

**(1) USAID, FAO Launch ...**

and producer groups. Promoting Value Chains-West would ultimately benefit a total of 39,900 small farm owners from 5,700 enterprise households.

"Sustainably improving Afghan lives through agriculture and food security is the main thrust of our work, and we are very happy to partner with USAID for this new project on value chains development in the Western region," said TomioShichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

**(2) Budget Approval ...**

jobs creation and provision of basic services to the population.

"The EU strongly believes in democratic processes. A vote on a national budget is one of these pivotal moments when the pact between the citizens, their elected representatives and the government can be renewed," the statement said. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Pakistan Tops**

to curb steps and designs aimed at changing Afghanistan into a centre of proxy wars or another Syria."

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, who met the team on Sunday, said during the meeting of heads of both houses of the parliament with the delegation, different issues including security, peace and election were discussed.

"The participants said the peace call was issued by the Afghan government. And there is weak willingness for peace in the region, the world and insurgents fighting against the Afghan government.

"Peace is still eluding Afghanistan and remains a challenge. Peace is part of government policy. The government has performed well in terms of peace based on people's wishes.

"But the armed opposition doesn't have even the slightest of will, because insurgents are not independent and act as a tool to promote the strategic interests of terrorism-supporting countries. It would be difficult prompting the rebels into joining dialogue."

He claimed terrorism-supporting countries were known to all and Pakistan was at the top of such states. He accused Pakistan of providing safe havens for terrorists and pouring militants into the country.

Ibrahim noted the Afghan forces had fought terrorism for a decade and a half with support from the international community and based on the decision of the UNSC.

But the global fraternity had been struggling to resolve the security crisis in Afghanistan, the speaker commented.

He said the delegation had come to Afghanistan to ascertain reasons why NATO forces could not overcome the challenge yet. "These reasons are well known to the Afghans: Some regional countries are aiding the menace." (Pajhwok)

**(4) Pro-Taliban ...**

Agency on Nov 20, 2001 when he was returning from Afghanistan, where he had gone along with thousands of supporters to wage jihad against US forces. (Pajhwok)

**(5) Afghan Special**

Jan. 13, 2018. Divided into three special operations light infantry companies, the 10th SOK always actively pursues the enemies of Afghanistan with at least one Commando element. The special operators fired company organic weapon systems to include rifles, light and heavy machine guns, RPGs and mortars, according to a report Maj. Tony Mayne of the NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan.

The special operators continue to apply pressure on the Taliban through an aggressive winter campaign in the country's northern region.

On Dec. 10, 2017, 10th SOK concluded a series of focused offensive operation in Kunduz province resulting in the removal of 101 Taliban fighters from Imam Sahib district. Over the course of five days, the Commandos eliminated 74 Taliban, wounded an additional 27 insurgents, and destroyed 87 defensive fortifications.

During the course of 2017, the Taliban have attempted to seize provincial capital district centers, such as Kunduz city, with no success. The combination of cooperation amongst the Afghan Nation Defense and Security Forces, and the growing capability of the Afghan Special Security Forces enabled a prolonged offensive operation through Afghanistan's harsh winter season.

Four thousand additional Commandos will join the force before the start of the traditional fighting season in April 2018. The first Mobile Strike Kandak Commando force graduated from the Commando Qualification Course in Dec., and begins the inaugural Cobra Strike Mobility Course at Pol-e-Charki on Feb. 3. (KP)

**(6) Act on 'Kabul ...**

put more pressure on Pakistan to relinquish support to terrorist outfits."

Mohammad Asif Sediqi, deputy speaker of the Senate, said the UNSC should take practical steps against Pakistan over its continued support to terrorist organizations.

Senate Chairman FazalHadiMuslimyar, who also met the UNSC team, said the visiting delegation was clearly told that terrorist organizations active in Pakistan 'enjoyed' safe havens in Pakistan and gained support from across the Durand Line.

He said the Afghan side handed over some documents as evidence of Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan's affairs, support to terrorist outfits, artillery shelling inside Afghanistan's territory and fencing of the Durand Line.

He hoped the UNSC would take tangible steps against Pakistan's support to terrorism and help Afghanistan and the region get rid of terrorists. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Taliban Envoys ...**

discussed a wide range of issues with America's Acting Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells in Islamabad. Zakhilwal also met EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan Roland Kobia.

