

(1) New Strategy...

to be part and parcel of our foreign policy. Culture is a powerful tool to build bridges between people, notably the young, and reinforce mutual understanding. It can also be an engine for economic and social development.

"As we face common challenges, culture can help all of us, in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, stand together to fight radicalisation and build an alliance of civilisations against those trying to divide us. This is why cultural diplomacy must be at the core of our relationship with today's world."

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, said: "Culture is the hidden gem of our foreign policy. It helps to promote dialogue and mutual understanding. Culture is therefore crucial in building long-term relationships with countries across the whole world: it has a great role to play in making the EU a stronger global actor."

European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, and Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, welcomed the Strategy, in line with the recently adopted 2030 Agenda acknowledging global citizenship, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as overarching principles of sustainable development and for the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policies. Culture can play an important role in the EU's foreign policy. Cultural cooperation counters stereotypes and prejudice by nurturing dialogue, open-mindedness, dignity and mutual respect. Intercultural dialogue can help prevent conflicts and foster reconciliation within and between countries. Culture can help respond to global challenges such as the integration of refugees, countering violent radicalisation and the protection of the world's cultural heritage. Culture can also be a tool to deliver important social and economic benefits both within and outside the EU. The communication proposes a strategic framework for deeper and more effective international cultural relations as well as a new model for cooperation with Member States, national cultural institutes, private and public operators from the EU and its partner countries, increasing opportunities, creating synergies and maximising socio-economic benefits. Culture is becoming more and more a vector for economic growth, not only in its traditional forms, but particularly through cultural and creative industries, SMEs and tourism. This strengthens the opinion that synergies with other fields are crucial and that public and private sector and civil society should be more and more involved.

Culture plays an important role also at municipal level. Engaging citizens, state actors and cultural operators alike, is a major resource for strengthening municipalities and communities and for developing market opportunities. (Pajhwok)

(2) Al-Qaeda...

from the past. Taliban has often sacrificed Afghanistan and the Afghan people to save al-Qaeda leaders. This is not a new thing as they [al-Qaeda] have announced the same allegiance in the past as well. They said they have renewed their allegiance," said NSC spokesman Tawab Ghorzang. "What Afghan government has always insisted on is that enhanced relations between regional and international terrorist groups has posed a potential threat to Afghanistan and the region," he added. Meanwhile, a number of analysts have said that al-Qaeda's allegiance to the Taliban indicates that the Taliban are used as tools in the hands of international terrorists and this will lead to the inclusion of the Taliban in the list of world terrorist organizations.

"The United States has always demanded Taliban to cut relations with al-Qaeda. Now, if Taliban approves this allegiance, a center of al-Qaeda will be re-established in the region," said political analyst Sediq Patman. Al-Qaeda's allegiance to the Taliban has not been an unprecedented move in the history of Afghan insurgency as the two groups have routinely cooperated with each other in their attempt to target Afghan and foreign troops in the country. However the renewed partnership between the Taliban and al-Qaeda in some way raised alarm among US and Afghan officials with US President Barack Obama recently confirming new powers to US forces in Afghanistan in their struggle against the Taliban. "Al-Qaeda announced allegiance to Akhtar Mohammad Mansour [Taliban's former leader] when he was appointed as Taliban's leader. This was announced for Mullah Omar [Taliban's founding leader] as well. This is not a new

thing."

Recently Obama announced a broader role for US forces in Afghanistan. Based on the new US plan, the current level of US forces in Afghanistan will not change. Obama also authorized the American troops to help their Afghan counterparts on the war fronts. (Tolonews)

(3) Indian Envoy ...

development support. He asked the Indian government to construct another hydro-power project on Kunar River the survey of which had been completed.

He asked the neighboring countries to learn from India and help Afghanistan in its rehabilitation. (Pajhwok)

(4) Taliban ...

are poor, they will either migrate to other areas or will accept the Taliban demand," said Naqibullah.

