, is deployed in Tajikistan." At the same time, Afghan drug mafia has become more active, the source added. (Asia-Plus)

(10) Wolesi Jirga ...

present voted in favour of the bill, which would be soon sent to the Meshrano Jirga (Senate) for approval. The bill will become a law after it is signed by the president. (Pajhwok)

(11) ANA Operation...

pletely clear the area from the militants and would not disappoint the inhabitants.

"We will die but won't run away," the commander said, adding the forces were conducting operations in those villages where no Afghan or foreign forces have gone so far.

Since the operations have started, civilians are not allowed for any type of movement to these areas. The demining personnel and the local police forces are paving the ways for the ANA soldiers to successfully conduct their operations.

The ANA sources said strong exchanges of gunfire were continued as the Taliban insurgents were resisting from ditches dug in the area.

"Taliban have dug out long ditches to plant mines but we have thwarted them all," 4th battalion commander Jawad Qane said.

The soldiers that took part in the operations said the insurgents have changed their fighting tactics as long underground tunnels and ditches were found that ended to ANA check posts. (Tolonews)

(12) Urgun, Sarobi...

governor met with tribal elders and youth representatives during the visit, the brief statement said.

Yaqub Khan Manzoor, a Youth and Culture Society head in Urgun, told Pajhwok Afghan News the district was central area of nine other districts, but no real developmental work had been carried out there. He said residents wanted an end to corruption and speedy development in health, agriculture, education and security sectors.

Manzoor said the new governor had been informed about problems being faced by residents of the two districts.

Sharif Agah, a tribal elder, said a master plan should be prepared and implemented for the district's main bazaar to help revive businesses.

Haji Hussain, a tribal elder in Sarobi, said also claimed no development work had taken place in the town during the past 13 years.

Governor Matin promised local residents he would gradually fulfill their demands to end their grievances.

He urged residents to give pens in hands to their children instead of guns in order to save the country from the illiteracy menace. (Pajhwok)

(13) Paktika ...

Abdul Ghani Paktin, said residents had to face numerous problems due to the highway closure.

tika," he remarked. (Pajhwok)

(14) Air India...

hijackers forced India to release terrorists Maulana Masood Azhar, Mush-taq Ahmed Zargar and Ahmed Omar Saeed Shaikh before they released the passengers and crew. One passenger, 28-year-old Rupin Katyal, was stabbed to death. Kandahar was then controlled by Taliban.

According to the Air India official, all stakeholders have stepped up vigilance after IB alert. "We have asked our airport staff to be vigil around booking counters to ensure that nothing goes unnoticed," the official said. One of the key reasons could be the Republic Day when the US President Barack Obama will be the chief guest. (Monitoring Desk)

(15) 3 Killed,...

body of another person in the Shin Ghazi area on the outskirts of Dand district, he added.

He said the individual was shot dead by unidentified gunmen late Tuesday night. No group so far claimed credit for the blasts and killing of individuals. (Pajhwok)

Obama Condemns 'Horrific' Attack on French Newspaper

Washington - US President Barack Obama condemned the «horrific» assault on a French satirical newspaper that left 12 dead Wednesday, calling it a terrorist attack on America's «oldest ally» and pledging assistance.

«We are in touch with French officials and I have directed my administration to provide any assistance needed to help bring these terrorists to justice,» Obama said.

Speaking in French, US Secretary of State John Kerry, who is a frequent visitor to Paris on his diplomatic travels, said he wanted to address all French people directly about the «murderous attack» to say «All Americans stand by your side.» The «pen is an instrument of freedom, not fear,» Kerry said.

«Free expression and a free press are core values... principles that can be attacked but never eradicated.»

Gunmen shouting Islamist slogans stormed the offices of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris, armed with an AK-47 assault rifle and a grenade launcher.

The weekly's editor Stéphane Charbonnier, and three renowned cartoonists were among those killed, officials said.

Charlie Hebdo had attracted controversy by publishing satirical cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

«I strongly condemn the horrific shooting at the offices of Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris that has reportedly killed 12 people,» Obama said.

The US president praised France as a partner «in the fight against terrorists who threaten our shared security and the world.»

«Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this terrorist attack and the people of France at this difficult time,» he said.

«Time and again, the French people have stood up for the universal values that generations of our people have defended.

«France, and the great city of Paris where this outrageous attack took place, offer the world a timeless example that will endure well beyond the hateful vision of these killers.»

Obama and Kerry were to meet on Wednesday, the White House said. Vice President Joe Biden was also to attend.

Obama's White House has not always been so supportive of Charlie Hebdo, however, and in September 2012 criticized its decision to go ahead and publish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

«We don't question the right of something like this to be published. We just question the judgment behind the decision to publish it,» then White House spokesman Jay Carney said.

Carney was speaking at a time of heightened tension when US embassies in the Muslim world had come under attack by locals angered by the portrayal of their religion in Western media.

Still, on Wednesday, US officials were unanimous in their condemnation of the attack and in their solidarity with France.

The US embassy in Paris symbolically changed its Twitter profile picture to a newly popular slogan inspired by the attack: «Je suis Charlie» (I am Charlie).

Kerry also vowed that «the murderers dare proclaim Charlie Hebdo is dead, but make no mistake -- they are wrong.»

«Today, tomorrow, in Paris, in France, the freedom of expression that this magazine ... represented is not able to be killed by this kind of act of terror.» Senator Dick Durbin, speaking in the Senate, also slipped into French after recalling France's support for the United States in the wake of the September 11, 2001 Al-Qaeda attack on US cities. (AFP)

Senator Introduces Bill to Cut Aid to Palestinians

WASHINGTON - Republican Sen. Rand Paul introduced a bill on Wednesday that would immediately halt U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority until it withdraws its bid to join the International Criminal Court to pursue war-crimes charges against Israel.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' recent turn to the international court at The Hague marked a major policy shift and transformed his relations with Israel from strained to openly hostile. The Palestinians want to pressure Israel into withdrawing from the territories and agreeing to Palestinian statehood.

U.S. law currently says that any Palestinian case against Israel at the court would trigger an immediate end to U.S. aid, but that Palestinian membership in the court, by itself, would not. The Kentucky senator's bill would ban assistance until the Palestinian Authority withdraws its request to join the court.

"We are currently sending roughly \$400 million of U.S. taxpayer dollars to the Palestinian Authority," Paul said. "Certainly, groups that threaten Israel cannot be allies of the U.S. I will continue to do everything in my power to make sure th

is president and this Congress stop treating Israel's enemies as American allies." Paul, a likely Republican presidential contender, generally favors a smaller American footprint in the world and in 2011 offered a budget plan that called for ending foreign aid to all nations, including Israel. The country gets about \$3 billion a year in military aid from the U.S. He says even Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu has said that he welcomes a day when Israel is independent of American aid. (AFP)