

(1) Ghani Says...

in the perceptions of achieving peace. "Our goal is sustainable peace, but the bitter reality is that international experiences have shown that 50 percent of peace agreements have resulted in worse wars and the reason for this is (stakeholders have been too) hasty to achieve peace," Ghani said.

He said "international organizations do not have successful experience on peace" therefore, the goal for sustainable peace will be accepted by the nation while peace should be achieved through a clear way and based on the nation's will.

Ghani talked about the legitimacy of his government "which American analysts say has been questioned by recent peace negotiations between US and Taliban officials".

"If (Afghan) government is not legitimate, then where has Taliban gotten their legitimacy from?" Ghani asked, adding that religious scholars in Mecca and Indonesia said that suicide attacks and the killing of civilians are forbidden.

This was in reference to attacks by the Taliban that were carried out during last week's talks.

Ghani said the president's authority is in the hands of the people and has been defined by the Constitution.

"I ask the Taliban if they have prepared their talks roadmap or have they been prepared by others; and is their authority in their hands or in the hands of strangers?" Ghani asked.

He mentioned that the Afghan government's talks with the Taliban would be unconditional but according to him peace with Taliban "will have conditions".

Ghani called on the Taliban to respect the will of the people and said his responsibility is to safeguard the honor of Afghans.

Presidential Elections

Ghani, meanwhile, talked about the upcoming presidential elections and said he wants the results to be announced through a transparent process within two days of votes being cast.

Ghani said that the "people no longer trust the election commissions and that widespread reforms are required in the electoral bodies."

He said the election law will be amended - to facilitate further reforms in the commissions.

The presidential elections are scheduled to be held on July 20 as per a timeline announced by the Independent Election Commission. (Tolo news)

(2) 2,700 Cases...

province and its level needed formulation of a counter-strategy.

He said in the past two years the number of female attorneys had increased from three percent to 22 percent - an exemplary recruitment in the AGO history.

He said most of the cases reaching the AGO had been addressed particularly concerning violence against women.

About the increase in incidents of violence against women this year as compared to the previous year, the AGO spokesman said such incidents had not increased but women's access to justice had improved. (Pajhwok)

(3) Unity Government...

not been able to fulfill its promises to its people.

Nadia Bazidwal, Board of Member of Transparency Afghanistan, said, "The result has been diminishing government legitimacy and trust among Afghans and donor fatigue."

The reason Afghanistan has seen slight improvement between 2015 and till launch of 2018 index is the procurement reform and adopting a few important legislations including access to information and whistle blower protection laws as well as civil service and justice sector reform to a lesser extent.

The CPI 2018 shows that dozens of Asia and African countries have improved significantly between 2017 and 2018. Oman with 8 score, Gambia with 7 are among top performers followed by Tajikistan with Egypt by 3 score each.

The reason Afghanistan failed to be a top performer were internal disagreements within the political leadership over power sharing issues, weak institutional arrangements and lack of support to independent anti-corruption agencies by political leadership, and most importantly a diminishing political will over the years since 2015. Recommendations

- Transparency Afghanistan calls on all stakeholders in the Afghan peace

negotiations to consider corruption a major issue to development and prosperity in Afghanistan and avoid a settlement and power-sharing model that flourishes corruption as was done by Bon Agreement in 2001.

-The nominations for presidential election that is due in July 2019 were just completed and we call on all presidential candidates to come up with strong and clear anti-corruption commitments.

-The work of civil society fraternity has shown that a democratic state can prevent corruption by making transparency and public participation compulsory in the administration and can fight corruption through independent oversight and prosecutorial agencies. (Pajhwok)

(4) Senate Leader Wants...

(BDS) movement against Israel, advanced in a procedural vote on Monday.

There was no immediate word on when the Senate might vote on whether to pass the bill, including the amendment. To become law, it would also have to pass the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives and be signed by Trump, or overcome a Trump veto if he will not sign.

