

(1) 4 Nations ...

Taliban groups to accept our call for peace through dialogue, and to come to the table for talks so that we can resolve all differences politically and ensure the rightful and just desire of the Afghan people for lasting peace," he said.

An official close to the process said that another two "preparatory" meetings are expected to take place. "There are different opinions about the methodologies and approaches in resuming these talks," the official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to journalists.

The roadmap would include "who do they want to talk to, on what timetable, what incentives are to be offered, and what kind of action will be taken with those people who want to talk and those who do not want to talk," the official said.

The Afghan government expects Pakistan to use its influence with Taliban groups, whose leaders are reportedly in Pakistan, to bring the level of violence down, and to use force against groups that refuse to come to the table for negotiations.

Pakistan says that its influence with the Taliban is "limited" and the use of force would be counterproductive until all other measures have been exhausted.

"Threat of the use of military action against irreconcilables [those unwilling to talk] cannot precede the offer of talks to all the groups and their response to such offers," said Sartaj Aziz, adviser to Pakistan's prime minister on foreign affairs, in his opening statement to the first QCG meeting.

The meetings are part of a three-step process, said Abdul Hakim Mujahid of Kabul's High Peace Council, tasked with ending the war. Mujahid also served in the Taliban's 2001-1996 administration.

"The first step is to formulate a roadmap, the second is to invite the armed opposition to the negotiating table and the last step is the implementation of the peace plan," Mujahid told The Associated Press.

Kabul held direct talks with the Taliban for the first time last summer in Islamabad, but that process collapsed after Afghanistan announced that longtime Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar had died more than two years ago in Pakistan. The announcement set off an internal rivalry among the Taliban, raising questions about who would represent them in negotiations. Analysts have said it will be months before direct talks resume.

The war meanwhile shows no sign of abating, with the Taliban challenging Afghan forces on a number of fronts since the U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission at the end of last year.

Nine policemen were shot dead by a colleague at a checkpoint in Uruzgan province early Monday, according to security officials, who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak with media. The attacker took all weapons from the checkpoint before escaping, they said.

In a similar incident late Sunday, a policeman killed four colleagues at a checkpoint in Lashkar Gah, capital of the southern Helmand province, said provincial police chief Gen. Abdul Rahman Sarjang. (Agencies)

(2) UN Chief ...

should be coupled with investments in renewable energy projects.

"Combating climate change has never been more realistic than today and we are the last generation who is capable of bringing change," he said.

In order to achieve the objective set in Paris in December last year, governments must cut subsidies on the use of fuel and electricity, he added.

He said the global expansion of clean energy can save 4.3 million lives every year.

"This is the estimated number of victims who die every year due to air or water pollution, wrong use of open fire, coal or because of wrong or non-existent waste management," he said, adding that women and children constitute the majority of those victims. (Xinhua)

(3) Afghanistan...

Outraged by the attack in the city, elders of the Shinwari tribe on Monday demanded that Afghan security institutions take decisive action to arrest and prosecute those behind the attack.

The funeral-goers strongly condemned the act of violence. Nangarhar governor, Saleem Kunduzi said: "The people of Afghanistan have always been

the victims of conspiracies of the enemies. We stand by our people and are determined to thwart the plots of the enemies against the people of Afghanistan."

Meanwhile, Muslimyari said: "The government of Afghanistan must be vigilant in the negotiations. Those killing innocent civilians must be dealt with force."

Elders of the Shinwari tribe called on government to arrest the criminals who planned

"Our demand from the security institutions is to make sure the organizers are arrested and prosecuted," one tribal elder Malik Shinwari said.

"We want justice, those killed in Sunday's suicide attack had no faults, we want the planners to be arrested soon," another elder Arif Shinwari said.

A suicide bomber detonated his explosive inside a house in Jalalabad city on Sunday during a family celebration. (Tolonews)

(4) Delayed Elections...

Afghanistan's elections, has also made its continued support conditional on reforms.

In his press conference, Nuristani urged "all individuals and relevant authorities to respect the independence of the election commission." (AP)

(5) Australian PM...

to the Afghan army. Turnbull told Australian troops they were "making a real difference" in the efforts to help Afghanistan stabilize after years of uncertainty.

"You are making a real difference to the evolution of Afghanistan to a point where it can stand on its own two feet and maintain its own security," Turnbull told troops overnight.

"We say that Afghanistan is a long way from Australia... but everything is very close and very connected."

The news came after Turnbull held talks with Afghan President, Dr Ashraf Ghani, promising a further 20 personnel to assist in training Afghan forces.

That will bring the number of Australian troops in the country up to 270.

Later this week, Turnbull will meet with U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington, to discuss the war against Islamic State (IS) as well as the U.S. Marine rotation through northern Australia. (Xinhua)

(6) Abdullah Addresses ...

said: "Afghanistan itself is a victim of terrorism."

