

(1) Elections sans....

Faizullah Zaki, Saleh Mohammad Regestani, Shah Mahmood Mia Khaill, Sabrina Saqeb, Dr. Alema, Abdul Majid Ghanizada and Tad-amichi Yamamoto are members of the panel.

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 UNAMA's role in the commission would be advisory and would not have the right to vote despite attending all meetings. (Pajhwok)

(2) WH Finalizing

primarily because it is a priority of the president."

The operation in Cuba is not an effective use of government resources, Earnest told reporters.

"This is complicated work, but we have made a lot of important progress," he added.

- Cuba sees US as 'occupier' -

The broader US naval base at Guantanamo in southeastern Cuba is also opposed by the Cuban government, with which the United States just restored diplomatic relations. Cuba says the United States is illegally occupying its land.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez called for the return of the territory to Cuba and for a lifting of the US embargo against the communist country while in Washington Monday.

Standing next to US Secretary of State John Kerry, Rodriguez said Havana aimed to move forward.

But he stressed "totally lifting the blockade, the return of the illegally occupied territory of Guantanamo as well as the full respect for Cuban sovereignty ... are crucial to be able to move towards the normalization."

Kerry said that the US had no plans to alter its Guantanamo lease treaty. Cuba however says there is no lease, and that there has been none in a half century.

- Transfers and opposition -

Washington has slowly been sending Guantanamo prisoners back to their home countries or to third countries, something that needs to continue if the facility is to shut, Earnest said.

The United States said in June a group of six Yemeni detainees were transferred to Oman.

Other detainees need to be prosecuted or reviewed for release, Earnest said.

A new special envoy tasked with closing the prison was also recently appointed by Kerry.

Lee Wolosky, a lawyer who worked under both presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, was chosen as the State Department's Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure.

The post, which tries to manage the transfers of detainees, had been vacant since December.

But the transfer of detainees to the United States is opposed by Congress, and some lawmakers have tried to halt all transfers out of Guantanamo, saying the releases could lead to more attacks.

In June, the Senate endorsed a bill that strengthens restrictions on the closure of the Guantanamo prison, a plan Obama has threatened to veto.

Earnest said he was concerned about seeing Congress "repeatedly impede the effort to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay despite bipartisan agreement that closing the prison is actually in the national security interest of the United States."

The military prison opened in January of 2002 shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

After reaching a peak of 680 prisoners in 2003, there are 116 inmates remaining.

Just under half of the detainees remaining have been cleared to leave but have yet to be resettled or repatriated.

Detainees have been slowly tried

by military commissions in Guantanamo Bay in cases that have stretched over years. Many cases remain stalled in lengthy pretrial stages.

The Obama administration has pushed for trial of terrorism suspects in federal court, saying the venue leads to justice much faster than military tribunals. (AFP)

(3) MoFA Summons

to it urgently.

Pakistan ambassador Syed Ibrar Hussain promised to pass on Afghanistan's concerns and demands to the Pakistani officials.

Kunar has been the target of Pakistani shelling for the past few years.

The most recent attacks have claimed the lives of at least 20 people, destroyed close to 100 homes and wounded 80 people, including women and children.

Diplomatic talks between the two neighboring countries have not stopped the attacks.

The Pakistani attacks have continued for years and intensified in the last few months despite Afghanistan's efforts to resolve the issue diplomatically.

Afghanistan's letter to the UN Security Council in this regard has not received a response yet. (Tolnews)

(4) Region Should....

the support that it can in encountering what is not an Afghanistan problem, but a regional phenomenon."

About UN's role in maintaining peace, providing employment and improving the country's economic status, Haysom said the UN had indicated it intended to stay in Afghanistan for a long time and certainly for as long as Afghans would want the world's body to be present.

"I should just emphasize, our presence in Afghanistan is not a recent phenomenon. We have been here for 50 years and we intend to be with the Afghan people as they take on the longer term challenges of development and building the institutions in the country." About his visit to Faryab, Haysom said: "I think it's very important for the United Nations to get out of Kabul and to come and see how people in the provinces are meeting the challenges which they face. I think all over Afghanistan people are really confronting quite significant challenges."

He said he had the benefit of a very full briefing from the provincial governor, certainly giving him both information and messages to be taken back to Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(5) Campbell, Raheel....

particularly acknowledged efforts of Gen. Raheel for facilitating the Murree talks and also appreciated gains of the ongoing Operation Zarb-i-Azb in helping towards bringing peace and stability in the region.

