

(1) Ghani Meets...

"Pakistan and Afghanistan are working on a comprehensive strategy on a bilateral basis to establish peace in Afghanistan," adding that "ceasefire in Afghanistan is a positive sign for regional peace."

He further stated, "peace and stability in Afghanistan is our common objective and Pakistan is playing its due role in this regard."

On Monday, officials confirmed Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed to deploy liaison officers in each other's capital and establish coordination centers along the border to share intelligence on militant suspects.

The director generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two countries met in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi to explore ways for further cooperation in security areas.

Officials said both sides agreed to deploy liaison officers and establish Ground Coordination Centers (GCCs) for intelligence sharing and to monitor cross-border movement of the militants.

According to Xinhua, liaison officers will share information they receive about the presence and activities of militant suspects and will accompany the security officials during raids against the suspects.

GCCs will be established at Torkham and Chaman, two main crossing points between Pakistan and Afghanistan to monitor the cross-border movement of the militant suspects. (Tolo news)

(2) NATO Chief Sees...

of troops within the framework of NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

He said that Italian troops are providing training to Afghan forces in order to empower them to fight terrorism in their own country.

"You play an essential role in our shared security by contributing to many different missions and operations in Afghanistan; you help train local forces in their fight against international terrorism. And I was really impressed by the professionalism and dedication of the Italian troops I met in Herat. I welcome the ceasefire in Afghanistan, due to start tomorrow. I call on the Taliban to fully respect the ceasefire."

While the NATO coalition continues to call for a positive role by regional nations in resolving the conflict in Afghanistan, Italian premier Conte said Russia has an important role in resolving conflicts in the world.

"That Russia plays an essential role in many of the international crisis theatres is a fact. We therefore believe that without its involvement it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach those political solutions that represent the only realistic and lasting way out from these crises," said Conte.

Currently, an estimated 895 Italian soldiers are in Afghanistan as part of the NATO coalition. (Tolo news)

(3) Faryab's...

military check posts on Monday night in Sayad district of Sar-e-Pul province, killing three soldiers and wounding five others. Another source told TOLONews that a battalion has been destroyed and the army suffered heavy casualties.

Meanwhile, Zabiullah Amani, Sar-e-Pul governor's spokesman said if reinforcements do not

reach Sayad district, the district will fall to the Taliban.

Taliban have not commented on either incidents. (Tolo news)

(4) New Zealand's...

She told reporters: "This [extension] will allow us a little extra time to consider further advice on Afghanistan in light of other deployment decisions."

New Zealand troops have had a presence in Afghanistan since 2001, with more 3500 personnel having served there over almost two decades.

"We've gone for a three month extension rather than a one year rollover so we are able to make a number of related decisions over deployments in the Middle East," the premier said. (Pajhwok)

(5) NATO to Provide...

it was in a difficult situation, but you kept the glory and honor. As the top commander, I am proud of you," Ghani told the soldiers. He ordered solution to problems in the promotion and privileges of security and defense forces. (Pajhwok)

(6) Amid a Wave...

forces in Ghazni, Sar-i-Pul and Paktia provinces and inflicted casualties on them.

Defence and interior ministries have pledged to fully implement the presidential orders. During the period, they said, the security forces would stop operations. Army Chief Gen. Yaftali slammed the insurgency that involved the killing of brothers. He said the army would implement ceasefire.

He stressed the value of peace and said the Taliban had paved the way for other terrorist groups to step their activities in the country.

The US, the UN, the EU, the UK and other members of the international community have welcomed the government and Taliban decisions. (Pajhwok)

(7) Political Parties...

and should be changed to PR system.

Obaidullah Barakzai, representing the Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan, said the SNTV system was not effective in current circumstances and should be converted to PR system so that people were able to vote in their own constituency.

Muhiuddin Mehdi, a representative of Jamiat-i-Islami, said political parties had presented the new election strategy to the government, but it did not show interest.

