

(1) Electoral Reform....

reforms and the commission's work would not be symbolic. The panel started its work late, he said, asking its members to make up for the time lost. He hoped the commission would finish its task in a timely manner.

Assuring government's full support to the panel, the CEO said the panel failed in achieving its objects, it would not only be detrimental to the commission itself but to the entire nation. The commission's head said they would make every effort possible to ensure accuracy and impartiality in their work.

"We believe that the electoral reform commission is not supposed to work for a particular individual, group or party, but to bring necessary reforms in the electoral system for the sake of transparent future elections," Shah Sultan Akefi added.

Earlier, election observers had welcomed the establishment of the electoral reform commission, but they were skeptical about its independence, saying majority of its members were affiliated with the leaders of the unity government.

Akefi promised they would try and listen to views from different segments of society and even leaders of the government to incorporate them in reforms. He said they would also study international experiences and would take them into consideration in the reform process.

Tadamichi Yamamoto, UN Secretary-General's deputy special representative for Afghanistan and a member of the commission, said UNAMA was proud to be part of the panel and considered it a major step toward restoring people's trust in the electoral process.

"We believe the commission would utilise this opportunity well and with its efforts would make the electoral process very strong," Yamamoto said, hoping UNAMA's role in the commission would be advisory and would not have the right to vote despite attending all meetings. (Pajhwok)

(2) Lost Kabul....

to pay their debts. They can't possess even a single afghani from the national coffers," he remarked.

Once the country's largest lender, the bank plunged into deep crisis in 2009, when it lost \$987 million in fraudulent property deals, massive off-book loans and credit to fake corporations, prompting the government to take over the bank's affairs and change its name to New Kabul Bank. The government had to finance a bailout of \$825 million to the bank.

Of \$987 million squandered money, the government says it has so far recovered \$437 millions. Twenty-four defaulters have paid their debts until now. Some of the major shareholders including Mahmood Karzai, Gulbahar Habibi, Hassin Fahim, Daud Nassir, Mohammad Anwar Jigdalak, Mohammad Tahir Zahir, Mahboob Frotan, Mohammad Ismail Ghazanfar and Amrullah have started paying their debts in installments. According to the AGO, the assets of these individuals are not frozen anymore.

In October 2014, the president ordered reopening of the Kabul bank case and reinstating its assets.

Prior to Ghani's order, the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption and Evaluation Committee revealed that the New Kabul Bank had lost around 47 million dollars during the past four years. (Pajhwok)

(3) Ceasefire High....

government and Taliban representatives.

Pakistan and China show their interest to be 'guarantors' for a peace deal between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan hosted the first direct peace talks between Afghan officials and Taliban representatives earlier this month in the presence of observers from the United States and China.

The second round of the peace talks is expected on July 30 in China, Pakistani media reports. Din Mohammad said other major points to be discussed in the next meeting would be trust building

and resolving differences between the two parties. "We will mainly focus on how to develop trust and end the war and bloodshed in the country," he added. Removal of Taliban leaders' names from the UN blacklist and release of their prisoners would also be included in the agenda, he said.

Peace was the cry of the day, no others but mothers wanted peace the most because they lost sons as soldiers and as Taliban fighters to the conflict, the presidential advisor said.

Haji Din Mohammad said the next round of talks should have been planned in Kabul since it was a joint house of both the parties. But he said China might host the next dialogue, a venue for which will be finalised soon. "(In the Murree talks), we asked the Taliban delegation if they had full authority and approval from their senior leadership, they confirmed they had it," he said, referring to doubts expressed about non-participation of Taliban representatives from their Qatar office in the talks.

"Our main goal and objective is to achieve peace and we are ready to talk and negotiate everywhere we are asked and we would never care of hear-say," he said of the government's strong desire for peace.

The former governor said the Taliban delegation had assured them their several other prominent leaders would participate in the second round of peace talks, admiring US and China's efforts in advancing the Afghan reconciliation.

"We agreed to continue peace talks. We have a strong international support for the peace process and there exist regional and international consensus in this regard," the tribal elder said.

"We are optimistic about reaching a decision with Gulbadin Hekmatyar since we are in contact with him through different channels for the last few years," Din Mohammad said in response to a question about the Hezb-i-Islami's stance on the peace process.

He also said the Afghan government had been in regular and close contacts with Saudi Arabia and Qatar about the ongoing peace process.

