

(1) Uzbekistan to Host ...

a logical continuation of the second meeting of the "Kabul Process", scheduled for late February, and consolidate the results achieved within the framework of the common international efforts at various levels, according to Kamilov.

He stressed that holding a high-level forum in Tashkent should demonstrate that the "Afghan problem" will not remain in modern history as a precedent of the helplessness and indifference of the world community in countering the challenges and threats common to all mankind.

"We see the main goals of the multilateral meeting in Tashkent in agreeing the basic principles of the peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, elaborating a mechanism for "launching" negotiations between the government of Afghanistan and the armed opposition, as well as coordinating international joint actions to support this process," he said.

Trend news agency reported that on the outcomes of the conference, it is planned to adopt the Tashkent Declaration, which will define the basic principles and conditions for a peaceful settlement, specify the obligations of the Afghan government and the armed opposition, as well as the international community in terms of "launching" the negotiation process and its support. (Tolo news)

(2) Ex-Afghan PM ..

a brief period of Afghanistan between 1995 and 1996.

High hopes from Turkey

Speaking in his native Dari language, Ahmadzai told Anadolu Agency that Afghans want Turkey to play an instrumental role in bringing peace to their country. "Afghans have high expectations from Turkey. Turkey's stance as an Islamic country in the international arena is quite clear.

"Ankara is determined in its friendship with Afghanistan. It can play an important role in Afghanistan's peace and stability," he said.

He proposed that Turkey could host the Kabul-backed Afghan High Peace Council and representatives of Afghan Taliban, and come up with its own peace plan to resolve the crisis.

"Turkey can present its own peace plan to the parties and prepare a solution with all the information it gets. This way, it can know its supporters in Afghanistan," he said.

"In this regard, President Ashraf Ghani, Taliban and committees from other pro-peace groups could be invited to Turkey." Taliban conditions for peace

About Taliban's conditions for peace, he said: "Taliban has conditions for peace. Withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Afghan soil is one of them.

"Acceptance of this condition by the central government is hard. But this is their opinion. Also, Kabul administration needs to propose a solution between Taliban and the U.S."

He also highlighted the fact that currently there was no timetable specifying when exactly the U.S. forces would withdraw from Afghanistan.

"The U.S. should provide a program and calendar to the Taliban specifying when it would leave Afghan soil in the near or distant future.

"For instance, the U.S. could give a statement saying it would leave Afghanistan in 10 to 20 years. The [Taliban] organization wants this," Ahmadzai said.

Proxy war via Daesh

About claims of Taliban's deep relations with Iran and Russia, and the risk of a proxy war through Daesh in Afghanistan, Ahmadzai said peace in his country was impossible without approval from the U.S. and Russia.

"The Afghan government should prioritize realizing an atmosphere of unity and integration with the public.

"Later, it should coordinate peace talks with the U.S., Russia and others. Peace in this region is not possible without approval of the U.S. and Russia."

He also dismissed the notion that proxy wars, backed by Russia or the U.S., could ever become successful in Afghanistan.

"It is not possible a proxy war to [successfully] happen in Afghanistan. Russians do not have any preparations in Afghanistan for such war. They only support the Taliban.

"Daesh does not have presence in Afghanistan. Afghan government should meet the Taliban and negotiate with it. Only this way, Daesh and other groups can be eliminated.

"Now, Russia's presence in Afghanistan is not seen. As far as I know, Iran and Russia supports the Taliban in Afghanistan. There are some news about it but they are not confirmed.

"There are also news reports suggesting that Daesh was moved from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan by the U.S."

Return of Hekmatyar

About the return of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar -- a former Mujahedeen leader and Hezb-e-Islami party chief -- to Afghanistan, he said, so far, there had been no positive impact of the move.

"After signing the peace agreement with the government, his return to Kabul did

not have a positive effect on drawing the Taliban members to the negotiating table. "He has no contact with Taliban. Hekmatyar should have negotiated with Taliban before he united with the government. But he did not do it.

"He did not do anything for the peace process, before he got concession from the government of Afghanistan."

Government weaknesses

Expressing sorrow over the unfortunate situation in his country, Ahmadzai said: "Afghanistan is engulfed in crises in unemployment, political, economic and social fields. The government has weaknesses in bureaucracy and military.

"The government is extremely weak in military aspect, has almost no control over security forces and army commanders.

"The U.S. supports the central government. Afghanistan is such a country that neither the government nor the U.S. has control of the whole regions."