Obaidullah, a resident of Brangak locality, confirmed the announcement and said he and his family had migrated to Farah City, the provincial capital, fearing the Taliban would enroll him. The Pusht Rod district chief, Ghausuddin, said the Taliban had launched a recruitment campaign in the district and were making announcements in this regard on loudspeakers from all mosques. "Now people are deciding what to do." The official said the Taliban operating in the district were loyal to the movement's new supreme leader, Mullah Haibatullah. The Hezb-i-Islami militants also existed in the district, but they too were aligned to Haibatullah, he said. He said there were 62 villages in Pusht Rod and each village at a mosque. The Taliban are in control of most of the villages in Farah, according to Ghausuddin. He said it was not easy to prevent the Taliban's campaign even in government-controlled areas because the rebels used to threaten people with elimination if they disobeyed them. The district chief said he had informed the provincial intelligence department and the police headquarters of the Taliban's announcement, but there had been no response. But Farah deputy police chief Col. Mohammad Ghaus Malyar denied receiving any report about the matter. He said they were aware the Taliban had asked each family in districts to give them 5,000 afghanis each as usher and zakat. He said they had called tribal elders from districts and had told them not to give the money to the Taliban. But a security official in the police headquarters, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the Taliban had asked people to support them in the conflict. He said the Taliban were doing so in order to capture the Anardara district and establish a base there. Calls seeking comments from the Taliban went unanswered. (Pajhwok)

(5) MPs Blasted...

ghanistan's important issues." "This decree should be passed as soon as possible and in the meantime, the elections fate should be made clear as well," said MP Ghulam Farooq Majroh. Bringing reforms to electoral bodies was one of the main commitments made by the National Unity Government leaders during their campaigns in 2014 presidential election. (Tolonews)

(6) Reform Decree ...

lawmaker Sharifa Balkhahi said the house panels in their joint first and second meetings had discussed the decree. She said some commissions rejected the decree, others proposed recommendations and some approved it, but there was only one controversial clause in the third meeting of the commissions. However, Shehla Farid, law and political sciences professor at Kabul University, said Wolesi Jirga members were in their sixth year and were acting members. "They don't have the authority now to reject or approve a presidential decree because they are illegally sitting on their seats."

The parliament five-year term ended on June 22, 2015 under Article 83 of the Afghanistan Constitution and new elections were supposed to take place within 30 or 60 days. But the elections could not be held, though the Independent Election Commission (IEC) has set an Oct 15, 2016 date for the polls. Similarly, Article 109 of the Constitution says "Proposals for amendments to the electoral law cannot be included in the working agenda of the assembly during the last year of the legislative period." Shehla Farid says the 109 makes president free to implement his legislative decree on electoral reforms. While article 79 says "in cases of recess of the House of Representatives [Wolesi Jirga], the government can adopt legislation in an emergency situation on matters other than related to budget and financial affairs."

The legislative decrees become laws after they are signed by the President. The legislative decrees should be submitted to the National Assembly in

the course of thirty days beginning from the first session of the National Assembly. In case of rejection by the National Assembly, the legislations become void." Professor Shehla confirmed under Article 79 of the Constitution, legislative decrees should be sent to the Wolesi Jirga for approval but the current parliament was not legitimate because its working tenure had ended.

However, the president has extended the parliament mandate through a decree until fresh elections are held. Shehla said the extension in the parliament mandate by the president was also totally illegal because there was no nothing in the Constitution under which the president could extend the Wolesi Jirga tenure. She termed electoral reform and implementation of the decree as crucial at this stage and said the decree should be sent to newly elected Wolesi Jirga members after elections for approval. Shehla believed many lawmakers feared they would be unable to be elected if the decree aimed at bringing reforms to the electoral system was approved. However, Abdul Karim Ranjbar, head of Afghanistan's Democratic Lawyers Association, says the extension of the parliament mandate by the president was legal. He said many lawmakers did not want the decree to be executed and reforms brought to the electoral system. He termed electoral reform as important and said the president should dissolve the assembly and hold fresh parliamentary elections and send the decree on electoral reform to a new parliament. (Pajhwok)

(7) Air Force ...

analysts said they are concerned about the Taliban's resurgence, as they have recently plotted big attacks and are trying to commit more violence. "One of the failures of the Afghan government is that it had a break in its air strike missions, but it would be good if it continues and accelerates this pace in order to be successful in defeating the enemy," said military affairs analyst Baz Mohammad Anwari. (Tolonews)

(8) Taliban Vows ...

against your occupation," Mujahid said in a statement sent to VOA on Saturday. Obama on Friday approved broader role for the US military to assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to fight the Taliban-led insurgency.

