

(1) Jamiat-ARG ...

amendment Loya Jirga after the parliamentary and district council elections and before the presidential elections, but the two sides have agreed that if the preconditions are implemented completely, the Loya Jirga can be held after the presidential elections.

Jamiat-e-Islami says that the party has not reached any kind of settlement with the presidential palace's negotiators about the rolling out process of electronic ID cards.

- Giving share of Jamiat-e-Islam in the national unity government based on the NUG political agreement—the government has agreed that Balkh governor and police chief must be determined on the basis of a recommendation by Jamiat-e-Islami. Negotiations were also held on two ministries, but talks were not held on certain candidates who will occupy the two ministries.

- Providing clear information about the nature of the attack on the funeral ceremony of Salem Ezedyar. The special commission which was tasked to investigate the incident will brief Jamiat about the attack, if Jamiat is not satisfied about the outcomes, the investigations will continue.

- The two sides have agreed to the establishment of a High Council of Political Parties.

- The two sides also agreed to create a joint commission to oversee the implementation of the agreement between the government and Jamiat-e-Islami within the framework of a specific timeline.

- Extension of the tenure of Atta Mohammad Noor as governor of Balkh until ARG and Jamiat-e-Islami reach a final settlement—the two sides agreed that if key items of the proposals are accepted by government, in this case, Noor will step down from his post.

- Jamiat has proposed the overseeing of the agreement by the US ambassador to Afghanistan and UN delegation, something the government rejected. But Jamiat has asked the president to give assurance about the agreement at a press conference. It appears however that there are still serious challenges ahead for both parties before they can reach a final agreement.

On Thursday, the US Ambassador to Kabul John R. Bass called for an urgent solution to be found to end the ongoing dispute between government and ousted Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor, who was fired last month by President Ashraf Ghani.

He said this dispute was an Afghan issue and needed to be dealt with accordingly. He said it was not an issue for the US or any other foreign country to resolve. It was an Afghan problem that needed to be resolved within the framework of the Constitution and in accordance with rule of law.

Vice President Mike Pence spoke with President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan by phone on Tuesday 16 January and emphasized his support for the Afghan government to engage with Noor and conduct a peacefully negotiated transition of leadership.

According to a White House statement the discussion was a continuation of the dialogue that the Vice President had with Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah in Kabul last month.

Pence highlighted Kabul's continued engagement and critical progress on necessary reforms, political inclusion, and preparations for forthcoming elections. (Tolo news)

(2) Ghani Briefed ...

and implementation of mega projects. The president said: "The purpose of my visit to the corps was to pray for the soul of martyrs of security forces, offer condolences and wish you all the best in your mission."

The president said the losses of Afghan security forces had dropped this year and this should further drop in the year to come.

He thanked the commando forces for ensuring the security of mega projects and added Afghanistan strategic location should be converted to a huge investment and projects like TAPI, railway track of Herat-Mazar-i-Sharif and water dams were of high importance.

Referring to the courage and bravery of Commando Force the president said: "We all are moving ahead in line with the constitution, our security forces are committed to national unity which interpreted by the implementation of constitution and there was no place for small and trivial politics in our security forces."

At the end Waziri reaffirmed that the commando forces of the country were fully prepared to defend the country. (Pajhwok)

(3) UNSC Discusses ...

engagements at home he was unable to travel to New York.

Rabbani had been busy in political settlement of issues triggered after the acceptance of Balkh governor resignation. (Pajhwok)

(4) 63 Ghor Children ...

"It is known to all that Ghor is one of cold and economically poor province, some of its areas are influenced by militants who do not allow vaccination of children, fam-

ilies also pay less attention to their children's health, these reasons in general can increase diseases in children," he said.

On the other hand, a number of Ghor residents complained about lack of access to children's health specialists and said their patients remained hospitalized in the Ghor Civil Hospital for a long time without being cured.

Abdul Baqi, who brought his child suffering from pneumonia to Ghor Civil Hospital, said he wandered in the hospital for 20 days to seek treatment for his child.

"I came 20 days ago from Shahrak district to this hospital and since we are here waiting for our child to recover, but the doctors are careless about us, they check patient only once in 24 hours, if someone has connection with the doctors, their patient is checked every hour," he said.

The Ghor Civil Hospital agreed with these complaints to some extent and said there was no children specialist in the hospital where sometimes the number of child patients reached dozens. "That is why children's diseases are not properly diagnosed.

Provincial acting public health director, Abdul Latif Rahimi, also said they recently registered 54 cases of pneumonia in children from areas on the outskirts of Firozkoh city, the provincial capital and two of the children lost their lives.

