

(1) President Ashraf...

tant and vowed to convert it to a trade hub during his leadership. In a reference to the recent peace talks, the president said the Afghans after 14 years had been able to talk face-to-face with the Taliban.

He said the meeting between the government and Taliban officials in Islamabad was a big achievement and the first step to start peace talks.

He said the second phase of the talks would start in the next 15 days, but did not mention a possible venue for the talks.

Ghani said the second round would discuss demands and problems of the Taliban and solutions to them.

Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar on Wednesday also favoured the peace talks as legitimate in a message on the eve of Eidul Fitr.

"If we look into our religious regulations, we can find that meetings and even peaceful interactions with the enemies is not prohibited," the Taliban leader said. (Pajhwok)

(2) Watchdogs ...

in the Kabul Emergency Hospital on Tuesday were those injured by the explosion in Shar-e-Now on Monday.

"This year, 2015, has already started already badly," the hospital's program manager Luca Radaelli told TOLONews. "Since the beginning of this year, the first quarter - from January to April - we had 39 percent admission, which is more than 2014."

Lal Gul Lal, the head of the Afghanistan Human Rights Organization, has echoed calls from groups like the UN and HRW for the warring factions to take more care in avoiding civilian casualties. "Civilian casualties in recent months are without precedent and we ask all groups involved in the fighting to avoid civilians casualties and do not harm civilians," he said. (Tolonews)

(3) Murree Meeting...

However, commentators believe the divisions are not as serious as to be a kick in the guts for the group.

In an ambiguously-worded statement, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid rejected as rumours reports about the clandestine negotiations. There were also reports that representatives of the Taliban's political office in Doha did not attend what many characterised as a ground-breaking contact.

Ahead of the Murree meeting, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry had told senators in Islamabad although the Afghan government was ready for peace parleys, the Taliban were sharply split on the issue.

Javed Kohistani, a Kabul-based political analyst, claimed there were cracks in Taliban's ranks on reconciliation talks with the Ghani administration. He believes the movement is divided into three groups.

(4) UN Report...

Speaking exclusively to Pajhwok Afghan News, he suggested the Taliban's Doha bureau was firmly under the influence of Mullah Omar, who seems to be under house arrest in Pakistan. However, the Taliban figures who recently took part in a series of meetings at different venues are stoutly backed by Islamabad.

Kohistani opined the Qatar office members and Mullah Omar, who was not allowed to participate in such meetings, represented one group. The other faction is comprised of Mullah Mohammad Hassan Rahmani and his loyalists, who have been part of the peace parleys. (Pajhwok)

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placed from their homes in 2014, more than in any single year since the war began, UN officials said. Yet they have warned that number could likely be surpassed in 2015. "You have a different kind of fighting going on now," said Catherine Howard, the acting head of the UN's humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. "Now, you're seeing a more indiscriminate use of mortars in populated areas, and an increasing number of women and children impacted."

More than 14,600 families have been displaced in northern Kunduz province alone, the UN report says. Eastern Nangarhar province and southern Helmand have also witnessed thousands of residents displaced.

Abdul Salam Hashimi, the head of IDPs affairs in Kunduz, told TOLONews that there are at least 4,630 displaced families living in the province. "Most of the families have been displaced from parts of Gortepa, Ali Abad, Chardara, Imam Sahib, Qala-i-Zal districts, and have moved to different parts of the province, including Kunduz city," he said. (Tolonews)

(5) AAF to Get...

twin FN Herstal 12.7 mm (.50 cal) Heavy Machine Gun Pods (HMPs). The integration, which will include installation of fixed forward weapon sights, will be complete by 12 July 2016.

The Afghan Air Force received the first six armed MD-530s from United States earlier in the month of March this year.

Pentagon awarded MD Helicopters Inc. a maximum \$44.2 million firm-fixed-price contract last year to develop and provide an armament package for the MD-530F helicopters that were already supplied to the Afghan Air Force.

Around 17 of the Afghan Air Force's MD-530F helicopter will be upgraded under the contract which is expected to be completed early next year.

MD-530F helicopters are designed for high altitude and/or hot weather operations, where thinner air costs helicopters some of their lift.

Afghan Air Force is also expecting to receive 20 A-29 Super Tucano light air support aircraft which will help replace the Mi-35 attack helicopter that reaches the end of its service life in January 2016. A-29 pilots and maintainers are currently in the US and have been training since February. (KP)

(6) Mullah Omar...

armed Jihad, political endeavors and peaceful pathways... is a legitimate Islamic principle and an integral part of Prophetic politics." He said the objective behind their political endeavors as well as contacts and interactions with countries of the world and Afghans was to bring an end to the occupation and to establish an independent Islamic system in Afghanistan.