The broader role granted to the US military will allow them to accompany Afghan forces and assist them more proactively on the battlefield. The US forces were earlier accompanying the Afghan special forces only when it was needed, according to the US officials said. The officials said under the new policy the US commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, will be able to decide when it is appropriate for American troops to accompany conventional Afghan forces into the field. (KP)

(9) 2 Teachers....

missing. Student Basera said: "We go to school with enthusiasm, but there are no books and teachers." She wants to study well and become a doctor but there is no proper system and management to ensure quality education. Resident Haji Rahimullah alleged the education department had allocated the teacherposts meant for Shinkai locality to other areas. Forty teacher posts have been approved for Gilan, but currently only 16 teachers are working across the district. Although there is a girls' school in the area, some female students have to travel to Jaghori district. "The education department has done nothing in our district. We haven't seen the education director for years despite a whole host of problems haunting the vital sector in Gilan.

Police chief Col. Lutfullah Kamran told Pajhwok there was a shortage of teachers in the district. "At times, I send policemen to teach students," he said. Currently, a total 600 schools are functional in Ghazni but half of them are without building. Sixteen schools have been closed due to insecurity. (Pajhwok)

(10) US Air Strikes...

Pakistan has made US Government to change its policy against it. "Fundamental changes made on the policy of US towards Pakistan, the messages of US officials for Taliban supporters are as same as it was on 2001, messages indicating that either to be with Taliban or quit it Ministry of Interior Affairs spokesman Sediq Sedique said." Meanwhile Afghan military experts have addressed some of the gaps in the queue of the Afghan security forces. Military expert Attiqullah Amarkhail said, "the most effective way for Afghan security forces to defend its country well is to get equipped with Tanks, jet fighters, artillery and some other heavy machine guns to

remove Taliban easily." Afghan officials are pushing through to get some achievements before attending Warsa summit which will be held after one month. (Agencies)

(11) Paktika ...

of Gayan district, told Pajhwok Afghan Newscheck-posts in their area were unmanned. Many parts of the district were being controlled by the insurgents, he claimed.

But Gen. Ziayee insisted he would eliminate the militants and enforce law and order across the province. (Pajhwok)

(12) I Cried so...

in June, 2008 left many people dead and injured and hundreds of prisoners managed to escape, mostly Taliban political prisoners. Attiqullah told Pajhwok Afghan News he was just two years old when the prison attack took place. He said his mother told him his father owned a bakery in Sarposa area and he was killed along with several others in the attack. When his father was alive, they lived in a rented house, but after the death of his father, Attiqullah said his grandfather gave them a room in his house where he, his mother and two sisters still live.

Three years ago, Attiqullah was admitted into a school by his mother, but he had to quit and instead work to support his family. "I remember the day when my mother separated me from my classmates and took me to a mechanic shop to learn the skill. That day I cried so much, I was telling the mother I don't want to work, I want to study. But the mother was also crying and said there is no other option with her but to take me to the workplace."

The boy said he never felt happiness coming to the shop and always came to the workplace with his eyes filled with tears. "Work at the mechanic shop is tough. I don't like it. I wear dirty clothes all the day and the master uses harsh words and often beats me."

Attiqullah said he daily thinks he would have been living a different life had his father been alive. "I am dreaming the day when I get rid of this dirty dress and the hard labour and just go to school." "There is no one to fulfill my wish. No one has helped us after the death of my father, neither relatives nor the government, we are forgotten folk." Attiqullah is given 50 afghanis each day by his master before leaving for home and sometimes when there is more work, he gets 80 to 100 afghanis, which he gives to his mother to buy bread and other things.

His mother said she would have never sent her son to the mechanic shop if his father was alive. She said she had no choice but to send her son to work. "My husband owned a bakery shop near the Kandahar prison. He would leave for the shop before dawn and would come home at midnight."