The IEC in response to the political parties demand said they were committed to introducing reforms into the election system in line with the election law.

IEC Commissioner Syed Hafeezullah said change in the election system was not possible due the lack of time. He said the IEC was busy making preparations for the upcoming polls and such move might hamper their preparations. (Pajhwok)

(8) UNSC Welcomes...

engage in direct peace talks without any preconditions and without the threat of violence, with the aim of an ultimate political settlement that leads to sustainable peace for the people of Afghanistan.

The members of the Security Council reiterated the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led and -owned peace process for the long-term prosperity and stability of Afghanistan, and expressed their full support for the Afghan Government's efforts to that end. They also recalled

their messages on the peace process as set forth in the Security Council Press Statement of 15 March 2018.

The members of the Security Council reiterated that, as mandated by Security Council resolution 2405 (2018), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, they stand ready to provide their good offices to support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, if requested by and in close consultation with the Afghan Government. (Pajhwok)

(9) Noor Backs...

leaders should put pressure on the Taliban to extend the ceasefire period.

Earlier, former spymaster Amrullah Saleh and other figures opposed the government's ceasefire offer to the Taliban and slammed the move the handiwork of the fifth column within the government.

President Ghani says the truce with the Taliban will begin from the 27th of Ramadan and last till the fifth of Eidul Fitr.

Soon after the government decision, the Taliban also announced a ceasefire during the three-day Eid festival. But foreign forces are excluded from the truce. (Pajhwok)

(10) ANSF in Defensive...

ahead of Eid-al-Fitr.

Security officials meanwhile said government forces across the country are now on red alert. However, they will retaliate with full force in the event of coming under attack.

The Taliban also announced a ceasefire - for the first three days of Eid. However, government's ceasefire runs for eight days from Tuesday.

The Taliban's announcement has meanwhile brought renewed hope for the resumption of the stalled peace process between the Afghan government and the militants.

On Tuesday, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) called on all parties in the conflict to end the ongoing violence and instead engage in peace talks.

General Baba Jan, the commander of the first brigade of 20 Pamiir Army Division in Kunduz said earlier in the day: "We will comply with the order and I have asked my soldiers to abide by it; if the enemy tries to disrupt the security of the people in Kunduz, they will be met with strong retaliation."

Another Afghan National Army (ANA) officer in Kunduz said: "We are implementing the order and respect the truce; if the enemy attacks us, then we are prepared to deal with any situation."

Even troops in Ghazni have said they will observe the ceasefire.

"We are following the direction, if the enemy is seen in any kind of activity in Ghazni, we will stand against them," said Ghazni police chief Fareed Mashal. "We are fully ready to defend Ghazni," said an Afghan army officer in the province.

"Government institutions shouldn't be targeted, we want peace with justice," said AIHRC spokesman Bilal Sediqqi.

Government's ceasefire came into effect at 12.01am on Tuesday.

Earlier Monday, Taliban freed at least 13 government forces in the southern province of Helmand. "Last night direction was giv-

en to all regions to respect the ceasefire, however forces were asked to defend if they were attacked," said MoI spokesnsna Najib Danish.

President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday announced a ceasefire with the Taliban after a religious scholars meeting in Kabul last Monday where they issued a fatwa against the ongoing war in the country.

"The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan announces a ceasefire from the 27th of Ramadan until the fifth day of Eid-ul-Fitr following the historic ruling (Fatwa) of the Afghan Ulema," said Ghani.

The Taliban on Saturday issued a statement saying it had ordered its fighters not to clash with Afghan security forces for the first three days of Eid.

Taliban's ceasefire, however, does not include the foreign forces. (Tolo news)

(11) Death Toll...

there for seven years. He lost his life in the explosion. Obaidullah's pregnant wife is now in shock after hearing about the tragedy.

The victim's son, Subhan, said: "Here it was blood around, bullets had hit his legs."