"Our country is fighting against all terrorist groups and see no differentiations among them."

He also congratulated Iran and the US for their win through diplomacy. "It tells a lot about its positive effects over the region," he said.

"Lifting sanctions on Iran was a major good news for this region. It is a great step forward for regional and global peace and prosperity," he added. (Tolonews)

(7) Wolesi Jirga ...

have been allocated for the year 1395 out of which AFG168,552 billion is for development projects. (KP)

(8) Kazakhstan ...

operates between Iran and Kazakhstan twice a week from Almaty to Tehran, according to the website of the Prime Minister.

"Yesterday, an agreement was signed: Kazakhstan side declared its readiness to establish air communication between the two countries. The essence of this agreement is to increase air travel between the two countries," the diplomat said.

Kazakhstan, according to the ambassador, could use its transit potential in trade and economic relations between Iran, Russia and China. (Monitoring Desk)

(9) Over 160 Top...

hectic efforts by its correspondents, this news agency could not find lists of such government officials in Nangarhar, Nuristan, Panjsher, Laghman, Baghlan and Uruzgan provinces.

Sharifullah Salehi, recruitment head at the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Services Commission (IARCSC), said there were no limits to the tenures of governors and district chiefs. No law exists in this regard.

He believed if a specific tenure was defined for a particular post, its holder would not be able to work with a sense of security and comfort. As a consequence, his/her performance will be badly affected. Salehi saw no problem with positions of authority being held for an inordinately long time by efficient, innovative and committed

people, who were not tainted by corruption and avoided the misuse of resources.

Government slots fall vacant when incumbent officer resigns or fail to secure good marks in periodical evaluations. Similarly, officers can be fired in case of absence for more than 20 days without information, indictment or imprisonment on criminal charges.

Under the country's basic law, the president, his deputies and Wolesi Jirga members have a five-year tenure. Similarly, Meshrano Jirga members also serve for the lengths of time specified in the constitution. Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) Chairperson Seema Samar has been in office since 2003, when the watchdog was created during Hamid Karzai's presidency.

Rafiqullah Baidar, AIHRC spokesman, said the commission's affair were being run by its eight members nominated by the president for a five years period. He insisted there was no legal issue with Samar continuing as chairperson.

Azimullah Rahmanyar, who has been the director of information and cultural in northern Jawzjan province for the past 10 years, said there could be multiple reasons for an individual staying in the same position for a long time.

He listed competence, commitment, efficiency and good management were the principal demands of high positions. Holding a specific post is helpful for the entire department, according to him. Rahmanyar made clear he did not have props in the government and counted only on hard work and dedication.

But some people are dead-set against the occupation of a high post by one individual for decades. Abdul Qadir Misbah, a civil society activist, called it a dangerous culture that facilitated corruption and venality.

He said periodical reshuffles of government servants were a sign of good governance and an improved system. An individual should not be allowed to work in the same position for an unreasonably long time, he suggested.

However, the director of justice in southern Helmand province said that he has been working on his position for the past five years.

"The justice department was initiated in 2008 when late Mohammad Ibrahim Ghafoori was the director of the department. After his death in 2010, I was qualified for the position through open competition conducted by IARCSC on Nov, 2010.11 and officially joined the office in April, 2011," he said. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban Want...

officially declined to comment. But one of them confirmed the meeting and tax demand: "Ten percent tax to the Taliban? That means we will have to share our revenue information with a militant organisation... That's just not feasible. We told them 'no.'" But one of the telecom officials who attended the Pakistan meeting said there was no escaping the Taliban edict, adding that the companies at best could wrangle a concession from the insurgents in future negotiations.

"What choice do we have? All our investment, our infrastructure is at stake," he said, adding he was unaware what his company's official response would be. "But I fear that if we start paying one militant group, others will start harassing us."

The National Directorate of Security, Afghanistan's main intelligence agency, declined to comment. Afghanistan boasts 18.5 million mobile users in a population of 30 million. (Agencies)

(11) Ashgabat, Kabul...

Turkmenistan started constructing the TAPI gas pipeline December ,13 2015 with a project capacity up to 33 bcm of gas per year.

The basic document for the TAPI is Ashgabat's interstate agreement of the member-states signed in 2010. (Trend News Agency)

(12) Afghan ...

international licensing and distributions agreements around the world. (Wadsam)

(13) Poppy Fields ...

Local officials in Kandahar said that acres of cultivated poppy fields have been destroyed in the operation. Meanwhile, a number of local farmers have said that the lack of proper marketing and no access to markets for agricultural products has forced them to grow poppies.

Police in the area have called on farmers to cooperate with the security forces in the campaign. "On the orders of the ministry of interior and the police department,

we decided to impose a ban on drugs in coordination with the people," Panjwayee acting police chief Hazrat Wali said.

