

(1) Ghani Calls...

said Ghani in an interview with China's CCTV.

He said the ongoing threats faced by Afghanistan are not confined to a single country and that the regional nations must arrive at a common understanding of these threats.

"First thing is to arrive at a common understanding of threats. Because these threats are not confined to one country, they emanate from networks. While Shanghai Cooperation is based on cooperation of states and people, so we need to understand that no country is safe from these threats," he said.

Ghani's assertions come at a time that the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) are tackling the Taliban insurgency in at least 14 provinces across the country.

However, Ghani believes that China can play an effective role in curbing the scale of violence in the country.

"Currently, security forces are leading operations in 14 provinces. Situation in Ghazni and Faryab provinces has now changed and the situation is improving there," said Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish.

Meanwhile, a number of lawmakers in Afghanistan's Lower House of Parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, said the Afghan government needs to outline more comprehensive programs for areas under threats to overcome the current crisis.

"There is a confusion in the war in Afghanistan. First, we need to address this confusion," said Daud Kalakani, one MP from Kabul.

"Government leaders need to reach a consensus and seriously work on the security issue and put it on their top priority," said MP Farooq Majroh.

This comes as reports indicate that fatalities among government forces have significantly increased during the current fighting season compared with previous years – as the Taliban expands their offensives against multiple fronts in the country. (Tolo news)

(2) UN Continues to...

in Kabul to issue a joint declaration that would contribute to a safer and more secure Afghanistan is totally unacceptable, Yamamoto, adding that "I am outraged by this attack and condemn it. I continue to be outraged at those extremist groups seeking to derail efforts made in the interest of peace".

"The group of scholars gathered on Monday were seeking to make headway and provide appropriate guidance against extremist forces directly targeting civilians, whether at polling centres, religious gatherings or anywhere else civilians may be peacefully assembled," he said.

"There is simply no justification for targeting them or any other civilians, at any time, under any circumstances. Doing so may amount to a war crime, and those who are responsible for enabling such attacks must be brought to justice and held to account," he added.

The United Nations continues to stand with all Afghans in solidarity, and remains committed, along with the broader international community, to an Afghan-led peace process that will end the war and enable Afghanistan to allocate more resources to protect all citizens from such atrocities, the organization said in a statement.

"On behalf of the United Nations in Afghanistan, I wish to extend my deepest condolences to the families of the victims killed in yesterday's attack and wish a full and speedy recovery to those injured," Yamamoto added.

On Monday, a suicide bomber targeted a gathering of religious scholars in Kabul that killed 14 people including seven religious scholars.

Officials said that 17 others were wounded in the suicide bombing. The explosion happened near a gathering of over 2,000 religious scholars at Loya Jirga, the Grand Assembly, tent close to Kabul Polytechnic University sharply after the Ulema issued a fatwa against the ongoing war in the country.

Taliban denied any involvement in the attack. (Tolo news)

(3) IEC Finalizes...

"Through this we will see if one person has applied with one ID card several time. If he is under the age of 18, then we will know it," added Sadat.

Last month the IEC announced that it had prepared the database for the voter registration process through which provincial heads of the institution can update data on a daily basis.

Despite the progress, members of Afghanistan's civil society institutions and election observers seem skeptical about the IEC's ability to manage the database.

The parliamentary and districts councils' elections is scheduled for October.

The commission has allocated 2,801 seats for parliament and district councils. (Tolo news)

(4) NRC Concerned...

An NRC survey in January found 50 percent of displaced Afghans could not adequately feed their families, and were often skipping meals. This is an increase from one in three in 2012.

In Badghis, the most food-insecure province in the country, NRC is currently assisting Afghans fleeing from fighting in Qadis district to the provincial capital.

Over half of the displaced had no food stocks and the rest less than enough for a week. One in four had restricted their own eating so that small children could eat.

"Prices of basic staples of wheat flour and rice have begun to climb by about 20 per cent," says a new assessment conducted over the last weeks by NRC.

"The humanitarian crisis is not only a consequence of the severe drought; it is also a sad result of man-made factors. An under-developed irrigation system and the weakening economy are hitting ordinary families hard.