He said Qatar had assured complete support to the Afghan government about the peace process in the country. (Pajhwok)

(4) ANSF in....

His remarks came just days after the acting governor of Balkh, Atta Mohammad Noor, said three major parties in Afghanistan, including First Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum's party, had joined hands to fight insurgents in northern Afghanistan.

Over the past few months there have been constant attacks by the Taliban and other militant groups in northern Afghanistan that often resulted in the collapse of districts - which were then retaken by security forces. Uloomi said however at Tuesday press conference that Afghans have "learned after three decades of war that they want peace".

He said however that the Taliban has not succeeded in reaching its goals. The Taliban has tried to show their presence but they have failed in the north, south and east.

He says militants move constantly - when security forces launch attacks in the north, they move to the south and vice versa.

However, he pointed out that Afghan forces have succeeded in taking back control of a northern areas seized by the Taliban

He says local anti-government militants are those who are not happy with the system - they create corruption, insecurity and injustice in their areas.

Afghanistan has never allowed its soil to be used in offensives against another country - the Afghan government has been successful in this regard and has the support of the international community.

"We are well aware of the situation - the Afghan forces are in the driving seat and there is no threat that any province will fall to militants".

"Militants will never be able to pose a permanent threat to any province and Afghan security forces are able to foil any type of attack - if they are properly

equipped." (Tolo News)

(5) ISIS Recruiting....

started rebranding by pledging allegiance to the terror group. Pentagon also released a report earlier last month stating that the terror group is likely to continue looking for ways to expand their activities in Afghanistan. According to the report, the US forces have noted a few militants re-branding themselves, likely in an attempt to draw media attention, greater resources and more recruits. (KP)

(6) Trust Building

the negotiations while Chinese and US representatives took part as observers. Members of the Haqqani Network were also present at the face-to-face talks.

Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Qazi Khalilullah had said Islamabad was committed to honouring all pledges made with the Afghan leadership.

Maulvi Shahzada Shahid, a member of the Wolesi Jirga and the High Peace Council (HPC), told Pajhwok Afghan News the next round of talks with the Taliban would be held in China at the end of July.

He said Pakistan wanted the second round to be held there, but it was a Chinese request that the next round should be held in China.

He welcomed Pakistan and China for accepting the Taliban's demand to act as guarantors and said the step would help narrow the trust deficit between the two sides.

He informed the number of the Afghan government peace negotiators might be increased with the addition of a woman.

Abdul Hafiz Mansour, another lawmaker, also stressed better environment and trust building to make the parlays a success talks. He also welcomed Pakistan and Chinese acceptance of Taliban's demand.

But lawmaker Mohammad Raza Khoshak Watandost said the acceptance of the Taliban demand by China and Pakistan might create distrust among government institutions and politicians. (Pajhwok)

(7) US, Pakistan....

On Tuesday, US national security advisor Susan Rice met Tariq Fatemi, special assistant to the Pakistani Prime Minister on foreign affairs, at the White House. Afghanistan, particularly the peace and reconciliation efforts, were one of the major topics came up for discussion between the two officials.

They "reaffirmed" their shared desire for "continued close coordination" to realise peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, according to a statement from the Pakistani Embassy in Washington.

Fatemi is on an official visit to the United States to meet senior US officials and members of the Congress.

At the White House meeting, Fatemi and Rice reviewed the current state of Pakistan-US bilateral relations and expressed their full satisfaction at the positive trajectory of the relationship.

They also discussed the evolving regional scenario and how the two countries could cooperate to achieve their shared goals, the official statement said.

"Rice particularly appreciated Pakistan's positive approach and outreach to its neighbors as part of the Prime Minister's vision of a peaceful neighborhood. This, she noted, would go a long way in achieving enduring peace and stability in the region," the statement said.

Acknowledging Pakistan's immense sacrifices in the war against terrorism, Rice appreciated its commitment to eliminate the menace. In this context, Rice expressed the United States' unremitting support for accelerated regional economic development through enhanced cooperation between the countries of South Asia.

While recognising the significance of continued high-level engagements between the two countries, both sides agreed to work closely to sustain and further build the momentum in high-level exchanges to further solidify mutual trust and confidence between the two countries. (Pajhwok)

(8) Masked Men....

and interests of Ariana company."

The document adds: "(The Iranian firm) used the plane to carry suspected and masked passengers. (The step) has been criticised by the (Afghan) parliament and other government agencies. Until now more than \$2.5 million in rent has not been paid to Ariana."