The delegation level talks also focused on issues related to further improving the border coordination mechanism. (Pajhwok)

(6) Afghanistan's

sacrificed to keep us safe."

He said that as Commander-in-Chief, his greatest responsibility is ensuring the security of the United States. "That means keeping our military strong. Yes, our armed forces are drawing down after two major wars, but some of the reckless budget cuts, under the name of sequestration, that's going on in Washington right now -- that's not the way to keep our armed forces ready, or to take care of our troops and their families."

"I'm calling on Republican leaders in Congress to come to the table with Democrats, sit down, negotiate a budget that protects our national security and our economic security."

"Now, every ally and every adversary needs to know around the world the United States has and will continue to have the strongest, most capable fighting force the world has ever known," he said.

"No one can match our Army -- the greatest land force on Earth. Nobody can match our Navy -- the largest and most advanced battle fleet in the world. Or our Coast Guard -- safeguarding our shores and ports. Nobody can match our Air Force -- its reach and precision are unequalled.

Nobody can match our Marine Corps -- the world's only global expeditionary force. Nobody can match our Special Operations Forces -- our remarkable, quiet professionals," he added.

He went on to say however, the he will not hesitate to use force to protect the U.S. including from the threat of terrorism. "Thanks to the skill of our military and counter-intelligence professionals, we've struck major blows against those who threaten us. Osama bin Laden is gone. Anwar Awlaki, a leader of the al-Qaeda affiliate in Yemen -- gone. Many of al-Qaeda's deputies and their replacements -- gone. Ahmed Abdi Godane -- the leader of the al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia -- gone. Abu Anas al-Libi, accused of bombing our embassies in Africa -- captured. Ahmed Abu Khattalah, accused in the attack in Benghazi -- captured. The list goes on. If you target Americans, you will have no safe haven. We will defend our nation."

He noted that when countries stand together, things happen. "Right now we've got a coalition of some 40 nations in Afghanistan. The war may be over that our ground troops fight, but that country is still dangerous. So we'll persevere in our new mission, which is training and assisting Afghan forces, remaining relentless in our counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda."

"Likewise, we stand together -- a coalition of some 60 nations, including Arab partners -- in the fight against Daesh. I firmly believe that the United States should not be engaged in another major ground war in the Middle East. That's not good for our national security and it's not good for our military. But what we can do and what we are doing is to pound Daesh from the air -- more than 50,000 [5,000] air strikes so far -- while training and supporting local forces on the ground in Iraq and Syria as they fight to push Daesh back."

Obama also touched on the U.S.'s latest move to soften ties with Cuba and he mentioned his country's recent success in reaching a nuclear deal with Iran. (Tolnews)

(7) Fidai Asks

compensation to the families of the victims. He also urged the Ministry of Interior to support children of the slain soldiers in getting education. (Pajhwok)

(8) MoD Expresses

increased concerns over the issues facing the Afghan forces in terms of weaponry and training. Regardless of the cause, however, there is no doubt that the Afghan forces have faced a tough fighting season as the Taliban and other militant groups have launched major offensives around the country since the early spring.

On the other hand, MoD officials have said rates of volunteers for the security forces have increased simultaneously, and ANA forces are currently undertaking at least five major military operations on four different fronts to suppress the militants.

According to MoD statistics, the number of soldiers serving in the ranks of the Afghan Army is around 195,000 soldiers. But independent analysts have cast doubt on those claims, arguing that the actual number is slightly lower.

"There are some principles in war laws, because a soldier - as a human - needs to relax sometimes and go for leave and the alternative for that is the reserved forces," military commentator retired General Atiqullah Amarkhail said.

MoD officials have said the number of volunteers trying to join the ANA has increased from 4,000 to 6,000 people over the past month. "The number of volunteers registering with the Defense Ministry is very high; up to 7,000 volunteers took the exam for 200 seats in the National Military Academy," Waziri said on Thursday.

Since the NATO combat mission ended at the end of 2014, concerns that the complete drawdown of U.S. troops and decreased financial aid would open the door to Taliban gains have abounded. But reassurances from the Washington that the drawdown will be assessed based on realities on the ground have somewhat assuaged those anxieties. (Tolnews)

(9) JEC Meeting....

last JEC meeting in November 2014.

The minister proposed a technical level-meeting be held prior to formal talks between the two finance ministers, a statement from the embassy said.

The envoy informed Dar a notification about the waiver of financial guarantee of 110 per cent custom duty as well as \$100 per 25

tonne charges on Pakistani goods transiting through Afghanistan to Central Asian states had been issued.