She said her husband worked for long hours for the sake of their family, but he was martyred in a very powerful blast. Her spouse left her behind with three small children, including Attiqullah. Her father then took them to his home and gave them a room.

"My father is also not in a position to support us and that's why I send my son to the mechanic shop," she said. She said she also worked day and night dealing with household works, taking care of children and embroidery. The mother said she worked on embroidery designs from shopkeepers against wages and earned up to 6000 afghanis after months of work. "I hardly meet the family needs."

Initially she sent all her children to school, but bad economic condition forced her to take her son out of the school and send him to work. Her two daughters still go to school. The mother said no one had assisted her and she alone was taking care of her children under tough conditions. Attiqullah is not alone whose life is ruined by the conflict in Kandahar. Thousands of families who lost their beloved ones and breadwinners to the conflict live in the province. Security officials say the attack on the Kandahar prison was one of the deadliest that freed some 1200 prisoners, including experienced killers and those involved in heavy crimes. They say many years had passed since the attack and some of the perpetrators might have been among those arrested since then and others killed during the conflict. Kandahar governor's spokesman Samim Khalwak told Pajhwok Afghan News that the government has been assisting families of the war victims and Attiqullah's family might be assisted by the then government. "But such assistance cannot change the pain into joy," he said, adding the provincial government was encouraging wealthy people to assist the victims of war to the possible extent. (Pajhwok)

(13) Kunduz...

the problems as people were in urgent need of the service during Ramadan. Aimal, a resident of Sar Dawra area, said: "Our electricity voltage has been low and load-shedding is more frequent over the past several days. The problem has worsened in Ramadan." As people suffered due to the hot weather, the Breshna Shirkat had enhanced electricity supply to ice factories, the resident noted. Ordinary consumers had access to a few hours of unstable power supply, he said. Anwar Nawabi, the Breshna Shirkat's acting head for Kunduz, confirmed low voltage and load-shedding. Distributing electricity to ice companies was a periodical issue, he explained. However, he accused the factories of violating rules despite being warned several times. Kunduz is supplied the electricity imported from Tajikistan. Beside Kunduz City, Imam Sahib, Khanabad and Chahardara districts also use the imported facility. (Pajhwok)

(14) Problems in... is the main problem, Agha notes, claiming fruit-laden trucks often rot that can be averted. He alleged border closures by Pakistani forces result in big losses to the traders and gardeners. For example, Agha says, dozens of trucks full of grapes went rotten or stale. The fruit was sold at half prices last year ago when Pakistani forces closed the border for several days. Demands for bribes from Pakistani security personnel are another concern, according to him. He urges the officials concerned to take practical steps before fruit exports begin. Haji Aziz, a fresh fruit trader, holds the same view. (Pajhwok)

(15) 3 Sisters Shot...

which are mainly due to domestic violence as well as violence by the militants trying the women on adultery charges. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in its report released late in November last year said "statistic of violence against women, obtained from the registered cases of violence against women during the first six months in 1394 exceeds 2579 cases." The report further added that figure was reported 2403 cases during the six months in 1393 which shows 7.32 percent increase in 1394, the last solar year. (KP)

(16) 50 Killed...

around 2:00 a.m. local time (0600 GMT) inside the club and there once was a confrontation between the suspect and an officer working at the club outside the venue, according to local police. Then the suspect went back into the club to continue shooting and took hostages. (Xinhua)

(17) Iraqi Forces....

Meanwhile, the security forces and allied paramilitary units, known as Hashd Shaabi, advanced in east of Fallujah and freed al-Subayhat area after heavy clashes with the extremist militants, killing at least 13 extremist militants and destroying four of their vehicles, including a suicide car bomb, said the source. Saturday's operations came after the security forces managed on Wednesday to seize part of al-Shuhada district in south of Fallujah and raised the Iraqi flag over some buildings after fierce clashes with IS militants. However, advance in southern Fallujah was slowed by IS militants resistance inside the city, with hundreds of hidden bombs believed to be planted by them. (Xinhua)

(18) 75% of Democrats...

and stayed in the race even when the delegate count seemed to spell his doom, and yielded record numbers of small donations to his campaign. Sanders so far has not conceded defeat, even though Clinton recently clinched the nomination and won endorsements from President Barack Obama and U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts - a favorite of the same left-leaning voters who supported him. (Reuters)

(19) Trump Calls...

