

(1) Wolesi Jirga...

presented to the National Assembly within thirty days of convening its first session, and if rejected by the National Assembly, they become void." Some lawmakers believed the new draft's approval would curtail powers of the president, but others said it might not impact the president's powers.

The lawmakers discussed other issues as well. Abdul Wadud Paiman from Kunduz province said there were reports regarding the fifth column, a group of individuals working against the interest of Afghanistan for foreign countries. "After the capture of Qari Zahir, the reports are proved to be true."

"Don't try to protect Andarabi, police chief of Maidan Waradak province and let every traitor and criminal be punished," he told the lawmakers. Saleh Saleh, a lawmaker from Kunar province, said: "Individuals who sold weapons to the enemy of Afghanistan and helped them should be interrogated and no one should come to their rescue."

Niamatullah Ghafari, 2nd deputy speaker, said the house had summoned security officials to brief the MPs about the country's overall security situation on Saturday. (Pajhwok)

(2) Progress on...

the battlefield in many areas of Afghanistan was in a state of flux, with gains and reversals but with neither side effecting clear dominance.

"The security forces continue to face serious challenges, including in addressing questions of morale, leadership, attrition and logistics," said Haysom, who is also head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. In a statement from the UN mission, Haysom said he remained concerned about the impact that the high level of violence was having on the civilian population.

"There has been no let-up in Ramadan, during which period there have been some reports of disturbing brutality, including attacks on worshippers.

"I am especially concerned about the trend of targeted attacks on civilians working in the judicial sector, and on journalists," said the envoy, who warned of possible retaliatory acts and an escalating spiral of violence.

On the economic front, Haysom noted there had been progress in revenue collection and developing thoughtful medium-term plans for reform. He praised the establishment of the High Council of Governance, Justice and Anti-Corruption as a positive step toward demonstrating results in the everyday lives of Afghans.

Referring to the failure of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group to bring the antagonists to the table and the recent death of Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, the envoy said such a peace process seemed unlikely in the short term.

"We believe, however, that there are elements within the Taliban movement who are questioning whether they can win militarily, at least in the short term, and wonder whether a purely military goal is desirable," he said.

Peace is not a luxury, but a necessity, without which Afghanistan is not sustainable, according to Haysom, expressing disappointment over lack of any concrete traction on peace efforts. However, he remained optimistic that such a process would eventually emerge. The UNAMA chief said Afghans could meet the challenges confronting them. "It is possible for Afghanistan not only to survive in 2016, but to grow stronger as a result." (Pajhwok)

(3) Warsaw Summit...

sustaining Afghan forces "must decline" over time. Noting that American and NATO forces are not enough to protect Afghanistan, he called for sustaining and strengthening the Afghan national security forces.

Olson also reiterated the United States was not resuming day-to-day security operations in Afghanistan, but would protect its interest in Afghanistan. Expressing his support to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace talks, Olson, however, said the fighting season had not gone down well with the Taliban.

To a question, Olson said Pakistan remained committed to the peace process and this needs to be encouraged. He urged Pakistan to use its influence to bring the Taliban to the peace talks' table.

He said the mood in Kabul after a recent big attack was fairly downward and to some extent diminished the space towards an outreach to the Taliban for reconciliation.

"But now the government is quite seized with taking the opportunity that it is presented to it for talks with the Taliban. The mood is more of cohesion and unity," Olson responded

to a question on the Afghan Government.

"There is space for the Taliban to integrate into the pluralistic society of Afghanistan," he added.

Praising Pakistan for its anti-terror campaigns in Waziristan, Olson said Pakistan was now experiencing lower level of violence and its economy has stabilized.

"There is some degree of good news. However, the challenge for Pakistan has been its reluctance to take strong actions against terrorist networks that go after its neighbors." He said Pakistan would not have a bright future until and unless it went after the Taliban.

The Afghan Taliban, he said, had consolidated itself under the new leadership. "There clearly is a role for other countries in the region, but for the moment the challenge is to keep the negotiations going."

On peace talks with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Olson said: "We do think that the approach that the government has taken, we in the US support the reconciliation process and bringing groups in."