"He was a graduate, he completed his schooling, he was very talented, he was working as a driver ... everyone liked him," said Obaidullah's friend Hamed Baqai.

"Stop the war and violence, it is enough now, what kind of ceasefire is this that you respond with shedding blood," said Obaidullah's uncle Abdul Baqi.

"They (government officials) live in steel palaces, they do not know how many become widowed and orphaned," Mohammad Ibrahim, a relative of Obaidullah said.

Another victims was Mohammad Ali Shariati who worked for the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House of Parliament). He lost his wife and his sister-in-law in the attack.

My six-month-old daughter was with her mother and she sustained serious wounds, he said. "When we do not feel secure, peace with one faction does not lead to peace and this is not acceptable to us," said Shariati.

This comes a day after a suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside the gate of the ministry, while staff were on their way home.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack. (Tolo news)

(12) Taliban Attacks...

once they reached the second corps, police became suspicious and using heavy weapons, they shot up the Humvee.

After the Humvee was detonated a clash broke out between the security forces and the Taliban. Five policemen were killed, and 12 others were wounded including the Moqur district governor, the official said.

Ghazni's provincial governors office confirmed the clash and said at least five soldiers were killed. These officials said however that at least 26 others, including the district governor, were wounded in the clash.

In addition, at least 26 Taliban insurgents were also killed in the clash and their vehicles were destroyed when reinforcements arrived at the scene. They then brought the situation come under control.

Taliban has not confirmed their casualties. (Tolo news)

U.N. Refugee Agency Hopes Lebanon Will Reverse Residency Freeze

GENEVA - The U.N. refugee agency UNHCR hopes the Lebanese foreign ministry will quickly reverse a decision to freeze residency applications the agency has submitted for its staff, its spokesman said on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil ordered the freeze last week after accusing UNHCR of hindering the return of refugees to Syria by "spreading fear".

Syrian refugees now account for around a quarter of the population of Lebanon - around 1 million are registered with the United Nations. The Lebanese government wants the refugees to start going home; the UN says it's not yet safe for them to return.

Beirut is working with Damascus to arrange the return of thousands of refugees it says want to go back to Syria, a top Lebanese official said last month.

"We are very concerned about the freezing issuing of residence permits to international staff in Lebanon," UNHCR spokesman Andre Mahecic said during a briefing in Geneva. "We hope that the decision of the foreign ministry will be reversed without delay."

Lebanese President Michel Aoun has been calling for Syrian refugees to return to areas of the country he has described as secure. Aoun says this should happen before a final political solution to the seven-year-long war.

A conference on Syria hosted by the European Union and co-chaired by the United Nations in April said conditions remained unsafe. (Reuters)

Iran's Exports of 'Red Gold' Hit 10-Year High

TEHRAN - Iran's saffron exports last year hit a 10-year high, with the highly-prized spice generating more than \$325 million in hard currency revenues.

The exports of 236 tonnes of the most expensive spice in the world known as "red gold" showed Iran is far from losing its dominant position as a producer which usually accounts for about 90 percent of world saffron output.

The sales during the March 2017-18 fiscal rose 55% against the previous year, head of Agriculture, Water and Food Industries Commission with Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture KavehZargaran said.

Iran's saffron is exported to some 20 countries but about 77% of the shipments go to Hong Kong, Spain and the United Arab Emirates "which shows we have not been successful in winning a better share of the world market," he said.

Experts have long said Iran has to improve marketing and find new customers if it wants to secure a bigger slice of the profits from saffron sales.

Bulk production methods in Iran fetch less than what is paid in countries such as Spain which re-export the Iranian produce.

Saffron from Spain reportedly sells for 1,400 euros (\$1,861) a kg in Europe, but Iranian varieties command a quarter or less of that price.

"Countries like Spain, while being a major importer of saffron from our country, are among the largest exporters of this product in the world," Zargaran said. (Press TV)