

(1) Ghani, Yamamoto...

procedure in the next one day so all become assured that Afghan security and defense forces are national asset, not a personal property or affiliated with some political parties," he said. Ghani said government's civil workers would be impartial in election and those who violated the law would be taken to task.

"Afghanistan penal code criminalizes interference in election, I ask judiciary organs to be careful about criminal election cases," he said.

The president said election campaigns by candidates would start next week. The presidential election would not be free of problems but Afghans would not bow to any problem and would act in recourse to deal with them, he said.

Ghani stressed national unity and said, "In the past, our small and big cities were not connected but today they are connected."

Peace in Afghanistan would be ensured because it was a priority of the government and there were also advancements in this regard, he said.

He said Afghanistan's economy was getting better and would reach self-sustainability with support of international allies.

He thanked the international community for its support and said the international community partnership with Afghanistan was highly valued. Tadamichi Yamamoto told today's meeting that they would discuss performed tasks, present challenges in Afghanistan and finding solutions to them in the meeting.

He said Afghanistan was closer to peace now than any time before but there was still need for further efforts to make peace a reality.

He said there were some challenges in last year's Wolesi Jirga elections and the government should learn a lesson from them in the presidential election.

"Afghan presidential election should be credible and transparent," he said. Mohammad Hamayon Qayumi, acting finance minister, who was also present in the meeting, appreciated international community's support to Afghanistan and said today's meeting would discuss coordination, challenges and solutions as well as anti-corruption efforts.

He said the government had prepared programs for its self-sufficiency and peace in the country. Qayumi said that implementing these programs needed international support. (Pajhwok)

(2) MPs briefed on ...

doors and the government fears if the public got aware of realities they will not vote to the president," he said. He said no major information was delivered regarding security situation in the meeting, therefore it was not worth to be held behind the closed doors.

Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, a lawmaker from Helmand province, said the meeting remained secret due to negligence of the house administrative penal.

"The speaker had consensus with the minister, therefore I did not get the time to ask questions so I left the meeting," he said.

It is worth mentioning that Taliban attacks have increased in recent weeks, resulting in civilians and security personnel casualties. (Pajhwok)

(3) Nabil Doubts ...

given PAK & TBN veto power. When the process fails, some in the US will blame it on AFG disunity thought they should accept responsibility for their repeated mistakes of trusting PAK to be sincere in fighting terrorism. US-China-Moscow statement on AFG peace talks list ETIM as a terror organisation, & they are right to do so, but why are all PAK terror groups given a free pass and not listed???" he asked.

"@US4AfghanPeace mentions peace agreement a lot his actions seem inconsistent with a peace agreement & is more consistent with the gradual withdrawal agreement. This has led to huge deficit of trust between Zal and the AFG Gov," he said.

"@ashrafghani is focused on extending his term for another five yrs rather than be serious about a peace process. The lack of clarity by the US in the peace process has led to very unhelpful trends & speculation," wrote Nabil

He warned the people of Afghanistan, the region and the US would suffer. "The Afghans will suffer if Washington thinks Pakistan as a reliable partner in fight against terrorism." (Pajhwok)

(4) Ahead of Trump ...

prevent foreign militants from using Taliban-controlled areas for international terrorism.

The Taliban insists that once the agreement is signed with the U.S. in the presence of international guarantors it will initiate inter-Afghan talks to discuss a ceasefire and issues related to political governance in the country.

Last year, President Trump suspended military training programs and canceled hundreds of millions of dollars in security assistance to Pakistan. He accused the South Asian nation of offering "nothing but lies and deceit" while giving safe haven to terrorists staging deadly attacks on the Afghan side of the border.

Islamabad rejected the charges and in turn accused Washington of trying to make Pakistan a scapegoat for U.S. military failures in Afghanistan, plunging bilateral ties to historic lows. Officials in Islamabad say the progress in Afghan peace has led to the warming up of ties with Washington, prompting Trump to invite Khan for Monday's meeting.