Referring to "certain end conditions" that have to be met for any peace talks, Olson said the US wanted these conditions be met for any peace talks, but it was up to the Afghan government to take a final call on it. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghan Election ...

about systematic reforms to the election system of Afghanistan. It will discourage the world community.

The United Nations has added its voice to these concerns, adding that the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) will face a credibility challenge if election law reforms were not undertaken and parliamentary elections not held.

In a briefing to the UN Security Council, Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan expressed major concerns over the constant delays that have hit the process for implementing election law reforms.

"Slow progress in advancing electoral reform and setting an election calendar, is one indicator of a need for greater political cohesion and the need for appreciation by a fragmented political community of their shared destiny. On the 13th June the Wolesi Jirga (lower house of parliament) voted against the draft structured law necessitating further review and discussions," Haysom told the UN Security Council. Referring to parliament's rejection of president Ashraf Ghani's legislative decree on electoral reforms, the head of the ERC said the decision has pushed the reform process into deadlock. He added that it was now it is the task of senate members to clarify the fate of the much-awaited decree.

"As long as the elections are delayed, it would pose harm to the people and government of Afghanistan. The international community will be discouraged and they will conclude that the national unity government does not have the ability to implement its programs," ERC chief Akifi said.

"The government does not have the will to conduct the elections," Ex-IEC chief Manavi said, adding to mounting concerns over election delays adding to further rumors that lawmakers in parliament are split over the election reforms.

The government is, however, insisting that it will bring about reforms in the elections law. (Tolnews)

(5) NSC Spurns ...

talks with the HIA hit a snag after the group placed new "impossible-to-meet" conditions.

NSC spokesman Tawab Ghorzang told Pajhwok Afghan News the government-HIA peace talks would soon reach the final stage.

He rejected rumours and reports that claimed the HIA had come up with new conditions.

Eng. Mohammad Amin Karim, who is leading HIA delegation in the peace talks, also rejected the reports and said such attempts were being made by those who were against peace.

He added there were only some technical problems which would be resolved in the next three days in order to pave the ground for the draft peace agreement's signature. (Pajhwok)

(6) India Offers ...

Afghanistan over the last 15 years, he believed, according to ANI news agency

He voiced his shock over the loss of lives and property in the June 20 bomb attack in Kabul, in which 20 people were killed.

"The Taliban are continuing attacks at an unprecedented rate since the beginning of the year and there is continued violence by other armed groups," he noted.

Militants should not be allowed to exercise control over any part of Afghanistan's territory, he said, adding: "This, in our view, is critical for lasting peace

in the country."

The path to reconciliation in Afghanistan should be through an Afghan-led and Afghan owned process respecting the red lines drawn by the people, the ambassador said. (Pajhwok)

(7) SCO to Discuss ...

Ushakov said, adding that "Russia believes there is no reason to refrain from accepting this country to the organization."

India and Pakistan are expected to become SCO members at the summit next year, he added. (Agencies)

(8) US Rules...

Olson was quoted as saying by the Times of India.

Pakistan would not have a "bright future" unless it took action against terror groups like the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, said Olson, a former US ambassador to Pakistan. However, he commended Pakistan's counter-terrorism operations in the tribal region of Waziristan, near the Afghanistan border. Olson believed the offensive had led to a decline in violence in the South Asian country.

The US would remain careful about troop reductions in Afghanistan, Olson suggested, next month's NATO summit in Warsaw would reaffirm the alliance's commitment to stabilise the country. (Pajhwok)

(9) UN to Host ...

firmed up. Kabul had adopted good measures to encourage the return of the refugees, acknowledged the UN-HCR chief, who met senior officials including President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(10) Border ...

Nuristan, causing civilian casualties and material loss," Saikal alleged.

Most recently, he claimed, in contradiction of bilaterally agreed consultation mechanisms, the neighbour attempted to build new infrastructure at the Torkham Pass, provoking a needless clash.

"The situation, a threat to international peace and security, remains tense with a devastating impact on trade and transit," the diplomat told members of the Security Council.