"But it is the ongoing and worsening conflict that is compounding these factors and bearing such a heavy cost on civilians," said Nyamandi.

He stressed the need for an increased level of humanitarian funding, asking the international community to sustain its support to ensure the needs of vulnerable Afghans continue to be met. (Pajhwok)

(5) WB Supports...

the world for its raisins and we hope this project will put the country back on the global map for raisin production," remarked Mase Rikweda, CEO of Rikweda Fruit Process Company.

While Afghanistan's climate is ideal for raisin production, less than 40 percent of its annual produce is currently exported due to instability, and poor quality and food safety standards.

"Nearly 90 percent of Afghanistan's poor live in rural areas where agriculture plays a major role in their lives," said Mouayed Makhlof, IFC regional director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"Raisin processing can create entry points for farmers, including women, to participate in the value

chain and improve the livelihoods of thousands of poor families."

IFC is providing \$3 million in financing to support the project. As well, IFC's advisory services will help Rikweda provide guidance to small farmers to improve farming practices and implement harvesting, storage, and drying technologies.

MIGA's political insurance coverage will be against the risk of war and civil disturbance. The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program's Private Sector Window is providing a first loss guarantee of up to \$1.25 million to IFC.

This is the first IFC-MIGA joint project in the country and IFC's first investment in Afghanistan's agribusiness sector. The project demonstrates the World Bank Group's Maximizing Finance for Development approach (Pajhwok)

(6) Jalalabad Girls'...

Daesh rebels through two night letters ---one black and white --and the second color ---- have threatened schools with bomb attacks in case of violation.

The group renewed the threat in a video message, saying it was in retaliation to civilian casualties caused by foreign and local forces in Haska Mena district.

Niamatullah, a resident of Jalalabad city, told Pajhwok Afghan News that his sisters went to school this morning but returned soon as they were told their school had been closed due security threat.

Another resident Wali Mohammad also confirmed the issue and said his children came back from school after they told to return home as soon as possible.

He urged the warring sides to avoid targeting schools for reaching their political goals.

The threat was only against girls schools, but today boys schools were also closed in the city.

AshabWali, a student of Nasrat high school in Jalalabad, said: "When I arrived at the school gate this morning, I was told to reach home quickly because security threats exist."

Mohammad Asif Shinwari, the provincial education department spokesman, said the decision to close all schools was made to avoid possible attacks.

He said today students sat their last exam and all main examinations had already finished and only supplementary exams remained. (Pajhwok)

(7) Insecurity...

challenges, the government of Afghanistan was determined to hold parliamentary elections and the voter registration process was properly proceeding, he added. (Pajhwok)

(8) Senators Hail...

meeting showed the weakness and depravity of terrorist groups. "They have no place in the public. Jews and Christians didn't order us to organise the ulma conference. But the militants were directed by their masters to conduct the blast," he remarked.

Qarleq slammed the bombing as an attack on Islam and asked the government to encourage religious scholars and take steps for their security.

Amina Afzali, another lawmaker, said: "Issuing the fatwa was a courageous step that happened after years of wait and hope. It will help restore peace and stability to the county," she hoped.

Her colleague Mohammad Hanifi said the people of Afghanistan had waited long for the fatwa -- an unprecedented step toward denouncing the ongoing conflict.

Deputy Chairman of Senate Mohammad Asif Sediqli also [raised the edict and asked the govern-

ment to encourage the scholars to speak up against terrorism and extremism.

He urged the people to rise against an enemy who recognised no principle and acted only to please their foreign masters. (Pajhwok)

(9) 17 Million...

Karimi said.

He added currently 17 million people (63 percent of population) in Afghanistan needed help in finding access to potable water and 53 percent of these people lived in rural areas.

About drought in the country this year, he said his ministry had developed a national water supply program for reducing the drought pressure.

According to an MRRD survey, around 20 provinces face drought while nine provinces face acute shortage of water. (Pajhwok)

(10) Commander among...

Mujahid said the fighters had suffered no casualties on Monday night.

Also on Monday night, the militants stormed the Afghan National Army (ANA) checkpoint in the Dadakhel area of the provincial capital, the police spokesman said. (Pajhwok)

(11) Kabul Police...

a committee has been formed to investigate individuals who had committed negligence," he said.