He called for the Afghan president to resign. "The society is uneasy, the government is powerless. The best way forward is the resignation of Ashraf Ghani-led government.

"An interim set up should be established until the elections. But Ghani says: 'The society voted for me for five years. I will complete it'.

"There are not only political problems but also military problems. The best way to solve the military problem is Taliban's peace process with the government... other [armed] organizations would then fade away."

Ahmadzai also said al-Qaeda terror organization was no longer a threat to Afghanistan.

"Al-Qaeda is not counted as a threat to Afghanistan. Members of this organization live in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other Arabic countries.

"Their influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan is not a topic or a question anymore." (AA)

(3) Survivors Share ..

entering the restaurant.

He said the attackers then deliberately opened fire on the people with AK-47 rifles after eating their food.

Haseeb said he, and eleven of his colleagues, then ran into a room on the fifth floor of the hotel to hide.

According to him, the attackers went through the hotel room-by-room looking for people and randomly shooting them.

"They (attackers) were wearing very stylish clothes," Haseeb said. "They came to me and asked for food. I served them the food and they (attackers) thanked me and took their seats. Then they took out their weapons and started shooting the people."

"There were dozens of dead bodies lying around me. I was one of the few people alive there, but one wounded person asked me for help and I took him out," added Haseeb.

Mohammad Musa Kamal, head of Nuristan telecommunication department, who was staying at the hotel ahead of a scheduled conference on Sunday, also sustained injuries in the attack. Kamal jumped from the second floor of the hotel and lay on the ground for hours before help arrived.

"I was creeping towards the elevator when I heard the attackers saying hit them one by one, hit them one by one! We rushed towards the rooms, whoever were trying to move towards the elevators, the attackers were killing them," said Kamal. Farid, another wounded survivor, said he can only remember his name and nothing about the attack due to head injuries caused in the attack.

Norullah is another civilian who sustained serious wounds in the attack. His legs and teeth have been broken and his family has no information about him.

"The wounded are now in a stable condition. We have operated on them," said one doctor at a Kabul hospital.

According to eye witnesses, dozens of people were killed in the attack on the hotel.

At least 400 civilians have lost their lives as a result of suicide attacks and explosions and hundreds more wounded in the past three months, officials stated recently.

The attack by the Taliban on the Intercontinental Hotel comes amid intensifying violence around the country. In the northern province of Balkh, at least 18 people were killed in an attack by the Taliban late Saturday, most of them members of the local police force, local officials there said.

Sarajuddin Abid, the district governor of Sholgara, said the incident happened Saturday night when a group of Taliban militants attacked a party in Buzboi village in the district where they shot

As well as in the west, at least eight civilians were killed in a roadside mine in Gulrandistrict of the provinces. Victims were reportedly on their way to Iran. (Tolo news)

(4) Taliban Claims ...

in the attack on the heavily guarded luxury hotel popular with foreigners and Afghan officials.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the insurgents initially planned to

attack the hotel Thursday night but postponed the assault because there was a wedding underway and they wanted to avoid civilian casualties. (NYT)

(5) Jamiat-E-Islami ..

Noor's resignation from the Balkh provincial government.

Noor says he had submitted his resignation as a guarantee to the government that he will step down if the demands of Jamiat-e-Islami are met by the government.

However, he says the government has approved his resignation as negotiations were underway insisting that none of the conditions and demands of the party have been met. (KP)

(6) Farah's Acting ...

has been sold to Iran."

In addition, army and police in Farah province on Sunday met to discuss ways to suppress the Taliban in Farah province. Taliban are said to be very active in the northern parts of Farah province. (Tolo news)

(7) 18 Pro-Gov't ...

serving in ranks of Afghan police, the source added.

An investigation was still on, he noted. The Taliban has claimed responsibility. Zabihullah Mujahid, a purported Taliban spokesman, tweeted that a Taliban sympathizer was among the militias and he had facilitated the attack.

He stated that one Taliban fighter was killed and another wounded during the clash.

Fighting has escalated in Afghanistan as the Taliban insurgency spreads from its traditional strongholds in the south and east to the once peaceful region in the north, where Taliban have been recruiting from among the youth.

The Taliban outfit and Islamic State (IS) terror group often target civilians and religious clerics as well as local leaders for their support to the Afghan government and the U.S.-led forces stationed in the country. (Xinhua)

(8) Korea Provides..