Elaborating on the problems facing the farmers, Mohammad Ishaqzai, Panjwayee district governor pledged that the provincial government will look for better opportunities to facilitate the farmers' access to markets.

"We have implemented a number of projects which are preferred by the people. We are determined to eliminate opium production and are currently destroying poppy fields with the help of tractors," Panjwayee district governor Fazal Mohammad Eshaqzai said.

"Government which prevents us from cultivating poppies must introduce alternatives. The resin (from poppies used to make opium) is lying at home and no one is here to purchase it," one farmer said.

This comes amid a surge in poppy cultivation and opium manufacturing in northern, southern and eastern regions of the province. (Tolonews)

(14) Afghans Welcome...

and stated, "this time the conference for searching peace in Afghanistan is utterly different to the previous ones as China and America can serve as guarantors of peace in the country."

Similarly, Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani in his opening remarks at the conference pointed out that Afghans are hopeful that the participation and involvement of the U.S. and China could take the talks into result-oriented one and eventually led to lasting peace in their war-torn country.

Rabbani also called upon Taliban militants to join the peace process and said, "let us solve all the differences through negotiations." Taliban militants fighting the government to regain power, have yet to express readiness for joining the proposed peace talks.

Meanwhile, Chairman Mushrano Jirga or Upper House of Afghan parliament, Fazal Hadi Muslimyari expressed support to the second round of the four-nation conference and told the upper house on Sunday with optimism that the quadrilateral meeting could find political solution to protracted crisis in the country.

A senior member of the government-backed peace body the High Peace Council (HPC) Mohammad Ismael Qasimyar, in talks with local media at the eve of talks on Sunday, expressed optimism over the four-nation meeting, saying there are considerable changes in Pakistan's behavior towards Afghanistan and that could help the talks to deliver. (Xinhua)

(15) Desertions ...

friends shedding their uniforms and walking away from the base near Kandahar, an area that has long been a Taliban stronghold. "I joined the army so that I could support my family and serve my country, but this is a suicide mission," said Amanullah, 28, who, like many Afghans, uses one name.

The attrition rate hits at the heart of the U.S. exit strategy in Afghanistan, which is to build a force capable of taking on the Taliban when it fully withdraws.

NATO ended its combat mission in Afghanistan at the end of 2014, and a smaller force remains mainly training and advising Afghans. Alarmed by Taliban gains, the United States decided last year to slow the pace of withdrawing troops still there.

In 2015, the Afghan army had to replace about a third of its roughly 170,000 soldiers because of desertions, casualties and low re-enlistment rates, according to figures released by the U.S. military last month. That means a third of the army consists of first-year recruits fresh off a three-month training course.

HEAVY CASUALTIES

The turnover rate is one of the most serious problems faced by Afghan security forces, according to Michael Kugelman, a senior associate for South and Southeast Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. "These high turnover issues increase the possibility that when U.S.-led forces leave Afghanistan for good, whenever that is, they will be leaving Afghan forces unable to fend off a still-ferocious insurgency," he said. The United States has spent around 65\$ billion preparing fledgling Afghan security forces, intended to number about 350,000 personnel, for when it leaves. U.S. General John Campbell, commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, told Congress in October high attrition rates are because of poor leadership and soldiers rarely getting holiday. In

some areas, soldiers "have probably been in a consistent fight for three years," he said. When the Afghan army in 2015 took over almost all combat operations for the first time since the Taliban were ousted, casualties rose 26 percent, according to a NATO military officer. About 15,800 soldiers were wounded or killed, or almost one in 10, according to the officer, who asked not to be named. Despite the challenges, the overall size of the Afghan army remains stable. Afghans willing to risk their lives for a basic monthly salary of about 300\$ a month equal those walking away.

RECRUITMENT DRIVE

The army has been running adverts on prime-time television that show inspiring images of resolute soldiers on training exercises, eating in well-stocked mess halls and with good kit. But on the frontlines, army and police deserters complain of commanders having no answer for deadly ambushes, no broader strategy for prevailing in the war, corruption among their leaders and poor food and equipment. "Barely a day passed without gunfire, ambushes, roadside bombs," said Farooq, a police officer from Helmand province, who quit his job three months ago. "We were treated as if we had no value and our job was to get killed." Sediq Sediqi, spokesman for the interior ministry, said the government was working to improve conditions for security forces and praised their work under difficult circumstances. "We are very happy with the commitment of the police and soldiers," he said.

Since quitting his job, Amanullah said he has been struggling to find work in a nation with one of the lowest labor participation rates in the world. He has decided to reapply for the army. "I am hoping to work in a safer region and under better commanders," he said. "I am just waiting for their response." (Reuters)

(16) Man Cuts ...

shelter in area under the Taliban control.