At the meeting, also attended by EU Ambassador to Pakistan JF Cautain, a comprehensive discussion on Afghan-Pakistan relations, the peace process and the situation of refugees figured prominently.

Zakhilwal said the focus of his meetings was to explore ways of minimising the trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"Our discussion revolved around how Afghanistan and Pakistan can sustain a constructive interaction ... on building more trust between our two brotherly nations," he added. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Turkish Aid Agency**

representative Ozturk said Turkey had supported hundreds of projects in developing countries such as Afghanistan through TIKA.

"More than 100 schools have been built in Afghanistan, many renovated and equipped. Hospitals and clinics were also built by our agency. Medical centers were supported with medical equipment," he added. (AA)

**(9) Agricultural ...**

agencies, UNAMA said in a statement Tuesday.

FAO will implement the project in partnership with the Afghan Provincial Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in the provinces of Badghis, Farah, Herat, and Nimroz.

"Promoting Value Chains-West fits perfectly into USAID's agriculture strategy. We are working with private sector partners, such as processors and traders, to ensure that more Afghan farmers can sell their products for good prices, feed their families, and educate their children," said USAID Afghanistan Mission Director Herbie Smith.

Project beneficiaries will include small and medium enterprises (SMEs), input suppliers, private service providers, traders, millers and processors, and producer groups. Promoting Value Chains-West will ultimately benefit a total of 39,900 small farm owners from 5,700 enterprise households.

"Sustainably improving Afghan lives through agriculture and food security is the main thrust of our work, and we are very happy to partner with USAID for this new project on value chains development in the Western region," said TomioShichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan. (Tolo News)

**(10) 'Kabul Process' ...**

three weeks to make required preparation for the event.

He said the Kabul Process meeting was to take place in early February in Kabul to discuss Afghanistan related issues.

"Efforts are in place to gather government and people's opinions about some important national issues to make a discussion on them in the Kabul Process meeting", he said.

"Considering the situation that arose in this year's start, we would try to discuss this situation in a major conference so countries who have problems in their political relations with the world are able to work jointly about Afghanistan," he said. On the other hand, an extraordinary meeting of UNSC would be also held about Afghanistan in neighboring Kazakhstan in near future. The deputy foreign minister said it was Kazakhstan's initiative to organize a UNSC meeting about Afghanistan in that country. "This meeting would focus more on regional economic cooperation...to muster central Asian countries' cooperation with Afghanistan in the peace process and economy," he said.

He said UNSC representatives' visit to Afghanistan was 'a new season' of uni-

ty among the world body's members. (Pajhwok)

**(11) Rashid Khan is ...**

of his time, and has dominated Twenty20 competitions while bowling his country to Test status.

Rashid was labelled IPL's "million dollar baby" when Sunrisers Hyderabad shelled out \$750,000 for the unheralded leg-spinner last year. He also took part in the Caribbean League, the Bangladesh League and Australia's Big Bash League.

"That will be interesting to see, it is big money," said Rashid on the upcoming auction.

"I had a one-season deal so I will go back in the auction. Hopefully Sunrisers will take me in the auction. I did well for them," Rashid said, according to a report in The Advertiser.

Rashid is the face of a new, confident Afghanistan where youth aspire to education or Test cricket representation.

"There has been a good change over the past six years. Before there was no plans or education for young people but now there are schools and universities which is the biggest difference," said Rashid, adding that "the young generation now thinks we should do something for the country. It was very difficult for a time but we were used to it. It is a good thing when someone is helping your country."

Rashid is self-taught with one natural advantage, employing mitt-size hands similar to Warne's tailor-made for revving a magical leg-spin, stealth and unique control.

"As a leg-spinner you have to have strong fingers," said Rashid who bagged the inaugural Caribbean Premier League hat-trick last September.

"I think it is the action and speed I bowl which makes it harder for the batsman."

Afghanistan and Ireland were awarded full ICC member status last June. (Tolonews)

**(12) Public Group in ...**

consists of experts, university lecturers and lawyers who are working to end the tension through dialogue," said Sayed Abdul Jabbar Jamal, member of the group.

"Our main recommendation is that the two sides must not use any words that results in violence," said Hayatullah-Jawad, a member of the group.

"We hope that we will not be disappointed," said Ibrahim, a tribal elder. Government and Jamiat delegations have held seven rounds of talks so far. The results of the talks are not clear as yet.