In the lead up to Khan's visit, authorities in Pakistan arrested a radical cleric, Hafiz Saeed, who is wanted by the U.S. for terrorism in India and carries a \$10 million reward. Pakistani officials have also taken control of hundreds of Islamic schools, health facilities and offices run by banned organizations blamed for cross-border terrorism.

Saeed's arrest, however, has come under scrutiny because he has previously been detained only to be freed by courts for a lack of evidence linking him to terrorism.

"We're monitoring the situation and -- but we wouldn't want to praise Pakistan for this step too early, because, you know, we've seen this movie before. We've seen this happen in the past. And we're looking for sustained and concrete steps, not just window dressing," the U.S. official told reporters.

Pakistan delegation Khan, who arrived in Washington on Saturday, is also accompanied by the Pakistani military chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa.

The Pakistan army has long been accused of covertly maintaining ties with the Afghan Taliban and terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founded by Saeed. India accuses LeT of planning and executing the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed more than 166 people, including foreigners.

Another irritant in Pakistan's troubled ties with the U.S. is the detention of Shakil Afridi, the jailed Pakistani doctor believed to have assisted the CIA hunt down Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the September 2001 attacks on America.

"Dr. Afridi is a hero in our country. He helped us capture the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks...this is something that is of the utmost importance to us...it is likely to come up," the U.S. official said when asked whether the administration would raise the issue in meeting with Khan's delegation. (VoA)

(5) Iran Exports ...

of economic ties with neighbors, it is necessary to carry out studies on the import and export barriers," he said. He revealed the interest of Pakistani and Afghan sides to reopen joint bank and adding that the "Islamic Republic of Iran has established trade exchanges with the two countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan since the Islamic Revolution." (Tolo news)

(6) Telecom Companies ...

institutions if they sold the SIM cards more than its normal price," said Mohammad Taqi Poya, the head of Directorate of Telecommunication and Information Technology in Balkh.

Balkh residents said the issue is concerning and it must be solved.

"SIM cards are not available; they are found in the black market," said Khwaja Sharif, a Balkh resident.

"People are facing problems and all communications were disconnected," said Qadir, a Balkh resident.

Head of Balkh Provincial Council, Afzal Hadid, said efforts are underway to solve the problem.

"What is the solution? Those who want to create a problem for our people must be stopped. We are trying to find alternatives and I am sure that this problem will be solved in the near future," he said. (Tolo news)

(7) Stable Afghanistan...

of lives that have been lost to violent conflict to the years of missed economic opportunities.

Once a booming crossroads of the historic silk road, the region has been crippled by the dangerous fear-based logic that has fostered conflict and instability for far too long. This logic assumes that a strong and thriving Afghanistan would extend India's influence and encourage Pashtun populations living in Pakistan's border areas to push for borders to be officially redrawn.

There is a better way. The peace plan should be an avenue to gain a commitment of the entire establishment of Pakistan to shift its calculation from the status quo to a stance that promotes peace and preserves the democracy and hard won gains of the Afghan people.

The Afghan people have spoken and our consultative peace loya jirga, a traditional national assembly of Afghani- stans convened to settle national issues, has mandated peace. The Afghan unity government is committed to this mandate, and regional connectivity is a key pillar of the roadmap to peace.

For the first time in decades, we have the plan, the leadership, and the human capital in place to bring this long-held vision of peace and prosperity to reality.

From expanding trade and transit opportunities through increased rail connections, to supporting rapid technological advancement through the Open Access Policy for fiber optic networks that was launched in 2016, to moving forward on construction of the extensive Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, we are making continuous progress on all fronts.

No country stands to benefit as much from the success of this plan as Pakistan. The future for peace in Afghanistan is much brighter

On the cusp of a serious economic crisis, Pakistan's industry has been seriously hampered by the lack of connectivity in the region.

According to a 2018 World Bank report, Pakistan's energy sector suffers from serious inefficiencies, including a shortage of supply, that costs the economy \$18 billion, or 6.5% of its GDP. The report also said that up to 50 million Pakistanis do not have access to electricity and shortage during peak hours is about 24%. In part, this is due to the country's gas shortages.