But Pakistani Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi rejected the allegations as "untrue" and "gratuitous". She recalled last month's US drone attack that killed Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour had dealt a blow to the Afghan peace process. That attack had been a breach of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, she charged. Ultimately, she continued, it was the responsibility of the Afghan government to deliver on commitments made to its people.

"Effective border management is the sovereign right of my country," she insisted, stressing there was nothing illegal about any construction on Pakistan's side of the frontier.

She urged Afghanistan to avoid externalising its problems by blaming others, and underscored the need for a political solution that would require compromise on both sides.

US Deputy Permanent Representative Michele Sison said the United States will maintain 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of this year and 5,500 thereafter, located at a small number of bases, including at Bagram, Jalalabad in the east, and Kandahar in the south.

"We will also continue to provide financial support for Afghan forces. We encourage all other donors to the Afghan security forces to do the same. Afghanistan has requested that donors renew their funding for the Afghan forces at, or near, current levels through 2020. We urge donors to do so at, or ahead, of next month's NATO Summit in Warsaw," Sison said.

The strike against Mullah Mansour should serve as a clear signal to the Taliban that US is prepared to take action against those who plan to potentially harm U.S. personnel and who continue to oppose peace, the American diplomat said.

"It is, however, not indicative of a change in policy and doesn't foreshadow a new military initiative. The US remains committed to encouraging a peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban, and we view such a process as the only avenue to end the war," Sison said.

"There is no military solution to the conflict. The Taliban must understand that they can only achieve their goals, including the withdrawal of international military forces, through a peace process that leads to a negotiated settlement." Nicholas Haysom, special representative of the secretary-general for Afghanistan, said despite persistent political, economic and security challenges, Afghanistan could make significant strides toward peace and stability in 2016. (Pajhwok)

(11) Afghan-Pakistani ...

Assadullah Walwanji said. Afghanistan and Iran are currently at-

tending the SCO as observer nations. Pakistan and India are expected to achieve full membership in the coming summit.

"President Ashraf Ghani will focus on regional cooperation, security, the fight against terrorism and the country's economy. He will also meet a number of heads of state during the summit," presidential spokesman Haroon Chakhansuri said.

The Afghan delegation has major tasks during the summit. These include discussions on the settlement of border disputes with Pakistan and encouraging the SCO member states to invest in Afghanistan.

"Jobs need to be created and unemployment must be tackled. It will also put pressure on Pakistan. Because when people have jobs, they will not take arms on the order of ISI for war," MP Zikirya Zikiray said.

The SCO is an international alliance that consists of 6 member states and 5 observers from Eurasia. It was established on 26 April 1996 as the Shanghai Five. Beyond the member states and observers, SCO currently also has 3 dialogue partners and 3 guest attendance entries.

The member nations are China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. (Tolnews)

(12) Farah Exports ...

worth 2 billion afghanis from Farah, although 10 days are still left in the season. Our statistics show watermelon worth nearly 2 billion afis has been exported from Farah this year," he continued.

Hameedullah, 37, a resident of Darabad village, said: "Thank Allah this year the yield is very good." His land produced 250 tonnes of watermelon and per five kilograms sold for 26 Mohammad Daud, another farmer from Pushtrod district, also expressed happiness over his bumper crop. He collected 68 tonnes of watermelon from two hectares of land. (Pajhwok)

(13) US Envoy ...

degree of Indian influence on Afghanistan may be overestimated in Pakistan," he added.

Disagreeing with Pakistan's concerns that India was using its strong presence in Afghanistan to stir trouble in Baluchistan, the US envoy said "India has been a supportive partner for Afghanistan. It has provided a limited amount, but important military assistance to Afghanistan."

"The Afghan government has failed in its efforts to get the international community to mount pressure on Pakistan. This is a sign of weakness of Afghanistan's diplomatic effectiveness," MP Shah Gul Rezayee said. His criticism comes at a time when Kabul has persistently asked Islamabad to take practical action against militants on Pakistani soil.

"It is known where the terrorists' hideouts and training camps are located. Therefore Pakistan needs to target these bases," deputy presidential spokesman Dawa Khan Menapal said. (Tolnews)

(14) Iran Warns UN ...