He said 50 percent of children in Ghor did not receive pneumonia vaccination and that was the reason of high number of children's deaths from the disease.

"The number of deaths from these diseases is high but statistics could not be collected from some areas due to impassable routes," he said.

"We have 54 cases from areas on the outskirts of Firozkoh city, two persons died from measles disease, pneumonia diseases has also increased and is rapidly spreading, that is because half of our children do not receive vaccination for several reasons including insecurity," he said.

Rahimi confirmed absence of children's health professionals in Ghor Civil Hospital and said the public health department had tried to employ children's health doctors but no any of such doctors interested to work in Ghor. "MoPH provides many privileges to children doctors, but they don't show interest to work in the provincial civil hospital", he said. Ghor officials say the provincial civil hospital is the only hospital having 180 beds that provides health services to nearly a million population of the province. (Pajhwok)

(5) UK-Funded \$6.7m ...

over 1 million Afghans, the statement said, adding \$6.7m project will help local government in six provinces deliver the services requested by citizens, in line with the Afghan Government's newly launched Citizens' Charter Programme.

The project "ACCESS" would be initially implemented in six Afghan provinces. It would directly benefit over 1 million Afghans by supporting communities to identify the education, health, energy, agriculture and water management services they needed, and monitor the delivery of these services by local government.

The project would also train district and provincial authorities to ensure they have the skills required to deliver these services, directly complementing the implementation of the Citizens' Charter.

The launch ceremony was held in Bagh-e Babur Garden and was attended by the British Ambassador, Sir Nicholas Kay, Mr. Timor Sharan, the IDLG deputy minister, Mr. Mumir Barmak, MRRD senior advisor and Mrs. Nurjehan Mawani, Diplomatic Representative of the AKDN in Afghanistan.

Deputy Minister, Mr. Timor Sharan stressed the "determination of the government in ensuring that governance was citizen-centered and responsive to local needs, promoting citizens participation and public accountability".

Sir Nicholas Kay, the British Ambassador, added, "Meeting the needs of citizens across the whole of Afghanistan for good health, education and buildings is a sign of good governance. Local people need to have a say in identifying what they need. The UK is pleased to help the Afghan Government respond to the needs of men, women and youth in all Afghanistan's provinces."

The project is called Accountable, Citizen-Centered, Sub-National Governance Strengthening Initiative' (ACCESS), and is funded by the Department of International Development at the British Embassy Kabul. It will be implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, and will run from 1 July 2017 until 30 June 2020. (Pajhwok)

(6) 5 Al-Qaeda Members ...

Al-Qaeda members had been assigned to prepare militants for suicide and other terrorist attacks.

Khogyani added the killed Afghan member of the group was identified as Mulla Sondai known as Seraj and he was in charge of propaganda campaign.

Security forces had recovered four AK-47 assault rifles, one machine gun, one pistol and other ammunitions during the raid, he

said.

Khogyani assured that security forces and civilians remained unhurt during the raid. Al-Qaeda has not yet spoken about the incident. (Pajhwok)

(7) Meeting With ...

Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development".

At the meeting, some issues of regional and international security, Uzbek-Afghan cooperation in the sphere of counteraction to modern challenges and threats were also considered. (Agencies)

(8) Pakistan Bans Fruit, ...

All Torkham Customs Clearing Agents Association (ATCCAA) accused the customs department if snatching businesses from the tribal people.

Hayatullah Shinwari, president of the association, and other office-bearers told reporters transporters found the fresh conditions for the food import impossible to meet.

If not allowed to proceed to their destinations, he warned, the fresh fruit and vegetables would perish. In reaction, Shinwari feared, Afghanistan might also stop import from Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(9) US Dismisses ...

improvements in governance and in the quality of the service and support that the government provides to the Afghan citizens, those are all things that should be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led," the ambassador said in a news conference at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

A day earlier, Mohammad Ismaeel Qasimyar, the chief adviser to the country's High Peace Council (HPC), the main government body tasked with reaching a peace deal with the Taliban, told Anadolu Agency the government in principle welcomed any cooperation that strengthened and facilitated the peace process.

"However, we have to learn from the prospects and possibilities of realization of it," Qasimyar said, adding that Afghanistan wished all regional and international players to seek their interests in peace and stability in Afghanistan rather than in an "imposed war".

Local officials in various provinces in Afghanistan have on multiple occasions claimed the Taliban were receiving support from Russia, as well as from Pakistan and Iran, a claim rejected by all three. (AA)

(10) US Warns Afghans ...

governors and urged both sides to respect the rule of law while finding a solution to the crisis.

"We believe it's essential that this dispute and the transition from former governor Atta to a new governor occur peacefully. There is no place for additional violence in this society, and particularly violence that would flow from a political dispute about who the governor of the province is," said Bass.