In the end, the Ariana's chief said: "In order to prevent the waste of national resources, we ask for guidance on the fate of the aforementioned individuals."

Taban Air is an airline headquartered in the Ekbatan Complex in Tehran with its main operational base in Mashhad. It operates international, domestic and charter routes as a scheduled carrier.

Pajhwok Afghan News contacted Sharifi for comments, but he refused to speak and referred the issue to Omar Mastoor, administrative director of Airana Afghan Airlines.

But Mastoor, who had previously denied masked passengers were carried on the Ariana plane, said: "This is a fake document. No official document has been sent by Ariana to any department because the issues mentioned are groundless."

He admitted the contract with the Iranian company had been signed by him and former Ariana Airlines chief Nasir Ahmad Hakimi in the presence of representatives from transport, finance and economy ministries. He had no information about the \$2.5 million payable by the Iranian company.

Meanwhile, a source in the National Security Council, confirmed receiving the letter. We have received the letter. We contacted the Ariana Airlines and summoned the company's authorities for details. The National Security Council will take decision after their explanations," source added.

Wolesi Jirga secretary Abdul Rauf Inami also confirmed receiving the letter a week earlier. "After receiving this document, we summoned Ariana officials and sought further information, but the Ariana chief and other officials say the letter is fake."

Inami said it had been decided to summon Ariana officials to a general session of the lower house, but it had to be postponed due to the summer break. "If the government takes the issue seriously, lawmakers will not go on vacations," he said.

The document mentions the contractor as Taban Air, while in June, Qais Hassan, who heads the Wolesi Jirga transportation and communication commission, had said the Ariana plane had been rented by Mahan Air, a private airline based in Tehran and had been ferrying masked passengers from Iran to Iraq.

He had claimed at a press conference that Nasir Ahmad Hakimi, Ariana Airlines chief, had moved to the United States with his family after the issue surfaced. Hassan said Ariana company rented its plane against \$10,000 per flight.

He had said renting aircraft was not illegal, but the Iranian company had obtained illegal benefits from the Ariana plane, which flew from Kabul to Mashhad and then to Baghdad and Najaf.

He said pilots of the Afghan plane were not allowed to examine passengers and other item on board. Hassan claimed the pilots noticed masked men on a flight in Mashhad to Iraq.

The Iranian Embassy in Kabul and Taban Air have so far not commented on the issue. (Pajhwok)

(9) MoUD Worried....

of land will be punished," Deputy Urban Development Minister Eng. Mohammad Akbar Ahmadi said on Wednesday.

The construction of these towns is inherently linked to the commonality of land-grabbing in Afghanistan. For decades, but especially since the NATO invasion in 2001, powerful local leaders, corrupt officials and members of the business community have taken advantage of the lack of rule of law in the country and seized land illegally for their own gain. It is much of this land that has since been converted into residential living space that can be profited from.

Independent economic analysts have warned that the gov-

ernment is likely too weak to crackdown on these powerful individuals, many of whom are influential within the government itself.

"We witness every day the increase of illegal towns, but the government does not do anything to prevent them; in fact, the government does not have the ability to stop such constructions because most of the illegal towns were constructed by people who are working in high positions within the government," analyst Bashir Shabiri said.

One of the major concerns about the unsanctioned construction activity is that much of it does not comply with basic engineering and living safety standards, putting those who reside in the new villages at great risk. (Tolo News)

(10) WJ Set....

remaining nominees, including a defence minister-designate, the attorney-general, apex court members and heads of independent institutions.

Meanwhile, some lawmakers said the Wolesi Jirga did not perform well during the past four and a half months for different reasons. Habiba Danish, a lawmaker from northern Takhar province, said insecurity and weak administration prevented parliamentarians from performing up to people's satisfaction. (Pajhwok)

(11) 20 Dead....

He said Ghulam Sakhi Kohi, the Almar's NDS chief, was also wounded.

A wounded NDS official told Pajhwok Afghan News from his hospital bed: "We were aware of the attack and were searching suspected places, the bomber came and exploded himself in the middle of us."

Maj. Reza Reza, a spokesman for the 209th Shaheen Military Corps in Faryab, said one army soldier lost his life to the attack and two others were wounded.