The Takfiri group has also enjoyed defections from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan although the latter's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has pledged allegiance to Taliban's new leader Haibatullah Akhundzada.

The top UN official in Afghanistan said Wednesday the country faces the risk of a new spiral in violence following a series of attacks on civilians in the last few months.

Bomb attacks killed at least 22 people in Kabul and the northern province of Badakhshan on Monday, underlining how dangerous Afghanistan remains. Nicholas Haysom, the UN secretary general's special representative for Afghanistan, said he was deeply concerned about violence against civilians, with attacks continuing during Islam's holy month of Ramadan. (Agencies)

(15) Construction...

A resident of Gardez, Mohammad Yousuf, told Pajhwok Afghan News any road project implemented so far in the city had low quality and needed repair. He strongly urged the provincial council and civil society institutes to oversee implementation of such projects. (Pajhwok)

(16) 115 Taliban ...

of Sherin Tagab district of Faryab. The ex-fighters are to be moved to Jawzjan to join their families and live in residences the government has considered for them in Shiberghan, Jawzjan's capital. Turkistani said the former insurgents had been active in Faryab and jawzjan provinces. Tahir, the group leader, said they were deceived by the Taliban's propaganda that fighting against the government was jihad. "But we saw their destructive activities as against humanity. They destroyed public utilities and killed innocent people."

Maulvi Mohammad Karim, the Jawzjan peace committee head, said last week another 15 Taliban insurgents also joined peace the process, increasing the number of militants so far reconciled to 850 in Jawzjan. (Pajhwok)

(17) Revenue...

But Mohammad Sedique, the governor's spokesman, said due to unemployment more youth were coming to work in the mining sector. Therefore, more coal was being extracted and there was an increase in the revenue as well, he explained.

Ali Ahmad Hussaini, the town's administrative chief, said 10,000 individuals from different provinces of the country were extracting coal from 1,000 tunnels in the coalmine. Earlier, 8,000 people worked in 700 tunnels, he recalled. (Pajhwok)

(18) UNSC Condemns ...

"The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks occurred on June 20, in Kabul and Badakhshan province against civilian population," said a statement issued by the Council. The detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED) in a bazaar in the Kisham district of Badakhshan killed 10 civilians, including five children, and injured 36 others-- mostly children.

In Kabul, ahead of a suicide attack on Nepalese and Indian contractors, an IED detonated targeting a provincial council member. The attacks resulted in at least 27 deaths, including 13 Nepalese citizens, as well as in more than 48 wounded persons. (Pajhwok)

(19) All Passengers...

highway security. "The Taliban in Afghan National Army (ANA) uniformswere riding a pick-up and a tank; they stopped passengers on the highway and took them hostage, but nearby security posts took no action," Kintoz claimed.

Lt. Col. Mohammad Rassoul Zazai, spokesman for the 215th Maiwand Military Corps, also said the militants in military uniformshad kidnapped the passengers.

Meanwhile, Taliban spokesman Qari Yousaf Ahmadi said the militants had seized suspected passengers from the three vehicles. He said investigation would be over soon and those found innocent would be freed.

The Taliban have recently stepped up mass kidnappings of passengers on highways. Hundreds of travellers faced similar situations in Kunduz and Takhar provinces in recent days. (Pajhwok)

(20) Road Blockades...

be improved by blocking roads and erecting barriers. Proper institutional measures and operational plans were needed to cope with the challenge, he argued.

A provincial council member, Mohammad Hassan Reza Yousafi, confirmed residents were facing problems due to the blast walls placed on roads. He urged the officials concerned should remove road barriers and avoid creating problems for the people.

However, the governor's spokesman, Javed Salangi, said roads had not been closed. "We don't block roads that create problems."

However, he acknowledged the placement of barriers on some routes to ease traffic congestion in the city. The governor's house will reopen the roads if their blockades have really created trouble for the masses. (Pajhwok)

(21) 224 Taliban...

they would be introduced to the authorities concerned, he said.