"The issue of violence against women requires serious attention and support," noted Amb. Rhee ZhaHyung, the Republic of Korea's Ambassador to Afghanistan. "UNFPA, through this GBV project, takes a comprehensive approach to address the issue, providing survivors with necessary physical and psychological care as well as referrals to protection and legal services. The Republic of Korea is willing and ready to continue its support in partnership with UNFPA and the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Women's Affairs."

Violence against women in Afghanistan, particularly spousal and domestic violence, is commonplace. According to the Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015, approximately 56% of married women aged 15 - 49 are said to have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence from their spouses.

A health sector that has the capacity to respond to the needs of female survivors of violence is an essential step in eliminating this harmful practice.

"One of the biggest impediments in addressing GBV is the stigma women and girls face when talking about it, and the unwillingness of communities to even acknowledge its existence," explained DrBannetNdyanabangi, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative in Afghanistan.

"We aim to increase awareness on GBV and its severe consequences on the health and wellbeing of people in general, and women and girls in particular. By scaling up essential services for survivors, and linking key stakeholders to better coordinate the response, Afghanistan can make significant advances in tackling this scourge."

The project currently reaches 30,000 clients in the 11 provinces where it's being implemented, impacting a wider circle of about 2 million people, including spouses and children, indirectly.

The funding from the Republic of Korea along with UNFPA's technical guidance on the response to GBV are aligned with the national development priorities identified by the Government of Afghanistan as part of the country's long-term development strategy. (Pajhwok)

(9) Making History,...

clean the city.

An elderly woman, who newly joined the municipality job, said every grey-haired woman in the country had gone through bitter realities and problems in life, but now their hope for a good life had increased.

Another woman, Habiba, said her son was an Afghan National Army (ANA) officer who was killed in a clash with militants. Her son left behind three children and their mother. The elderly woman urged the government to create more job opportunities for poor women in order to mitigate their sufferings. (Pajhwok)

(10) Afghanistan

and further strengthen relations between the two countries."

The Uzbek leader called his trip to Af-

ghanistan as "historic" in extending cooperation between the two neighbors.

He said the aim of his trip was to meet senior Afghan authorities and seek further ground for improving cooperation between the two countries.

Qochqarov thanked President Ghani for paying attention to infrastructural projects and said talks were underway on funding the Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat railway road and an assessment for the project had been completed.

He said the survey showed the railway could be built 127 kilometers shorter with less cost.

He added work on electricity transfer through Sar Khan-PuliKhumri route from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan was underway. (Pajhwok)

(11) Senators Accuse...

Morgulove during a meeting in India said: "I don't think so we have an influence on Taliban, but we are certainly worried about situation in Afghanistan and were ready to host direct dialogue between the Taliban and Afghan government. There was no evidence to show Russian support to the Taliban."

Morgulove, however, confirmed Russia's contact with the Taliban for the sake of Russian citizens in Afghanistan and cooperation in the peace process.

Criticizing Russia's role in the Afghan conflict, lawmaker Nisar Ahmad Haris told today's Meshrano Jirga session that Russia should first announce its support for the international alliance against terrorism in Afghanistan before talking about negotiations between the Taliban and the government.

He said: "If the Russians want to help us against militants -- the creation of regional countries -- bring them to the table of talks, first they [Russians] should stop providing them light and heavy weapons."

Lawmaker Juma Din Gayanwal said peace talks had been made a joke these days as they were arranged in many Turkey, France, UAE, etc.

He said Russia was arming the Taliban and Pakistan and at the same time talked about peace in Afghanistan.

Lawmaker Anar Kali Hunaryar said peace talks should be led by Afghanistan and international pressure on Pakistan should be increased so that the neighbouring country launch a sincere fight against terrorism. (Pajhwok)

(12) Paktia Women..

providing women work opportunities.

Najma, a resident of Paktia and law student, told Pajhwok Afghan News that many women and girls wanted to work in different fields but they had been ignored by the government.

"Attention means giving women a proper work environment so they can convince their families and show willingness for work," she said, asking the government to give women priority in filling vacancies reserved for them.

Khalid Zahin, another resident of Gardez, said women's presence and their role in government sector was vital and the need of the hour. He said most of the people had now realized that women should work in government offices.

Nargis Hayat, a resident, said she had appeared in a test for the position of the provincial deputy education director (teaching) long ago, but the results were still awaited.

She said in line with a presidential decree, the post at provincial level should be given to a woman.