Trump's administration has announced plans to bring all U.S. forces home from Syria, saying that the Islamic State militant group had been defeated.

Separately on Monday, Trump's director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, told a Senate hearing on worldwide risks that Islamic State remains a threat.

On Monday, a U.S. special envoy said the United States and the Taliban have sketched the outlines for an eventual peace accord to end 17 years of war in Afghanistan. However, there was no sign the group had accepted key U.S. demands such as committing to a ceasefire before a withdrawal of U.S. troops. (Reuters)

(5) Despite Ban...

MoAIL curbed trade in breeder chickens and took serious measures in this regard in May 2018. Noori informed that despite restrictions, several vehicles laden with chickens were smuggled into the Arghistan district of Kandahar from Pakistan a few days back. The agriculture department has contacted the district administrative chief on the issue.

Chickens were also smuggled to remote provinces in darkness of night, the official said, alleging the involvement of a mafia group, having link with Pakistani farmers, in the illegal practice. He explained traders purchased two to five kilograms of chicken for 50-70 Pakistani rupees and sold it for 100 afghanis.

Injurious to health There are two kinds of chickens -- breeder and layer. Breeder chickens lay eggs for two years. Later on, they should be buried professionally. Layer hens have two types of golden and white colours. Noori said these hens should also be eliminated after two year of laying eggs.

He added their meat was hard and of low quality, but Afghan traders artificially raise them on fluoride, antibiotics, vaccines and hormones. The chemicals result in cancer of stomach, heart and kidneys, the official said, asking the people to avoid consuming the meat of such chickens that caused many ailments.

The agriculture official continued frozen chickens were also imported to Afghanistan packed in cartons from Pakistan, Iran and Brazil. Such imports are harmful for human health. Noori recalled the MoAIL announcement that chickens traders would be referred to judicial organs. But no action has been taken against them so far.

A joint team of agriculture and municipality officials has been tasked with monitoring trade in certain types of chickens, but their smuggling is yet to be curbed.

Animal Health Director Dr. Fahim said they had warned shopkeepers against the sale of these chickens during monitoring. Violators would be brought to justice, the shopkeepers were told.

He said the joint team monitors markets on a daily basis and allows nobody to sell these chickens.

Chicken farm committee head Haji Nasrullah welcomed the MoAIL decision and pledged all-out cooperation on prevention of such sales. He told Pajhwok imported chickens were not only harmful for health but also nega-

tively impacted on domestic products. He urged the ministry to implement the ban on the smuggling of breeder chickens and promote domestic products that were useful for health. Such a move will help boost the local economy.

He claimed chicken farms in Kandahar could meet the provincial requirement. There was no need for imports from foreign countries, he maintained. The Agriculture Department says chicken farms have seen a lot of development in recent years. About 500 million afghanis have been spent on this sector. About 470 poultry farms are active - 13 of them producing eggs and the rest offering meat.

These farms produce 45,000 kilograms of meat -- 30,000 kilograms used in Kandahar and the remaining 15,000 kilograms supplied to other provinces. The farms fully meet the need for chicken meat. (Pajhwok)

(6) Pakistan, Russia...

deputy prime minister Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said.

Mr Qureshi, in his pre-departure statement, said he would take the Omani leadership into confidence regarding the situation in Afghanistan. (Monitoring Desk)

(7) Ex-US Envoy...

"The Taliban has said all along that it refuses to negotiate with the government, considering the government the illegitimate puppet of the US occupation."

"By acceding to this Taliban demand, we have ourselves delegitimized the government we claim to support," Crocker wrote.

He went on to say this current process "bears an unfortunate resemblance to the Paris peace talks during the Vietnam War".

"Then, as now, it was clear that by going to the table we were surrendering; we were just negotiating the terms of our surrender."

He stated that this time around, the Taliban "will offer any number of commitments, knowing that when we are gone and the Taliban is back, we will have no means of enforcing any of them."

Crocker said it need not be this way. He said the US could announce that talks won't proceed beyond the framework, to matters of substance, without the full inclusion of the Afghan government.