On Friday, Mitt Romney, the Republican Party's 2012 nominee for US president, warned that if Trump is elected president, he could legitimize racism and bigotry and change the moral fabric of American society. "I don't want to see a president of the United States saying things which change the character of the generations of Americans that are following," Romney said. "Presidents have an impact on the nature of our nation, and trickle-down racism, trickle-down bigotry, trickle-down misogyny, all these things are extraordinarily dangerous to the heart and character of America. (Press TV)

(20) Russia, England...

"Such unacceptable behaviour by so-called supporters of the national teams of England and Russia has no place in football, a sport we must protect and defend," it said. The execu-

tive committee said that independent of any disciplinary sanctions relating to incidents inside the stadium "it will not hesitate to impose additional sanctions on the Football Association (FA) and the Russian Football Union (RFU), including the potential disqualification of their respective teams from the tournament, should such violence occur again." Both associations are urged "to appeal to their supporters to behave in a responsible and respectful manner." The statement added: "We would also like to publicly voice our support for the work of the French authorities and security forces for their efforts to deliver a safe and secure tournament in challenging circumstances. (DPA)

(21) Political, Military...

Iran and Russia are Syria's main allies against a multitude of foreign-backed armed groups, including Daesh terrorists, fighting to topple President Bashar al-Assad. Moscow has sent warplanes and special forces in support of Syrian government troops, while Tehran has deployed military advisers in the fight against terrorists. Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. Damascus says Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar are the main supporters of the militants fighting the government forces. (Presstv)

(22) Undocumented ...

work permits and have their deportation put off under U.S. President Barack Obama's executive order, called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Currently, around 68,000 immigrants are believed to be eligible DACA holders in the Harris County, which detains and deports more immigrants than almost any other counties under the government program known as 287(g), which made rapid deportations of such immigrants possible. (Xinhua)

(23) WB to Fund...

consumers without distorting the commercial market and supporting the enforcement of quality standards for solar products," he said. He added the project was expected to create jobs in operation and maintenance of the solar systems to youth. World Bank will also finance a Climate Smart Agriculture project which is expected to increase agricultural productivity and build resilience to climate risks among smallholder farming and pastoral communities in northern Kenya. (Xinhua)

(24) Five Injured...

injured by shards of glass and were being treated in hospital. A further investigation is under way. A few flights were affected as their passengers were scheduled to check in at the explosion site, but the airport is now in normal operation. (Xinhua)

(25) Anti-Iran...

Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the US, France, Britain, China, Russia and Germany on July 14 last year after years of intensive talks. The agreement requires all nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Iran by the EU, the UN and the US to be lifted but Iranian officials have complained of obstructions by the Western side in this regard. (Presstv)

(26) US Asks Pakistan...

"That's a collective decision reached by the members of the group," said the spokesman, Mark Toner, when asked why the United States was not backing Pakistan's application. "India is also pursuing membership into the Nuclear Suppliers Group, but certainly, if Pakistan wants to pursue that, that's something for all the members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group to consider," he added. US President Barack Obama, who met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House on Tuesday, announced after the meeting that the United States strongly supported India's bid to join the NSG. Later, a senior US official told a news briefing that Washington wanted the NSG to induct India during its annual plenary session which will be held in Seoul, South Korea, on June 23-24. (Monitoring Desk)

(27) China Says further...

the NSG rotating chairmanship, did not discuss any topic related to that, Hong said. According to Hong, the chairman said the meeting, which was held without an agenda, was aimed to hear all parties' opinions on the external communication of the NSG to prepare for his report to the annual meeting to be held in Seoul of the Republic of Korea later this month. (Xinhua)

(28) Iftar Banned...

"In Mecca people perform iftar because people (pilgrims) do not have their own home there. Our citizens have their own home. They should have iftar at their place, within their family circle," Mansur said. (Agencies)