Pakistan's natural gas needs could also be significantly met through the TAPI gas pipeline, which is projected to annually transport 33 billion cubic meters of gas.

With India tensions simmering, is Imran Khan ready for his first big political test as Pakistan's Prime Minister? Pakistani industry would also benefit enormously from a direct railway link through Afghanistan, connecting Pakistan to Central Asia.

The inefficiencies created by the current lack of transportation connections are glaring and costly, especially since Pakistan is one of Uzbekistan's largest trading partners in the region. The cotton for the Pakistani textile industry, which contributes 60% of the country's exports, is mainly imported from Uzbekistan.

Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan, Pakistani minister for national food security and research, said last December that "the bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Uzbekistan could be increased by direct trade through Afghanistan." Pakistan's textile industry would also benefit from the faster connection to Europe and the Caucasus through the newly inaugurated Lapis Lazuli Corridor, which connects Afghanistan to Turkey via Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

These and many other benefits of connectivity are real and already well underway. Roads, railways, power grids and other infrastructure related to connectivity have been rebuilt or newly constructed.

At this historic moment, I like to reflect on the words of Nelson Mandela, who said, "May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears." This is a time for courage. We must seize the opportunity to cast aside harmful dynamics and build the prosperous and peaceful future that our citizens demand and deserve. (Pajhwok)

(8) Women's Role...

headquarters in Kandahar City, killing 11 and wounding nearly 90.

Despite the on-going violence, Afghan leaders held ground-breaking talks in Qatar earlier this week with Taliban representatives, with both sides calling for a reduction in civilian casualties.

The UN delegation met President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah on Saturday. The delegates also met a diverse group of women, hosted by First Lady Rula Ghani. They also met religious leaders, who

have a crucial role to play in bolstering the peace process, said a statement from UNAMA.

On Sunday, the delegation travelled to Bamyan province, where UNFPA is running a series of support programmes and services for women of reproductive age and families, as well as tackling gender-based violence (GBV).

They also visited a UN demining site and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Buddhas of Bamyan, which were dynamited and destroyed by the Taliban in March 2001.

The deputy chief said her face-to-face conversations with Afghan women had left her with no doubt that women were "in leadership roles, decision-making, they know exactly where they want to go and what they need from us is support."

"We have heard from them many messages: on the elections, that they must be credible, they must be timely, they must be inclusive, and their voices must be heard."

On the peace process, she said it had to be inclusive: "And inclusive means women at the centre," especially when it comes to addressing the needs of victims of violence.

"You cannot address peace and its sustainability, if you cannot come to terms with reconciling the past. So this has been an incredibly important opportunity for us."

The deputy secretary-general noted during the trip they had also been gratified to see the gains of the investments made by the UN system and its partners over the years.

The UN Women chief said she had been struck by talking to women who had lived with the "oppressive legacy of the Taliban's rule - which banned them from attending school, work or even speaking publicly or leaving the house without a man."

"The same women have consistently and courageously advocated for their voices to be heard, their priorities to be addressed and their agency to be recognised", remarked Mlambo-Ngcuka.

"And they do not stand alone, because UN Women and the UN, are here to back them up at every step." She said as the momentum built for peace talks with the Taliban, "ensuring women's meaningful participation in the process and in the upcoming elections is more urgent than ever. "Women must be able to exercise their right to define what peace means for them, and to have a seat at the table where the future of the country is being negotiated", said the executive director.

"Only then we will really see durable peace and democracy flourish in Afghanistan." (Pajhwok)

(9) Rape Case ...

and security chief are the accused. Jamshid Rasooli, the attorney general's spokesman, said the rape case against the ex-AFF officials had been referred to court. The accused have been barred from travelling abroad.

The allegations of sexual abuse led to missed paychecks after sponsors pulled out and families asked the female players to quit the sport.

FIFA suspended the AFF head and several other officials in December. President Ashraf Ghani had also ordered a probe the allegations surfaced in November.