Ousted governor Noor has been demanding, among other things, the authority to appoint his successor and the provincial police chief.

While addressing supporters Wednesday in the provincial capital of Mazar-e-Sharif, Noor threatened that if his party's ongoing negotiations with President Ghani's office failed to produce an agreement, he would launch a nationwide "rebellion" to "smash the walls of hostility and anger."

Noor was responding to reports the central government might resort to use military force to break the stalemate, and he did not elaborate. But in a public speech earlier this month, the controversial governor claimed that "70 to 80 percent" of Afghan soldiers would not fight him if the government were to proceed with the use of military power.

"There is enough violence, there is too much violence in this society and there are too many conflicts that this government and provincial authorities and citizens are already dealing with. The last thing Afghanistan needs right now is more violence," the U.S. ambassador noted while speaking Thursday.

Bass went on to say the political tensions are only benefiting terrorists and enemies of Afghanistan.

Earlier this week, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence also telephoned Ghani and emphasized Washington's support for the Afghan government to engage with Noor and peacefully negotiate the leadership transition in Balkh.

Observers say the political confrontation could refuel traditional ethnic rivalries in Afghanistan, undermining national counterinsurgency efforts and posing challenges for next year's presidential election.

Noor's party mainly draws its support from Dari-speaking ethnic Tajiks, while Ghani represents the majority Pashtun community. The Afghan president is accused of favoring his own ethnic group, charges Ghani's advisers reject. Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani represent Noor's party in the central government in Kabul.

Party sources have confirmed that political tensions prompted Rabbani not to travel to New York for Friday's U.N. Security Council meeting on Afghanistan and stay in the country to try to resolve the dispute.

Afghan forces in partnership with U.S.-led international troops have intensified operations against the Taliban and other militant groups since President Donald Trump announced his new South Asia strategy in August seeking to contain insurgent gains. (VoA)

(11) Norway Parliament...

an asylum seeker can be sent back to the country they fled from.

This proposal would have brought Norwegian law closer in line with international standards, said Amnesty International.

"This is awful news for Afghans in Norway, and a sad indication that politicians in one of the wealthiest countries in the world have lost their compassion.

Life in Afghanistan is fraught with dangers including bombing, kidnapping, and persecution, and it is cruel and immoral to send people there," said Charmain Mohamed, Head of Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty International.

"Not only is it deeply irresponsible to force people back to danger, it is illegal. With these proposals Norway had a chance to prove itself as a leader in upholding human rights - it has now thrown away that chance and jeopardized the futures of hundreds of Afghans."

Norway appears to deport more Afghans than almost any other European country - not just in proportion to its population, but in sheer total numbers.

According to the Afghan authorities, 32 percent (97 out of 304 people) of forcible returns from Europe in the first four months of 2017 came from Norway.

Afghanistan remains extremely dangerous, with civilian casualties reaching record highs in 2017.

Less than a month ago at least 40 people were killed in an explosion in the centre of Kabul, in an attack that appeared to deliberately target students.

A 2017 Amnesty International report detailed cases of Afghans who have been returned from European countries - including Norway - to be killed, injured in bomb attacks, or living in constant fear of persecution.

Amnesty international said among the Afghans affected by Thursday's decision is Taibeh Abbasi, an 18-year-old living in the city of Trondheim whose case ignited huge student protests.

Taibeh was born in Iran and has never visited Afghanistan, where she is terrified of going.

She told demonstrators at an October protest: "In Kabul there is no future for me and my brothers. We will be exposed to discrimination and physically feel what it is like to be an exposed minority. I as a girl am particularly exposed. My dreams of an education and a career will be broken".

More than 100,000 people worldwide have signed Amnesty International's petition calling on the Norwegian government to stop returning people to Afghanistan until the country is stable enough to ensure their safety and dignity.

"Afghans like Taibeh and her family deserve to live in safety and dignity. We are calling on Norwegian MPs to reconsider their position and to make sure that no Afghans are forced back to danger," said Charmain Mohamed. (Tolo news)

(12) Spain to Send...

Ashraf Ghani appreciated Spain's assistance in different sectors, particularly in military, in Afghanistan.

Ghani said the Afghan government will continue to boost relations between Afghanistan and Spain.

There are at least 15,000 US troops and almost 6,000 NATO forces in Afghanistan. Reports indicate that at least 3,000 NATO troops will be added to the number within the next four months. Meanwhile, an additional 1,000 US troops will be added to the number in the near future.