"Right now, the inclusion of the Afghans is only theoretical."

He said that the US could also suggest that unless another solution is found, US troops should remain in Afghanistan as long as the current government wants them, protecting the United States' national security interests and defending core values, such as women's rights, that have been fostered since 2001.

"President Barack Obama proved in Iraq that the United States cannot end a war by withdrawing its forces -- the battle space is simply left to our adversaries."

"In Afghanistan, President (Donald) Trump has a choice. He can follow Obama's example and leave the country to the Taliban, or he can make clear that the United States has interests, values and allies, and will stand behind them," said Crocker.

The Republican leader of the US Senate meanwhile also spoke out about a troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and offered legislation on Tuesday urging the United States to keep troops in the country, as well as Syria.

Saying that Islamic militant groups in the two countries continue to pose a "serious threat" to the United States, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he had introduced an amendment to a broader Middle East security bill urging a "continued commitment" until al Qaeda, Daesh and other groups are defeated.

"We're not the world's policemen, but we are the leader of the free world, and it's incumbent upon the United States to lead, to maintain a global coalition against terror and to stand with our partners," McConnell said in a speech in the Senate.

The measure would be an amendment to a broader Middle East security bill being debated in the Senate.

That bill, which includes fresh sanctions on Syria and a measure combating the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, advanced in a procedural vote on Monday.

Trump's administration has announced plans to bring all US forces home from Syria, saying that Daesh had been defeated.

Separately on Monday, Trump's director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, told a Senate hearing on worldwide risks that Daesh remains a threat.

This comes after US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad said on Monday the US and the Taliban have sketched the outlines for an eventual peace accord to end 17 years of war in Afghanistan.

However, there was no sign the group had accepted key US demands such as committing to a ceasefire before a withdrawal of US troops.

Nor did Khalilzad agree in talks with insurgent negotiators last week in Doha to a withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan within 18 months, as Taliban officials claimed, said a State Department spokesperson.

"We have not agreed to any specific timeline for a possible drawdown of troops," the spokesperson wrote in an email. (Tolo news)

(8) NRC Chief...

as high levels of violence and displacement continued, he claimed.

Negotiations should seek an end to the war and ensure aid workers could continue to deliver assistance to the millions of women, children and men still in urgent need of protection and education, he added.

"Negotiations must include specific agreements whereby aid actors are given the space, safety and support we need to reach people in need. No compromise should be made jeopardising civilians' access to protection and aid..." (Pajhwok)

(9) Hundreds Acres...

on the usurped land, a process which is still ongoing, but the municipality has been unable to control it," he said.

Wakil said the grabbed land was a green and recreational area of Pul-i-Alam, but it was lost due to negligence of the officials concerned.

Shir Badshah, a resident of Pul-i-Alam, told Pajhwok land plots in many other areas of the city had also been grabbed and turned into residential areas.

"People build illegal houses during night on the land, so no one stops them," he said.

On the other hand, Pul-i-Alam mayor Nasir Ahmad Lalizai acknowledged some land on the Miarabdal Mountain hillside had been usurped and used for residential purpose.

But he said a joint committee comprised of municipality, National Directorate of Security, police, attorney office, Land Authority and urban development department officials had been created for recovering the usurped land and bringing the grabbers to justice.

He also said land grabbers used to build houses during night and they abuse municipality workers who try to prevent the illegal practice.

Shapor Ahmadzai, Logar police spokesman, said that they were ready to cooperate with the municipality in retaking the usurped land.

"Police cannot take action arbitrary until people or the municipality complain, but we are ready to cooperate with relevant organs, particularly the municipality, in line with the law," he said.

According to the Land Authority, around 1.5 million acres of state land has been usurped countrywide. (Pajhwok)

(10) Dan Coats...

to gain a strategic military advantage in the Afghan war in the coming year if coalition support remains at current levels," he said in his report.