ZarghonaHimmat, the Afghan Women Network head for Paktia, rejected the official notion that women did not appear to apply for government jobs, saying this month alone her office received more than 20 applications from women seeking jobs. The applicants held BA and high school degrees. (Pajhwok)

(13) Afghan Diplomat, ...

indiscriminately.

Security force rushed to the site of attack and engaged with insurgent for almost 14 hours bringing an end to the siege of hotel by Sunday afternoon and killed all the attackers.

ZabihullahMujahid, the Taliban spokesman told Pajhwok Afghan News through an e-mail, that five Taliban stormed the Intercontinental Hotel at around 10:00pm on Saturday evening.

He claimed a large number of foreign security personnel, guests and local gusts had been killed during the hours-long assault.

Mujahid said the attack came to an end at around 11:00 am on Sunday morning. (Pajhwok)

(14) US President ...

the attack so far.

According to the White House, Trump was briefed on the terrorist attack in Kabul. No other details were immediately available.

The US is closely monitoring the developments and is providing all necessary help to Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

political offices in the United States."

Reports emerged of Hashemi allegedly having fake degrees after his application and certificates for the IEC post were leaked.

A number of MPs in the Wolesi Jirga said Hashemi's bachelor degree certificate had been issued by a non-existent university in the United States.

They asked the higher education ministry and the foreign ministry to urgently review Hashemi's documents and verify their credibility.

"There are claims that say fraud has been made in this regard and it must be investigated seriously. It will be made clear that what will he (Hashemi) do during the process as he has started his work by bringing fake certificates," said AssadullahSaadati, an MP.

"The National Unity Government's flaws are not summarized in a such fake certificate only. We must say that the National Unity Government has a record in committing frauds," said Ahmad Behzad, a lawmaker.

Election commission spokesman Abdul BadiSayyad meanwhile said they are waiting for the higher education ministry to finish its assessments in this regard.

"The claims about the certificates of (Hafizullah) Hashemi should be assessed by Ministry of Higher Education. The Election Commissions Selection Committee should have something to say that why they introduced him (Hashemi) to the Presidential Palace," saidSayyad.

Hashemi's educational credentials have become a hot topic of discussion -- despite him having to start work for the IEC on Sunday.

Sources meanwhile from the election commission said Hashemi is a candidate for the seat of IEC chief.

Before selecting a new commissioner for the IEC, President Ashraf Ghani's deputy spokesman said Ghani will appoint a new, competent commissioner to the IEC who will have the capabilities to manage the commission. (Tolo news)

(16) Kabul Hotel ...

JamaluddinPadshahkhil, and one foreigner, were killed and six wounded in the siege.

President Ashraf Ghani in a statement condemned the attack and called for regional and international consensus against states which sponsor and harbor terrorists.

The president assigned a team to investigate the incident.

Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah also condemned the attack and commended security forces for saving civilians trapped inside the hotel following the incident.

"I commend the Afghan Forces for their bravery & professional action of rescuing over 100 civilians and killing all terrorists in the insane attack on Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. I condemn the attack & condole with the victim families" Abdullah tweeted.

The US Ambassador in Kabul meanwhile condemned the attack and praised the Afghan forces' response to the attackers. (Tolo news)

(17) Afghan Forces ..

Rahimi said seven people, including three security personnel, were wounded and more than 161 guests, including 41 foreigners, were rescued. International forces reportedly assisted Afghan partners in dealing with the attack.

The Taliban insurgency claimed five of its suicide bombers carried out the assault, which they said targeted a meeting of Afghan and American security officials, inflicting heavy casualties on them. The Taliban often inflates its casualty claims.

But some Afghan journalists who visited the site of the attack Sunday reported via social media they saw dozens of bodies inside the hotel. Officials have not yet commented on these claims.

Saturday night attack. (VoA)

(18) China to Help ..

and political center.

"We have decided to support Afghanistan in the military area and work for military's capacity building in Afghanistan so we would be able to ensure peace in our own country and the region," he said.

"China and Afghanistan are against terrorism, we have made efforts in this area and we thank Afghanistan for its support in eliminating Eastern Turkistan terrorists," he said.

He said recently a trilateral contact was established between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan that would be helpful in elimination of terrorism and ensuring peace in the region.

He said his country always supported advancement in the Afghan peace process and development, business and stability in Afghanistan.

Abdul Karim Khuram, former president Hamid Karzai's chief of staff, also said Afghanistan-China relationship was important and China could help Afghanistan in areas of agriculture, economy, business development and peace and stability.

This relation should be positively used and the relations between the two countries needed to be further improved, he concluded. (Pajhwok)