Spain has so far sent in 29,861 troops to Afghanistan since January 2002. It has been the longest military operation of Spain's modern armed forces, with a tragic result of 102 dead (62 of them in an aircraft crash in Turkey while they were going back home in May 2003). (Tolo news)

(13) Farah Officials...

has positioned itself on the outskirts of Farah city. "Currently security forces have not made any move to target the insurgents and our defensive status is also incorrect. In the last week only, over 50 security force members have been killed," said Rasuli.

Meanwhile, Farah police headquarters security officer Gulbahar Mujahid confirmed the security threats in the province and said Taliban, in support of intelligence agencies from neighboring countries, especially Pakistan, want to seize control of the province. "The Taliban is using all its powers to collapse parts of the city or the province - to make achievements for the foreign intelligence agencies," said Mujahid.

Meanwhile a number of Farah residents and provincial council members said Taliban has infiltrated parts of the city and the security officials are busy securing their own safety. "Last year the Taliban was outside Farah city, but now they entered the city and the war is ongoing inside the city," a member of Farah provincial council Jmila Amini said. "Eighty percent of Farah is under Taliban control and the remaining

20 percent is also in a fragile state and this has caused serious concerns among the people," Abdul Sattar Hussaini, a resident of Farah, said.

Afghan defense ministry meanwhile said they have launched an operation in the city and have killed a number of Taliban fighters.

"Our security forces have launched a big operation in Farah city and Taliban has suffered lots of fatalities," defense ministry deputy spokesman Mohammad Radmanesh said.

Reports indicate that the Taliban has been positioned in Gengan area in north of Farah city and this has raised concerns among Farah residents. (Tolo news)

(14) Karzai ...

suddenly vice president (Joe) Biden got up from his place and said look Mr. Karzai, Pakistan is fifty times more important for us than you Afghanistan. That is the relationship that we should focus on," Karzai said.

At the same event, Igor Morgulov deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, rejected Russia's relations with the Taliban.

"How do you know this is Russian weaponry? I mean if it is AK, they are produced now almost everywhere. So, this no evidence again and we are speaking about those helicopters which bring foreign fighters to Afghanistan. We asked government in Kabul and we asked NATO commandment where these come from? Because we know that this is NATO and Afghan government who is controlling the air space of Afghanistan," Morgulov said. "We have not yet received any substantial answer."

The Russian diplomat said Russia does not have any influence over the Taliban.

"We are very much concerned with the situation in Afghanistan for many years and billions of dollars poured in this country and military efforts. We see no signs of the improving the situation. Moreover, the situation is becoming more and more dire and we are very much concerned. There are a lot of talk about possibility of Russia's assistance to Taliban," he said.

About Russia's pledge to facilitate talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, he said: "That is a principle difference. We are proposing to provide conditions and to provide venue if needed for dialogue between the government in Kabul and the Taliban but there is no evidence whatsoever with regards to Russia's assistance to Taliban. These are pure speculations; absolutely groundless." (Tolo news)

(15) Mining Plan ...

sector and the illegal plundering by powerful elements.

"Without defining a clear and working strategy for development from the mining resources in the long term, these kinds of roadmaps will not be helpful," said Ibrahim Jaffari, member of NRMN.

The Afghan government has been under severe criticisms over its failure to ensure the management of mines.

According to economic analysts, over the past few years, the ministry of mines and petroleum has lost large parts of its human resources and this has paved the way for the embezzlement of revenue achieved from the mining sector. (Tolo news)

(16) 8 Police, ANA ...

He said the Taliban also seized weapons and two motorcycles from the post.

Dadullah Qanay said that two ANA soldiers were killed when Taliban stormed their post in the center of Anar Dara district on Wednesday night.

Pajhwok tried to contact with Farah officials for comment about the incidents, but failed.

Militants have recently increased their attacks on security posts in Farah province. (Pajhwok)

(17) Western Coalition...

had the highest number of poppy growers. So make your own conclusions; who are the people doing it and who are profiting?" Karzai said. The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference held annually in New Delhi to discuss threadbare challenging issues facing the global community. (Sputnik)

(18) 6 Killed As ...

a number of security posts. Transportation routes to the district are blocked.

Meanwhile, Kohistan district police chief Mohammad Naser expressed concern over the security situation in the district and said only four villages of the 135 villages of the district were under their control and the rest were with the Taliban.

"The four villages may also be lost to militants if the situation does not improve," he said. The militants have intensified attacks on areas under government control since two weeks and people in these areas are trapped, he said. The government forces would be obligated to make a deal with militants if they failed to break the siege, he added. Naser said a shopkeeper was killed and another civilian was wounded by Taliban firing in the district bazaar on Wednesday. Pajhwok tried to contact provincial officials for comment about the incidents in Kohistan and Ghormach districts, but failed. (Pajhwok)