Dar welcomed the decision, hoping it would help enhance Pakistan's trade with Central Asian states. He conveyed his good wishes to Hakimi, saying he was looking forward to the JEC meeting, which would further spur economic cooperation between the neighbours. (Pajhwok)

(10) Poll Watchdogs

electoral regime.

The election observers floated suggestions and asked the reform panel members to ignore their political affiliations and focus on improving the system.

They issued a joint statement that asked the commission to be impartial and share their performance reports with the media and people.

Also on Thursday, the reform commission's deputy head told reporters that they would not work in favour or against any political group and if any such activities were found, the people would be informed about that. (Pajhwok)

(11) 25 Taliban

peace process. "We don't want the war which has been imposed on us," the deputy governor said. A tribal elder in Musa Qala, Haji Janan, told Pajhwok Afghan News that clashes broke out between security forces and militants last night and stretched into Thursday morning. However, he had no information about casualties.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed the local police suffered heavy casualties during the clashes in Kajaki. Another seven security men were killed in the Nawzad clash, he added, but said nothing about the clashes in Musa Qala.

One fighter was killed in Nawzad, Mujahid said. (Pajhwok)

(12) US Drone

also directed operations against Coalition, Afghan and Pakistani forces, and maintained a close association with Aymar al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's leader," the statement said.

In the statement, Carter said the killing of Sudani underscored the work done by General John Campbell, the commander of Nato forces in Afghanistan, and his troops "to take the fight to Al Qaeda".

"We will continue to counter violent extremism in the region and the world," Carter said (Pajhwok)

(13) Ex-Rebel....

He said the peace process should be managed by Afghans because it was their right.

"If the Afghan government and the nation allow the AHRC, it is ready to mobilise the nation over the next two months to decide about the peace process," he said.

Eng. Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai, who heads the Islamic Authority Party, is a member of AHRC, said the ongoing war in Afghanistan would not come to an end until all Afghans stood united and worked together for peace.

He criticised foreign meddling in the peace process, saying the Afghans themselves were ready to mediate between the government and the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

(14) Respond to....

to get rid of the conflict, but the goal should not be achieved at the expense of past gains in the peace process.

"The incumbent government has come to power with votes of the people and it should pay heed to their demands."

Calling the security situation in the north as worrisome, the lower house member asked his colleagues from northern provinces to hold gatherings with their constituents and work for peace and stability of the country.

He told his colleagues not to keep distance from the people as it created numerous problems. He said the conflict in Afghanistan was not the only problem, but there existed so many other problems.

He asked the government to pay special attention to addressing joblessness and the increasing number of drug addicts. (Pajhwok)

(15) Pakistan Arrests

Mohammad Omar, is the third top Taliban leader after Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, the Taliban's acting council chief. Ishaqzai is also head of the Taliban's economic commission.

A hardline mullah, Abdul Hakim Ishaqzai issued most of fitwas re-

garding the Afghanistan conflict as head of the Taliban Ulema Council, the source said. (Pajhwok)

(16) Activists Blast

gender discrimination and call their demand unlawful.

"You cannot find anywhere in Holy Quran that women are banned from business, leadership and working with men," said Ahmad Nadim, a civil society activist in Ghor. "Women in Islamic societies have always been seen working with men and there is no prohibition in Islam."

Meanwhile, some other religious scholars called the stance by Ghor Ulema Council against Islam and against the will of people of Afghanistan.

According to them, opposition to appointment of a female governor was a plan of insurgents being presented by some religious scholars.

"Those who disrupt the Muslim community are hypocrites," a religious scholar Mullah Abdullah said.

However, the governor Joyenda clarified that scholars' opposition to her appointment had ended now.

Those who still oppose her appointment are very few in numbers, according to Ghor governor.

"When I came to this province, I received a huge welcome by the people and I am still receiving flowers from them," she told TOLOnews. "Members of Ulema Council were also present at the day when I was introduced here."

Furthermore, appointment of another female governor for Daikundi also followed criticisms which the activists linked to gender discrimination.

Recently, the government appointed Masooma Muradi as the governor of Daikundi - the second female governor since the National Unity Government (NUG) came into power. (Tolnews)

(17) Bamyán Woman

torch himself if the government did not provide justice to his wife.

He said they could not live in society as residents of locality stared at them due to what had happened with Karbala's wife one year ago. Mohammad Sulaiman Sidiqi, judge of the primary court, both parties could appeal in the appellate court if they did not agree with the earlier decision.