He said the Taliban had established a political office in Doha for political affairs and the office was entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and conducting all political activities.

"It is our legitimate right to utilize all legal pathways because being an organized and liable setup, we are responsible to our masses, we are an integral part of human society and rely upon one another. All Mujahidin and countrymen should be confident that in this process, I will unwaveringly defend our legal rights and viewpoint everywhere."

Omar also said they formally recognized the legitimate rights of all Afghans including minorities as their religious duty. (Pajhwok)

(7) Scotland Sends...

without risk of course, and as a British soldier deploying on an operation overseas you would expect that.

"But it feels very, very different and we are not the ones who are primarily in the lead.

"It is the Afghans in the lead. We are there in a supporting role, helping them to develop their institutions so that they can then deliver more enduring stability to their own country." He is quoted by BBC as saying.

The news agency further states that about 250 of these troops will be stationed at Afghanistan's military college. (KP)

(8) Ghani, Karzai...

Some sources say President Ghani dubs Karzai as a national leader and lauds his efforts and contributions to the country's development

during his tenure.

Ghani, however, insists the new government should be given an opportunity to serve the country and implement the pledges it had held out to the masses.

Karzai, during his meeting with Ghani, shared his concerns about multiple national issues and gave his suggestions as well.

The meeting comes a day after Mesharano Jirga members asked the unity government leaders to resolve end rivalry with the former president and refrain from criticising each other. (Pajhwok)

(9) Safi Airways...

"Three years back, the Council of Ministers ordered the Finance Ministry to reduce taxes of the airlines from 10 percent to five percent. But unfortunately it has not been done."

In a letter, seen by Pajhwok Afghan News, the Council of Ministers has called for the tax on profit to be reduced from 10pc to 5pc and it collection in installments.

On the letter, the first vice-president's office has written: "based on decision of the Council of Ministers, the previous years' taxes payable by the Safi Airways should be calculated and received in 15 years in installments."

Farid Nazari said they had been expecting the Finance Ministry to act upon the Cabinet decision, but instead the company was subjected to heavy tax penalties.

He said unhealthy competition between airlines, weak market, a spike in fuel prices, foreign completion and the lack of sufficient passengers were among the challenges the companies faced.

He added their current income could not meet their expenditures, that was why the company was in losses. He urged the Finance Ministry to support investors facing financial challenges.

But Deputy Finance Minister Gul Maqsood Sabet said the taxes had been reduced to five percent in compliance with the Council of Ministers' directives.

Regarding the airlines' demand to pay reduced taxes from the date the Council of Ministers took the decision, he said: "law is above the Cabinet. When laws are amended, we implement them from that specific day onwards."

Earlier the Finance Ministry had said the Safi Airways defaulted on huge amount of taxes in parking and airport fees over the past four years. (Pajhwok)

(10) Kabul Protests...

to muster more support from regional and international countries for the reconciliation process.

Ghani flew to Ufa last week to take part in the 15th BRICS and SCO summits. He told the SCO members that terrorism was a regional threat which should be curbed through joint and regional efforts. In a reference to Taliban's visits to Iran, the president said if Afghanistan took similar steps and invited the Mujahidin-i-Khalq to Afghanistan what will be the reaction of the government of Iran.

Mujahidin-i-Khalq, a leftist political wing, is an armed organization in Iran. It was established in 1965. Rouhani did not directly respond to Ghani's complaint, but said it was an intelligence mistake which would not be repeated in future.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Iran in Kabul could not be reached for comments. Iran has been frequently accused for having links with Afghan Taliban. A delegation of Taliban headed by Tayyib Agha and members of Taliban political office in Qatar reportedly visited Tehran in April.

Wahid Muzhda, a political analyst, said Afghanistan should formally lodge its protest with Iran over the issue as secret protests would bear no fruits.

He said Iran was backing Taliban who received arms and other facilities from Iran during President Karzai government, but the Afghan government had never raised the issue.

He said Taliban leader Mullah Umar in his Eid message had mentioned Iran in a different way, which seemed the group might be receiving assistance from that country. (Pajhwok)

(11) 5 Passengers...

Nimatullah, a resident of Khairo Khail area, where the incident took place, said unknown gunmen last night started searching vehicles on the road in the locality.

Some months back, 13 passengers were kidnapped in Aziz Khan locality on the Kabul-Jalalabad high-

way, but they were later released. (Pajhwok)

(12) ISI and Military...

a fierce 14-day battle.

Paktia, which is a heavily wooded area, provides plenty of trees for insurgents to take cover behind - including Pakistani militia.