Sherzad, a resident of Herat City, said "We will believe in police claims when individuals carrying knives and pistols on the streets get punished as they harass people." Atiqullah, another resident of Herat City, said criminals were often released soon after their arrest. "Criminals should be punished to make the society crime-free." Police in Herat issued fresh statistics on arrested criminals at a time when crime ratio is on the increase in the province. (Pajhwok)

(22) Putin Urges...

already near our borders, which forces Russia to pay special attention to enhancing its defense capability, the Russian president said.

Relations between Russia and the West have reached their lowest level since the Cold War in the wake of the Crimea crisis in early 2014. On June 14, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced the deployment of four multinational battalions to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. (Xinhua)

(23) 19 Out of 22...

reduced availability of essential food commodities in the country, which imports some 90 percent of its staple

foods. Food and fuel imports in March 2016 were the lowest since October 2015. Fuel imports satisfied only 12 percent of the country's needs.

Shortages of seeds and fertilizers have crippled crop production across Yemen, where around 50 percent of the labour force earns their living from the agriculture sector and related activities.

Two cyclones in November 2015, plus flash floods and locust swarms in April 2016 further plagued already struggling communities, limiting their ability to produce and access food. (Xinhua)

(24) At Least 100...

According to officials, the injured were admitted at local hospitals.

In Uttar Pradesh, deaths were reported from Varanasi, Azamgarh, Basti and Gorakhpur. Reports said in Jharkhand, four persons from a single family were killed in lightning at Haldiatand in Chatra district.

"Four others injured in the incident have been admitted to ChatraSadar hospital," officials said.

Authorities in the affected states have intensified rescue measures and announced relief and compensation for the victims.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed deep anguish over the loss of lives in the country. (Xinhua)

(25) Turkey Says ...

Israeli commandos in 2010, killing nine Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American citizen onboard.

The strained relations between Turkey and Israel may soon recover however, with both parties likely to reach a deal on Sunday, according to local press.

Cavusoglu also discussed the upcoming Brexit vote during the press conference, stating that a possible exit of Britain may harm the European Union (EU) and that Turkey wants Britain to stay in the EU "under any circumstances. (Xinhua)

(26) South Sudan...

Ariane said: "all parties including SPLA, SPLA-IO and other local militia groups affiliated to both parties committed sexual violence during conflict."

Ariane said sexual violence was still a "new notion" in South Sudan despite officials trying to create awareness on it.

She added most cases were committed in the northern states of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile, which had been hit hard by the brutal conflict.

"Accountability is important. It's why we (UN) and other independent organizations are documenting human rights violations," she said. (Xinhua)

(27) EU Helps...

Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation and provides cooperation, assistance and continued training and tutoring to the regulatory body's staff. Vietnam is making preparations for building its first nuclear power plant with capacity of 4,000 MW in the central province of NinhThuan, which is scheduled to become operational by 2028. (Xinhua)

(28) Israeli PM...

Egyptian-led efforts to revive negotiations rather than the international approach pushed by France. On Monday, a forum of the European Union's foreign ministers voted in support of the French initiative, first suggested in January, which includes a plan to hold an international peace summit in Paris later this year. Earlier this month, representatives from 28 countries, as well as the European Union, the United Nations and the Arab League, met in Paris to lay the grounds for the planned French peace summit and discuss how to restart peace talks.

Netanyahu and Israeli officials charge the French initiative would "push peace further away" and let Palestinians "avoid direct negotiations" by setting preconditions. (Xinhua)

(29) Iran Arrests

group had schemed to carry out a series of bombings in different parts of the country, including in Tehran, on the occasions to come," state IRINN TV quoted the Intelligence Ministry as saying in a statement on Monday.

A Takfiri is a derogatory term referring to a Muslim who accuses another of apostasy. (Xinhua)

(30) Iraqi Forces...

battles in Zargah resulted in the death of 25 IS militants, including seven who were wearing explosive vests, and the destruction of two car bombs, whilst at least five security members were killed and 19 others wounded, added the source. Elsewhere, two HashdShaabi members were killed and three others wounded in a roadside bomb explosion near their patrol area in AlbuKhaddo in south of Tikrit, 170 km north of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, the source said. (Xinhua)