Atta Mohammad Noor was fired from his post as Balkh governor in December. He has rejected the decision and holds daily sessions with hundreds of people who announce their support to Noor.

Noor is also the CEO of Jamiat-e-Islami Party. (Tolo News)

**(13) 2,000 Religious ...**

The religious decree comes after Pakistani madrasas have for years been accused of involvement in terrorism and brainwashing of insurgents.

Political party leaders and religious scholars called for unity and a unanimous narrative to counter terrorism in Pakistan at a ceremony announcing the 'Paigham-i-Pakistan' fatwa in Islamabad on Tuesday, Dawn News reported. Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain expressed hope that the decree issued by religious scholars would help address the challenges posed by terrorism, extremism and sectarianism.

Issuing a fatwa drafted by means of a consultative process is a step in the right direction, he said, adding that it would portray a "soft and positive image of Pakistan" and highlight Islam as a religion of peace, brotherhood, tolerance and accommodation.

"Pakistan Ulema Council has issued a decree on the terror activities and the Fatwa states that Pakistan is an Islamic state and that Islam is the religion of equality, justice and brotherhood. Islam has denounced terrorism, bloodshed and suicide attacks," said the Pakistan president.

Afghanistan has always stressed the need for such a decree to be issued not only by Pakistan, but from a wider Islamic world. The Afghan government also raised the topic with Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa during his journey to Kabul last year. "Pakistani religious scholars have been used as tools by the politicians, we have witnessed such an issue over different occasions. Pakistan has taken this initiative to ease US pressure," said political analyst Sayed Emal Ebad. Pakistan's infamous cleric Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman who is an influential politician, powerful cleric, and the Secretary-General of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) was also among the scholars who issued the decree including the son of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq who is known as

the spiritual father of the Taliban.

In the past, some Pakistani scholars have legitimized suicide attacks in Afghanistan.

"It is a matter of concern that after 70 years, the dream for Pakistan, the dignity and justice we had to provide the nation, were not realized. All of this is only possible when the ethos of a nation or group of people is apparent to them," said Pakistani interior minister Ahsan Iqbal.

But he said that world powers who fought the Soviet Union are responsible for the ongoing conflict in the region.

"We have been fighting regional conflict, and the events we face today are not completely of our doing. To a great extent, the world powers who fought the Soviet Union are responsible," Iqbal said.

"But when the Soviet lost in Afghanistan, the world powers dusted off their hands and disappeared, leaving behind piles of weapons and the poorest segments of those societies," he said.

The decree by the Pakistani clerics comes at a time that Pakistan has been severely criticized by Afghanistan and the international community over its controversial role in the fight against terrorism. (Tolonews)

**(14) Afghanistan on ...**

in a press release on Tuesday.

"The effectiveness of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) is essential to the stability of Afghanistan, and to the assurance of the Afghan society. And the positive message about their progress and confidence to fight and win needs to be more widely heard," said general Pavel.

According to NATO, the Chiefs of Defense will also discuss the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh in Iraq and the region.

General Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee has said that to win the war in Afghanistan, there is a need for further cooperation and training to be provided to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

General John Nicholson, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan will update the session on the alliance's strategic and operational situation.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Ministry of Defense stressed the need for more military cooperation and training to be provided by the NATO alliance to the Afghan security forces to enable conventional Afghan forces to tackle the threats on their own.

"The number of forces battling in Afghanistan's territory are sufficient, because the US has equipped them with the technology and advise," the spokesman for Afghan Ministry of Defense, Mohammad Radmanish told TOLONews on Tuesday.

"We are hopeful we can defend the geography of Afghanistan in a better shape in the next fighting season," he added.

Afghan government has said that it continues its efforts to convince the international community to target terrorist safe havens and training camps outside the borders of Afghanistan.

"The important topic which we shared with the international community is to continue their longstanding cooperation with Afghan security forces, the need for better equipment and more concentration on terror hideouts on the Pakistani soil," Jawed Faisal, deputy spokesman for Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah told TOLONews. (Tolo News)

**(15) Pakistan 'Impeding' ...**

The High Peace Council Chairman Mohammad Karim Khalili meanwhile said they have been working on mechanisms to prepare a new roadmap and a mechanism for getting the Taliban to the peace talks table.