The police chief said in the past one and a half months, three people had been arrested over terrorist attacks in different districts of Kabul. During the period, another 341 crime suspects had been arrested in connection with 294 criminal activities, he said.

In the past three months, 136 counter-narcotics operations were conducted and as a result 147 suspected smugglers were arrested and 14 kilograms of heroin, 286 kg of She-sha or ice, 18 kg of opium, 14 kg of hashish, 146 bottles of wine were confiscated.

Three vehicles, one motorcycle, four pistols, 80 mobiles, 54600 afghanis cash and \$400 also were recovered during the raids. (Pajhwok)

(12) Report on...

"rejected asylum applicants could be returned."

"We cannot talk repeatedly about more expulsions but then set the hurdles so high that these are not possible," Blume told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

Afghanistan needed "persons to work on its reconstruction," Blume asserted as Afghanistan approaches fresh elections. (Tolo news)

Mueller's Team Accuses Manafort of Witness Tampering

WASHINGTON – Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort made several attempts to tamper with witnesses in his ongoing criminal case, prosecutors said as they asked a federal judge to consider jailing him while he awaits trial.

In a court filing Monday, prosecutors working for special counsel Robert Mueller wrote that Manafort and one of his associates "repeatedly" contacted two witnesses in an effort to influence their testimony. The contacts occurred earlier this year, shortly after a grand jury returned a new indictment against Manafort and while he was confined to his home. The filing marks the second time that Mueller's team has accused Manafort of violating a judge's order in the case. Late last year, federal agents discovered that Manafort was attempting to ghost-write an opinion piece in Ukraine even though he was under a gag

order in the case.

The allegations of attempted witness tampering relate to Manafort's criminal case in Washington where he faces charges of money-laundering conspiracy, false statements and acting as an unregistered foreign agent for Ukrainian interests. He also faces bank fraud and tax evasion charges in Virginia.

The charges – they involve tens of millions of dollars routed through offshore accounts – do not relate to his work on the Trump campaign or involve allegations of Russian election interference.

In the latest court documents, prosecutors say that while he was under house arrest, Manafort and his associate attempted to get two witnesses to lie about the nature of lobbying and public relations work they carried out at Manafort's direction on behalf of Ukraine.

The court documents do not name Manafort's associate, but they refer to him as "Person A" and note the pseudonym is consistent with previous filings in the case. In earlier filings, Person A has referred to Konstantin Kilimnik, a longtime Manafort associate who prosecutors have said has ties to Russian intelligence. (AP)

U.S. Pushes NATO to Ready More Forces to Deter Russian threat

BRUSSELS/WASHINGTON - The United States is pressing European allies to ready more NATO battalions, ships and planes for combat, officials say, in a fresh move to shore up NATO's deterrence against a potential Russian attack. U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis will seek broad agreement for the plan in Brussels on Thursday when alliance defense ministers meet, laying the ground for endorsement by NATO leaders at a summit in July, four U.S. and NATO officials and diplomats told Reuters.

The plan would require NATO to have 30 land battalions, 30 air fighter squadrons and 30 navy ships such as destroyers ready to deploy within 30 days of being put on alert, although the proposal does not discuss specific troop numbers or a deadline for setting up the strategy.

The size of battalions vary across NATO, from 600 to 1,000 soldiers. This lays down a challenge for European governments, pilloried by U.S. President Donald Trump for slashing military spending after the Cold War, to remedy long-running problems with helicopters and jets that are grounded for lack of parts.

"We have an adversary (Russia) that can move quickly into the Baltics and Poland in a ground attack," said one senior NATO diplomat who was briefed on the U.S. plans.

"We don't have the luxury of taking months to mobilize," the diplomat said, saying the U.S. idea was known as 30-30-30-30.

One U.S. official said the initiative was primarily aimed at countering Russia and fitted with the Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy, which accuses Moscow of seeking to "shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation."

Russia's war games last year, involving what Western officials said were 100,000 troops, also prompted concerns about accidental conflicts that could be triggered by such exercises, or any incursions into Russian-speaking regions in the Baltics.

The Kremlin firmly rejects any such aims and says it is NATO which is the security threat in eastern Europe. (Reuters)