Security officials blamed the Taliban for the deadly attack, but the insurgent group has not commented about the incident so far. Last week, a blast in front of a Kabul Bank branch in Maimana injured 24 people, including three policemen. (Pajhwok)

(12) Kunduz PC....

Mohammad Yousuf Ayubi, the provincial council head, denied the governor's claim as baseless and asked him to produce evidence in support of his allegation.

"The governor always raises such false claims against the provincial council. His allegation is pure lie. We, the representatives of people, monitor government's performance and our protest was against the problems in the province," he added. He said if the government proved his claims, he was ready to stand trial.

Mir Aqa Etibar, the Disaster Preparedness director, expressed his unawareness about any embezzlement in the assistance, which he said had been used through his department. (Pajhwok)

(13) 5 ANA Soldiers....

provincial police spokesman Sher Jan Durrani said three Taliban militants, including a prominent commander, were killed in a fight with Afghan Local Police (ALP) in Chamtal district.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesperson, claimed several policemen had been killed during the clash that left two fighters dead. (Pajhwok)

(14) Faryab Power....

Ahmadullah asked warring sides not to target welfare facilities.

An official of the Faryab water and energy department said engineers had arrived in the area and the problem would be resolved soon. (Pajhwok)

(15) Clashes Cause....

He said clashes between security forces and insurgents lasted for hours, with both the sides using light and heavy weapons.

Mohammad Anwar, who lives in the Kada area, said civilians often suffered casualties after being caught in crossfire between security forces and armed militants.

"Sometimes civilians are killed in these clashes, but they are inflicted financial losses in every clash. We live like prisons and cannot escape."

Mohammad Anwar said the

warring parties should take care of civilian lives and properties during their operations.

Other residents held similar views.

The district chief, Mohammad Sharif, also said security problems in the district had increased, creating numerous problems for local residents. (Pajhwok)

(16) Clash Over....

He told Pajhwok Afghan News Qadir lost two gunmen and Malik one to the firefight. What exactly sparked the clash remained unknown, but the two groups had a history of clashes over the azure mine in the district.

Commander Abdul Malik has been controlling the mine over the past two years, while Qadir, who wields influence in the area, wants a share in income from the riches.

A few months back, national and public order police personnel attempted to take control of the mine, but faced with stiff resistance from Abdul Malik, triggering a clash that left five policemen dead, their two vehicles and a tank destroyed. (Pajhwok)

(17) Insurgents Kidnap..

the kidnapers hanged the 70-year-old and released his son. The elder was a farmer and had been active solving local disputes. He had no government job, Karim said, accusing the rebels of targeting local elders and influential figures. However, the Taliban have not commented about the incident so far. (Pajhwok)

(18) 2 Childrens....

land mine which killed two children and wounded two more. Sangar, a local resident, said the children aged less than 10 and belonged to two different families. He doubted the land mine was an old one left in the area for years.

Taliban militants have not commented about the incident. (Pajhwok)

(19) U.S. Defense....

Yemen to Syria. Since Salman took power earlier this year, Riyadh has pursued a more muscular approach to Iran, launching a war against allies of Tehran in Yemen and providing more help for rebels fighting against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

So far its response to the nuclear deal has been lukewarm public praise, coupled with private condemnation. (Reuters)

(20) China Play....

regional hot spots, and it also proved the importance of the principle of settling disputes by peaceful means, which is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, Wang said.

Wang hailed the unanimous adoption of a resolution by the UN Security Council to endorse the nuclear deal, saying it laid a solid foundation for the thorough implementation of the agreement. (Xinhua)

(21) UN Envoy....

conflict and recalled the imperative for all parties to uphold the principle of the protection of civilians."

The special envoy is working to finalize his proposals to the secretary-general on a way forward to support Syrian parties in their search of a political solution to the conflict, in preparation for a briefing to the Security Council next week in New York, according to Haq. (Xinhua)

(22) Israeli PM....

U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter.

He reiterated that the deal is a "historic mistake," charging that lifting the sanctions on Iran means "hundreds of billions of dollars to bankroll its aggression in the region." He added that Israel is particularly concerned by funds that Iran could supply to its proxies, such as the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Gaza's Hamas, both are sworn enemies of Israel. (Xinhua)

(23) Al-Qaida Key....

-Fadhli was the leader of a network of veteran al-Qaida operatives, sometimes called the Khorasan Group, who are tasked with plotting external attacks against the United States and its allies, Pentagon spokesman Jeff Davis said in a statement. (Xinhua)