"We have dealt a heavy blow to the enemy. But we are still at war with them," one Afghan soldier told TOLONews.

Mohammad Shafiq, an army commander, said: "They [Pakistan's ISI and military] have set six million Pakistani Rupees reward for breaking the first [defense] line against the Afghan security forces."

TOLONews reporter, Wali Arian, who is reporting from the area, says that the Taliban flag can be seen flying in parts of Jani Khel district - which is close to Samkainai. Jani Khel however is under serious threat.

"The situation is really bad. The local police force is faced with lots of problems. This district will fall if no attention is paid to it," police commander for Jani Khel district, Abdul Nasir told TOLONews.

Army commander, Mohammad Sharif Yaftali, said that an ISI lieutenant is leading the war in Paktia. "Pakistan's Tal city is the command center for the war. They lead the war from there," he added.

A border police officer in Dand Patan district, Ridi Gul seconded this and said the insurgents are entering the province through Para Chinara area to fight the Afghan security forces. (Tolonews)

(13) 228 Held...

items used in making heroin, half a tonne of morphine, nine tonnes of opium, 26 tonnes of hashish, 1.5 tonnes of solid chemical materials, 20 tonnes of liquid chemical materials and 6,000 liters of alcoholic beverages.

The suspects included two Iranian nationals, 11 civil service workers, seven women and a number of ordinary people, Mowahid said. He said the cases were under investigation and the relevant courts would decide them soon.

He said most of the cases currently being investigated belonged to Kabul, Kandahar and Nimroz provinces. (Pajhwok)

(14) Sgt Esa Khan...

was sentenced to jail. No further details were given regarding the guarantor of Sgt Khan but Gen. Rahimi said the legal proceedings against Sgt Khan would continue.

If [the court] sentences him to jail, he will come to us and will complete the rest of his sentence... If the court orders his release after all investigations, he will be free," Gen. Rahimi added.

At least five people were killed and over 30 others were injured after the Taliban group launched a co-ordinated attack on the parliament building in Kabul on 22nd June.

The militants launched the attack by detonating a Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) near the entrance gate of the building and the remaining six militants started assault on the building and tried to enter the parliament house but were all gunned down by Sgt Esa Khan. (KP)

(15) Latest Peace...

and that more Taliban leaders would join the next round of talks. Pakistan foreign secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry recently told the Pakistani senate that though the Afghan government was interested in the peace talks, the Taliban were divided into two groups over the parleys. He had said one group of the Taliban was ready for the talks and the second was not.

In Kabul, political affairs expert Javed Kohistani confirmed differences among the Taliban, saying the rebels had split into three groups over the issue.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News the Doha office was under influence of Mullah Mohammad Omar's friends to a great extent, but it seemed Omar was under immense pressure from Pakistan and close observation as those attending talks at different venues had the backing of Islamabad.

He said Omar's Doha office was one group, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Rahmani and his supporters was another group, which has been taking part in talks, and the third group was young battlefield commanders each of whom had his own view and had serious differences among them.

Another political expert, Dr. Faiz Mohammad Zaland, said the peace talks which had been initiated with

Pakistan's mediation might have caused differences among the Taliban ranks.

However, he believed the Taliban's cautious statement following the Murree talks showed the differences would be resolved until the next round of talks and the Taliban would appear for the next round with a unified stance. (Pajhwok)

(16) Gunmen Attack...

to Parliament, the scene of a massive attack a few weeks ago.

Officials said that in addition to civilian patients in the hospital, a number of prisoners are also being treated there after recently having been moved to the facility.

Banaras Misbah, a physician who was at the hospital at the time of the attack, told TOLONews that a number of well-dressed young men broke the entrance door of Emergency Department and entered the hospital.

"We heard the sound of repeated firing. When I went to the corridor to see what was happening, there was no one there. They did what they wanted to in a very short span of time - in something more than one minute," he noted.

Head of the hospital, Temor Shah Musamim, said he was concerned about the incident and said he has raised the issue of hospital security with relevant organizations in the past but that nothing has been done about the situation.

"We have suggested repeatedly over the past two years that a security check post should be established outside the hospital. But the request was not addressed and [government] were not interested in installing a check post there to ensure the hospital's safety," he mentioned. (Tolonews)

(17) Taliban Attack...

wounded. He added two policemen also suffered injuries.

Taliban, however, in their website have claimed overrunning three security posts in Qala-i-Afzal locality of Kamal Khan, killing five soldiers.

Two weeks back also the insurgent group had attacked the facility, torching a police post.

Kamal Khan Dam has three sections and is being constructed with the financial support of the World Bank at a cost of \$100 millions.