Provincial public health officials have confirmed that the woman would require plastic surgery, a procedure that is not available in Faryab province.

The incident once again sent shockwaves across Afghanistan amid growing violence against women in the country with majority social media users condemning the brutal act and calling on the government to take immediate steps in detaining and trying the perpetrator.

The growing violence against women has been one of the main social issues Afghanistan has been facing during the past years with the analysts believing that the efforts by the government and international community have failed to curb the stigma in the Afghan society. (KP)

(17) Gunmen Kill...

in the school. I don't want this, they should not set fire to schools - let us study," said Zaid a student.

This incident has also raised questions as to who might be behind the incident.

"The incident concerns us and we want such incidents to be prevented," said Mujeeb Mehrdad an Education Ministry spokesman.

"There are persons who are against children's education, but police will continue investigations and we hope that we can identify the perpetrators and detain them" said Mol spokesman Sediq Sediqi.

This is not the first time a school has been torched. A number of schools have been burned down in the provinces but it is the first such incident in Kabul. (Tolonews)

(18) Russia Upgrades...

of Russia," he said, Nevertheless, he said Russia is ready to step up interaction and partnership with the U.S. and countries in the Euro-Atlantic region, in spite of the mounting military potential of NATO and the alliance's infrastructures advancing towards the Russian border. (Xinhua)

(19) At Least 25....

the two-floor building could be seen from nearby streets, where residents' houses were badly damaged. Its heavy concrete roofs are seen almost settled to the ground. Security officials said more than 200 policemen were asleep in the facility's bedrooms when the attack came.

The Saudi-led coalition started in March 2015 air strikes on Houthis and their allied forces' targets in Sanaa and other cities, saying the multinational action was to restore President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's rule and force the Houthis to

retreat from cities they have seized since September 2014. (Xinhua)

(20) Poland's Duda ...

and Britain would reach a deal at a summit in February on reforms that London has demanded to stay in the -28 nation club. British officials have said a referendum on a possible "Brexit" from the -28 nation EU could be held in the first half of this year if an agreement is reached next month. British Prime Minister David Cameron's most controversial proposal is a four-year ban on top-up benefits for EU migrants working in Britain, which critics say is discriminatory and threatens freedom of movement in the EU. (AFP)

(21) Muslim Women ...

spokesman for 10 Downing Street said the new English language scheme will reach tens of thousands of the most isolated women and will be targeted to specific communities where segregation is seen as a problem.

The proposed language classes for Muslim women will take place in homes, schools and community facilities. New visa rules mean women coming to Britain on a spouse visa will have to become more fluent in English, with a new language test for those seeking a visa extension after two-and-a-half years in Britain. (Xinhua)

(22) Refugee Influx ...

over half a million refugees in the country, most of whom rely heavily on WFP food assistance and nutrition supplements for young children.

"WFP is now feeding 360,000 refugees in Uganda, which is the highest number of refugees we have ever supported here," he said.

Uganda government figures show over 172,400 South Sudan refugees have crossed into Uganda since fighting started in December 2013. Over 18,425 Burundian refugees have been received in Uganda since November. (Xinhua)

(23) US Senior...

release of all remaining students and political prisoners before the new government takes office.

Blinken noted that it is time for successfully forming a new government after overcoming a step towards democracy and find solution through dialogue, adding that more difficulties and challenges are prevalent in the future.

During his visit, Blinken also met with Chairperson of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi, reiterating the continued U.S. support for Myanmar's reform and democratic transition.

Blinken arrived Myanmar Sunday on a two-day visit to the Southeast Asian nation. (Xinhua)

(24) Greek President ...

authorities act as if they don't notice anything. There are cases in which smugglers have supposedly been helped. We have evidence for this," he said.

A senior Turkish official strongly denied the allegations, saying Ankara was determinedly fighting irregular migration.

"Allegations that Turkish authorities have closed their eyes to human trafficking and helped smugglers are baseless and slander," the official told Reuters. (Reuters)

(25) Remittances ...

plummeted. In dollar terms, money sent home from Russia by Tajik migrants was down by %44 in the first six months of 2015 compared with the same period in 2014, according to the Russian Central Bank; remittances from Russia to Uzbekistan fell by half, and those to Kyrgyzstan fell by a third. (AKIpress)

(26) China Calls ...

should recognize it as a nuclear weapons state.

It also said all proposals offered to the U.S. are still valid, including a nuclear testing moratorium in exchange for a halt to joint military drills by Seoul and Washington and the conclusion of a peace treaty to replace the armistice agreement signed in 1953. The DPRK is "channeling all its efforts into the building of an economic power and feels no need to provoke anyone," it added.

China hopes that all parties concerned can keep calm and hopes that they will address the issue through dialogue and consultation, accommodate each other's concerns and jointly seek lasting peace and stability for the region, said Hong. (Xinhua)