Rohullah Farogh, The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) head for Bamyán, said they investigated the issued three time but could not find the evidence which could support that Maliba was sexually attacked, however, the AIHR would continue to probe. (Pajhwok)

(18) Paktika Security....

province from Ghazni and Paktia, causing problems -- an issue that he promised to tackle on a priority basis.

Police chief Brig. Gen. Ali Mast Mohmand also praised cooperation from the people in strengthening security in Paktika. He asked the residents to contact police in case of witnessing suspicious activity in their areas.

Musa Jan, a tribal elder, said unity among tribes helped keep the security situation under control. However, he complained: "The previous government did not pay enough attention to the reconstruction, economic, educational and agricultural uplift of the province."

Senior officials received kickbacks even on projects that were approved and funded by Americans in the province, bordering Pakistan, he alleged. However, he stopped short of naming those officials. (Pajhwok)

(19) Fazal, Imran....

Afghanistan. He opposed Pakistan's involvement in the war but past rulers joined the conflict and created problems for the country.

"If the US could not achieve its objectives through war even after employing all resources and modern technology, how can our rulers win the war in tribal areas?" the JUI-F chief asked.

He said Pakistan should promote trade with the neighboring countries. "The Pakistani businessmen would draw more benefits from trade with Asian countries than Europe," he reasoned.

Separately, Imran Khan, chairman of Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI), said in a press conference that "Pakistan and Afghanistan should start dialogue with Taliban fighters since the US has already been in talks with them."

Khan also pointed to the expected danger to Pakistan and Afghanistan from Daesh, also known as Islamic State. He planned to visit Kabul last month but postponed the trip for certain reasons. (Pajhwok)

(20) Flooding Causes....

kilometre irrigation channels were also damaged.

A nine-year-old girl was killed in Chappa district, Sabat said. At least 47 affected families have been assisted by different organizations so far.

Qazi Mohammad Nabi Ahmadi, the deputy governor of Kunar, said that he had requested the central government for further support for the affected households.

Zewar Shah, a resident of Pashad Kali, said the flood had ruined his house and agricultural land and his family had to brave problems. He urged the government to provide emergency support and shelter for the affected families. (Pajhwok)

(21) 8 Rebels Killed....

gathered for a meeting in the area when the ANA aircraft targeted them and killed them at about 10am. Qari Salahuddin, the Taliban shadow governor was among the slain militants, he said.

But a Taliban commander insisted Qari Salahuddin was alive. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, he said two Taliban fighters had been killed and three others wounded in the airstrike.

He claimed the airstrike killed and wounded several civilians, but provided no figures. (Pajhwok)

(22) Terrorists' Weapon..

intelligence operatives confiscated 2 AK-47 assault rifles, 3 pistols, 403 rounds of PK machine gun ammunition and 120 rounds of AK-47 ammunition.

In a separate operation, the Afghan intelligence operatives confiscated 8 pistols, 1 Improvised Explosive Device (IED), a 82mm artillery round and 940 rounds of AK-47 ammunition along with a pistol from Doshi and Baghlan-e-Markzi districts, the statement added. NDS said numerous attack plots by the anti-government armed militant groups were thwarted with the confiscation of the weapons, ammunition and explosives.

The anti-government armed militant groups have not commented regarding the reports so far. (KP)

(23) Ghor IED Blast....

He told Pajhwok Afghan News the injured girl had been shifted to hospital in a critical condition.

Initial investigation suggested the bomb had recently been planted by Taliban militants, the police chief said.

Mohammad, a local resident, said the blast took place near the house of the victims (Pajhwok)

(24) France, Iran

before but didn't go, but now I think everything is in place for me to go," Fabius told France Inter radio on July 21.

"I find it quite normal that from the moment this historic agreement took place, France and Iran can resume more normal relations," he said. (Xinhua)

(25) 200,000 Yemenis....

months of bombardments and street fighting, while 248 schools have been directly damaged.

The UN Children's Fund also reported that a further 270 schools are being used to host Internally Displaced People (IDPs), and that 68 are occupied by armed groups. (Xinhua)

(26) Berlusconi says....

offering only "metaphorical support" -- "not as a formal offer to occupy any official post."

"He notes that foreigners cannot work in the Russian government. (AP)

(27) Emirati Plane....

to Al-Khader Laswar, a health official in the city. The rockets were fired from north Aden, where the Huthi rebels still have a presence after being driven out of most of the city by fighters loyal to exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi. (AFP)

(28) S. Korea to....

of treating and destroying anthrax agents. Based on the on-spot investigation, the ministry will take measures to prevent the recurrence of such accidents. (Xinhua)