Work on the second phase of the mega project is underway and upon completion more than 100,000 hectares of land would come under irrigation and 8.5 megawatts of electricity would be generated. (Pajhwok)

(18) Bomb Injures...

Afghan News 19 wounded people had been brought to the hospital.

They included two policemen, two children and a woman and four of them were in critical condition, he added.

But Dr. Sabera Sherzai, deputy public health director, put the number of those injured at 24. Assadullah, 30, who was injured in the blast, said: "I was crossing the road when the explosion took place. Security forces were also present at the time."

Another wounded person said: "Anybody who is responsible for the blast during this holy month of Ramadan is not a Muslim."

The explosion occurred when police and other government employees queued up in front of the bank to collect their wages ahead of Eidul Fitr.

No group has claimed responsibility for the blast so far. (Pajhwok)

(19) Civil Society...

unknown gunman shot dead Hamidullah Noori, a civil society activist, and a policeman, District Police Chief, Mohammadmullah said.

"After the gunman attacked Noori the police wanted to arrest the man but he shot dead a policeman and injured another. The attacker was killed in an exchange of fire," he said.

Police have launched an investigation into the incident but it's not yet clear what the motive behind the attack was. (Tolonews)

(20) Taliban Kill...

eyes of Islam, said Karim Khorosh, the deputy police chief in Almar.

During a speech at Friday prayers, Sattar urged the people not to align themselves with the Taliban. In addition, he also declared that the killing of civilians is against the principals of Islam.

Meanwhile, a so-called spokesman for the Taliban, Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, claimed responsibility for killing Sattar.

This comes after the Taliban killed

a prominent religious scholar in Ghorbach district in Faryab earlier this week after the cleric announced his support for the Afghan security forces.

In addition, a third cleric died on Tuesday after being shot by unknown gunmen in northern Samangan province. The prayer leader, who had been a former Taliban shadow governor, was shot dead at a Mosque. (Tolonews)

(21) Russia Brings...

show better results after a modest campaign over the summer when many Russians are on vacation.

Some even called the move a trial balloon to see if Russians would support bringing forward presidential polls, which would further extend Putin's grip on power.

Putin's veteran ally and former finance minister, Alexei Kudrin, in June proposed that the 2018 presidential election be held at an earlier date to help the Kremlin launch reforms that could pull Russia out of the economic crisis.

Putin, who holds a record-high approval rating, has not ruled out running in the next presidential elections, which he is widely expected to win.

Kudrin's proposal sparked debate in Russian political circles. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not dismiss the idea and said it would be discussed among political experts.

By way of example, Kudrin referred to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev who was re-elected in April with nearly 98 percent of the vote in snap presidential elections held one year ahead of time.

Nazarbayev said the early election was needed to give him a fresh term to tackle economic problems exacerbated by low oil prices and the economic crisis in neighbouring Russia. (AFP)

(22) EU Publishes...

a gross financing requirements perspective, though they would still leave Greece with very high debt-to-GDP levels for an extended period."

The IMF study said European countries would have to give Greece a 30-year grace period on servicing all its European debt, including new loans, and a dramatic maturity extension.

The alternative was between annual transfers to the Greek budget or "deep upfront haircuts" on existing loans, it said.

Gross financing needs would rise to above the 15 percent of GDP threshold deemed safe and continue rising in the long term, the updated IMF study said.

The European Commission, however, estimates the same ratio would be 10.4 percent on average in 2015-30 and, in an adverse scenario, 13.1 percent.

European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis said that Greek debt sustainability, while a serious concern, should be seen more in terms of what burden it presented to the economy than in terms of the more abstract debt-to-GDP ratio. (Reuters)

(23) China Welcomes...

in North Africa, has witnessed a frayed political process since former leader Muammar Gaddafi was toppled amid political turmoil in 2011.

The country is now deadlocked in a struggle between the pro-secular army and Islamist militants, which has led to a security vacuum for homegrown extremism to thrive.

The UN has brokered several rounds of dialogues between the conflicting parties since last September, but clashes have persisted despite a truce agreed upon by the warring factions. (Xinhua)

(24) Iraqi Forces...

citing initial reports from the battlefield.

In addition, a Shiite leader from the Hashd Shaabi, Hadrir al-Qaisi, was killed and three of his bodyguards were wounded when they entered a booby-trapped house which exploded during a search operation, the source added.

The battle in Baiji comes about two weeks after security forces and allied militias, covered by Iraqi and U.S.-led coalition aircraft, cleared most of the town following days of heavy clashes with extremist militants.

Sporadic clashes persist in Iraq's largest oil refinery nearby as security forces fight to drive IS militants out of the refinery, which militants have seized large sections of. (Xinhua)