"Afghan forces generally have secured cities and other government strongholds, but the Taliban has increased large-scale attacks, and Afghan security suffers from a large number of forces being tied down in defensive missions, mobility shortfalls, and a lack of reliable forces to hold recaptured territory," he said.

On what was described as Pakistan's non-cooperation, Coats said in his report that militant groups supported by Pakistan will continue to take advantage of their safe haven in Pakistan to plan and conduct attacks in India and Afghanistan, including against US interests.

"Islamabad's narrow approach to counterterrorism cooperation - using some groups as policy tools and confronting only the militant groups that directly threaten Pakistan - almost certainly will frustrate US counterterrorism efforts against the Taliban," he said.

On weapons of mass destruction, he said the continued growth and development of Pakistan and India's nuclear weapons programs increase the risk of a nuclear security incident in South Asia, and the new types of nuclear weapons will introduce new risks for escalation dynamics and security in the region.

"Pakistan continues to develop new types of nuclear weapons, including short-range tactical weapons, sea-based cruise missiles, air-launched cruise missiles, and longer range ballistic missiles.

"India this year conducted its first deployment of a nuclear-powered submarine armed with nuclear missiles," he said.

On al-Qaeda, he said the group's senior leaders "are strengthening the network's global command structure and continuing to encourage attacks against the West, including the United States, although most al-Qaeda affiliates' attacks to date have been small scale and limited to their regional areas.

"We expect that al-Qaeda's global network will remain a CT challenge for the United States and its allies during the next year.

"Al-Qaeda media continues to call for attacks against the United States, including in statements from regional al-Qaeda leaders, reflecting the network's enduring efforts to pursue or inspire attacks in the West.

"All al-Qaeda affiliates are involved in insurgencies and maintain safe havens, resources, and the intent to strike local and regional US interests in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia," he stated.

Coats went on to say that al-Qaeda affiliates in East and North Africa, the Sahel, and Yemen remain the largest and most capable terrorist groups in their regions.

"All have maintained a high pace of operations during the past year, despite setbacks in Yemen, and some have expanded their areas of influence.

"Al-Qaeda elements in Syria, meanwhile, continue to undermine efforts to resolve that conflict, while the network's affiliate in South Asia provides support to the Taliban," he said. (Tolo news)

(11) Americans...

a political option," the negotiator remarked.

President Ashraf Ghani did not have the power to decide on keeping foreign troops in Afghanistan or asking them to quit the country, he alleged. "It is up to the Americans to decide either to leave or to stay in Afghanistan."

Stanikzai has been replaced by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar as head of Taliban's political office in Qatar. Now Baradar, the Taliban's deputy chief, will lead the peace talks.

Taliban's envoys think Khalilzad was more powerful than the previous US negotiators they had interacted with. Given his experience, Stanikzai hoped, Mullah Baradar's appointment as head of Taliban's political bureau would spur the group's political activities.

In response to a request from Khalilzad, Baradar was freed by Pakistan in October to facilitate the peace process. He had been detained in Karachi in 2010. (Pajhwok)

(12) Balkh Urea...

But the Taliban rejected the allegation they had demanded from the factory. The group spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Pajhwok that the gas pipeline was cut off near Chamtal district as a result of a clash and efforts were underway to repair it.

Mujahid said a technical team had been invited to fix the pipeline as the area was under their control. (Pajhwok)

(13) Ghor Residents...

officials for their failure to control the market.

A number of other residents hold similar views and want the government to pay enough attention to the issue. The commoners were finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet, he grumbled.

Shah Mahmood Shahab, the municipality spokesman, confirmed the hike in prices of fuel and other essential items. He said they could not interfere in the free market but still they monitored bazaars many times every month.

Economics experts in the province believe if the government does not pay attention to the rising prices of fuel in the winter season, concern among the people will refuse to go away.

Jamal Yaqoobi, an economist, said: "Unfortunately, the country has been faced with many challenges for the past decade in different areas. But as expected, it has not been able to deal with the challenges. (Pajhwok)