The treatment of the female players, even those who have not alleged sexual abuse, illustrate the Afghan culture's complicated approach to handling matters involving both women's sexuality and participation in sports. (Pajhwok)

(10) Military Base in...

views and urged the government to send reinforcements at the earliest possible.

Meanwhile, Governor Mohammad Shafiq Asadullah Sayeed said the issue had been shared with Kabul administration and demanded further assistance in this regard.

He said efforts were underway to reopen all highways connecting the provincial capital with districts of the province. (Pajhwok)

(11) Turkmenistan to ...

reaching Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and European countries across the sea, the Turkmen government said earlier.

Turkmenistan is lobbying for the implementation of a number of regional infrastructure projects with the participation of Afghanistan. In particular, Turkmenistan is working on the implementation of such projects through the Afghan territory as the construction of a railway to Tajikistan and a gas pipeline to Pakistan

and India.

Projects on the use of Afghan transit for the supply of Turkmen electricity are also being assessed. Turkmenistan has previously declared its readiness to provide its political space for conducting peace talks on Afghanistan. (Trend)

(12) 4 Local Companies ...

because they had not yet cleared the government tax.

But Ahmadi said the four firms had paid their taxes. According to Ahmadi, the Turkish company reserved no right to ask for the tax of these companies. He claimed the company in cooperation with a number of government officials wanted avoid payment of the money. He warned they would continue their sit-in protest and would not let anyone work in the township if their money was not paid. (Pajhwok)

(13) 'Heavy Clashes' ...

of Badakhshan Provincial Council, Abdullah Naji Nazari, said a number of government buildings in Keran Wa Manjan district have fallen to the Taliban.

Nazari said that at least 40 members of the local police and public uprising forces led by Commander Malik are fighting against the Taliban and that they really assistance by the government.

However, local officials did not provide details over the clashes.

Keran Wa Manjan shares borders with Nuristan, Panjshir and Takhar provinces. (Tolo news)

(14) Maj. Gen. Hadi ...

from the soldiers, we thank you for your hard work and dedication to the safety of our great nation."

Gen. Waziri praised the dedication, professionalism and technical expertise of the great heroes of the 201st Selab Corps. General Waziri thanked the soldiers, NCOs and officers that have fought and defended our strong nation.

Gen. Hadi thanked Gen. Waziri for the great job he performed during his service at Selab Military Corps.

US and NATO Forces Commander Gen. Scott Miller and Bri. Gen. Donn Hill, TAAC East Commander were present on the occasion. (Pajhwok)

(15) Under 'Dark ...

others in parliament to stop a rupture in relations with the EU, the country's biggest trading partner.

In his resignation letter to outgoing Prime Minister Theresa May, Duncan said: "The UK does so much good in the world. It is tragic that just when we could have been the dominant intellectual and political force throughout Europe, and beyond, we have had to spend every day working beneath the dark cloud of Brexit."

He pointedly noted that he had worked with "two very different foreign secretaries" - Johnson and his rival to become prime minister, Jeremy Hunt.

His decision to step down comes as little surprise. Duncan has shown no reticence in criticizing Johnson, his former boss at the foreign office, once describing him as a "circus act".

Earlier this month, he attacked Johnson for not defending Britain's former ambassador to the United States after a leak of his criticism of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration. Duncan said Johnson had "basically thrown our top diplomat under the bus". (Reuters)

(16) UN Nuclear...

landmark deal in 2015 between Iran and six major powers -- Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States -- under which the Islamic republic agreed to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of sanctions.

But international tensions with Iran have been rising since US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the deal in May 2018.

Amano took over from Egypt's Mohamed ElBaradei in 2009. His third term as IAEA chief had originally been due to expire in November 2021, but he had been expected to announce his intention to step down early because of undisclosed health reasons. (AFP)

(17) NYC Recovers...

under scrutiny since a massive blackout in Midtown and Upper West Manhattan on July 13, is "ready for what the heat will bring," said its president Tim Cawley.

In NYC, extreme heat is the number one cause of mortality from extreme weather, according to a report in 2017. (Xinhua)