"Unofficial talks are ongoing with armed opponents," Khalili told the gathering. "The High Peace Council and government are continuing their efforts to move forward the negotiations." According to HPC officials, the organization has held more than 280 consultative meetings in 26 provinces in the country. The HPC believes the consultative meetings will help them get to official peace talks with the Taliban. Members of the High Peace Council, youths and civil society activists at a ceremony on peace in Kabul.

This comes two days after two government officials and five Taliban members sat down at an unofficial peace talks meeting in Turkey.

Mawlawi Abdul Rauf, a purported Taliban leader who led the peace talks delegation in Turkey, claimed that they represented all Taliban factions in the negotiations with the Afghan government officials. However, information obtained by TOLONews indicates that the envoys who talked with the Taliban delegation in Turkey were not rep-

resenting the government of Afghanistan.

The Presidential Palace, ARG, on Monday said the individuals who attended the Turkey meeting "were not representing the Afghan government".

Who were the Taliban members who attended the talks?

Mawlawi Abdul Rauf was governor of Paktia during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan - 1996 to 2001. He did not have any sort of contacts with the group over the recent years, information obtained by TOLONews shows.

The second person in the Taliban delegation was Mullah Abdul Halim who runs a madrassa, religious school, in the border town of Chaman in Pakistan's

Baluchistan province. He is a native resident of Kandahar province in the south of Afghanistan.

The third person in the Taliban delegation was Rahmatullah who reportedly owns a shop in Quetta City of Pakistan and has no links with the Taliban.

There was no information about the fourth individual named Mawlawi Sultan who was also in attendance.

The fifth individual was Mullah Dawa Jan Ahmadzai who owns a tourism company in Pakistan's Peshawar City. It is said that he has no links with the Taliban.

The Taliban delegation however claimed they represent the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban and all those Taliban factions which strongly support an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led dialogue.

"High level Taliban members hopefully will take part in the official round of meetings (in the future)," said Mawlawi Abdul Rauf in an interview with TOLONews on Sunday evening.

The status of the talks

HumayunJarir, who claimed he attended the talks as a government representative, told TOLONews that the negotiations were unofficial and that they will discuss mechanisms to pave the ground for official talks between the two sides.

HumayunJarir and Abbas Basir, who attended the peace talks, are advisers to President Ashraf Ghani. They said they represented the High Peace Council and the government in the talks.

ZabihullahMujahid, a self-proclaimed Taliban spokesman, has rejected the claims of a meeting having taken place.

He said the delegation does not represent the group. (Tolo News)

**(16) Alarm Bells: ...**

Dr. Abdul QayumPukhla said about 1,000 children crossed the Spin Boldak border crossing and refugee families settlement in districts was another reason for the virus.

He also cited environmental problems another serious contributor to the virus spread.

He said heavily populated and impoverished areas, sub-standard bathrooms, lack of clean drinking water, bad children's malnutrition and polluted environment were problems paving ground for the polio virus to survive.

The public health official said Taliban's opposition to anti-polio vaccination in a number of districts was a major reason behind the increasing polio cases.

He added the Taliban were not allowing vaccination campaigns in Shah Walikot, Nesh, Ghorak, Khakrez and Mianshin districts. However, such problems in other districts had been resolved and a six-day campaign was underway to eradicate and prevent polio virus, he added.

Syed Kamal Shah, UNICEF's public relations head for Kandahar, told Pajhwok Afghan News that insecurity and not implementing vaccination drives properly were behind the increasing polio case in Shah Walikot.

Anti-polio vaccination was not implemented in such areas since the beginning of the ongoing year, leaving children prone to the crippling disease.

UNICEF would take measures against polio virus and bring about reforms in the vaccination program. (Pajhwok)

**(17) Waiver of Duty ...**

with Iran and a corresponding decline in business with Pakistan, the PAJCCI chairman explained.

Frequent border closures, heavy demurrages, uncertainty and diversion of bilateral and transit trade to other avenues were causing psychological rifts and resulting in long-run instability, he continued.

Advisor Miftah Ismail agreed to convene a meeting with the ambassador of Afghanistan in the context of pending Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority and Joint Economic Commission. He also promised support from the ministry to the private sector in expanding exports and developing fruitful trade ties in the region. He will raise the issues of waiver of regulatory duties and demurrage applied during border closures with the ministry of commerce. (Pajhwok)