

## (1) President Ghani

who in the past has regularly called the Taliban "terrorists" and "rebels" although he has also offered to talk with parts of the movement that accepted peace.

The Taliban, fighting to restore Islamic rule after their 2001 ouster by U.S.-led troops, have offered to begin talks with the United States but have so far refused direct talks with Kabul. It was unclear whether they would be prepared to shift their stance, despite growing international pressure.

However Ghani, who recently helped launch the latest stage in a major regional gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, said the momentum for peace was building from neighbouring countries that increasingly saw the necessity of a stable Afghanistan.

"The Taliban show awareness of these contextual shifts and seem to be engaged in a debate on the implications of acts of violence for their future," he said.

### POLITICAL OFFICE

Ghani said a framework for peace negotiations should be created with the Taliban recognised as a legitimate group, with their own political office to handle negotiations in Kabul or another agreed location.

Taliban officials have acknowledged that they have faced pressure from friendly countries to accept talks and said their recent offers to talk to the United States reflected concern that they could be seen to be standing in the way of peace.

### Slideshow (6 Images)

Ghani said the process would be accompanied by coordinated diplomatic support including a global effort to persuade neighbouring Pakistan, which Kabul has regularly accused of aiding the Taliban, of the advantages of a stable Afghanistan.

He renewed an offer of talks with Pakistan, which rejects the accusations and points to the thousands of its citizens who have been killed by militant groups over the years.

In return for Ghani's offer, the Taliban would have to recognise the Afghan government and respect the rule of law, he said. (Reuters)

## (2) Uzbekistan, Afghanistan

Proposals were made for exchanging experience and organizing regular meetings at the level of representatives of the Ministry of Water Resources of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Energy and Water of Afghanistan. (Trend)

## (3) Taliban Abducts

He said among the hostages are policemen. He did not however give details on how many civilians or how many policemen were abducted.

Raziq said the policemen were captured after a clash with the Taliban.

A source from Kandahar police said the incident started when a group of Taliban wearing ANA uniforms attacked a police check post along the highway and killed five policemen and wounded four others. The Taliban then stopped the bus and pulled passengers off. The Taliban has not yet commented on the incident. (Tolo news)

## (4) Pakistan to

Terrorism through Knowledge'. The Afghan youths studying in Pakistan under the Allama Muhammad Iqbal scholarship programme offered by the government were present on the occasion.

The president declared them ambassadors of their country and called upon them to use education to defeat forces that fomented mistrust between the two countries. He said keeping in view of regional situation, Pakistan and Afghanistan as responsible nations, needed to take decisions for their peace.

"Pakistan and Afghanistan are linked by the spirit of mutual respect and love based on blood relations, regional proximity, shared values and religious beliefs. "Despite recognized borders, the affection on both sides was similar and mentioned the launch of higher education programme for Afghan youth, keeping in view the same association," he said. The president wished the students happiness and best of knowledge so that they could work for the progress, prosperity and stability of their country and region.

"It is our sincere desire that you serve your country in various fields after completing education so that the loss suffered by Afghanistan during the last few decades, could be compensated and you could also play your part in the well-being of the entire humanity," he said. (Monitoring Desk)

## (5) Italy Pledges

support to terrorist groups in the region and bilateral cooperation including Italy's fresh pledge 120 million Euros were discussed during the meeting, the statement said.

Peri has been heading her country's delegation in 2nd summit of Kabul Process which kicked off in Kabul today.

The Afghan foreign minister hailed Italy cooperation with Afghanistan being a friend country and appreciated the uplift projects conducted by Italy in Herat province. (Pajhwok)

## (6) US Trying

how to combat Islamist militants waging war in Afghanistan.

It has also heightened concerns that Pakistan is becoming internationally isolated, and that its economy could suffer if global banking

intuitions cut links with the nuclear-armed nation, or otherwise increase the cost of doing business with Pakistan.

Ismail, officially the adviser on finance, revenue and economic affairs to Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, led Pakistan's negotiations in Paris. He told Reuters that Washington did not seem genuinely eager to see Pakistan boost its terrorist financing regulations and was instead bent on humiliating the country.

"If the Americans were interested in working with us and improving our CTF (counter-terrorist financing) regulations, they would have taken the offer I was making them," Ismail said. "But their idea was just to embarrass Pakistan."

Diplomatic and Pakistani government sources say Pakistan fended off a US-led motion on Tuesday as Turkey, China and the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) countries objected to it. But in a break from tradition, the motion was brought up again on Thursday and passed as the GCC and China dropped their objections.

Ismail said that he urged the United States to allow Pakistan until June to fix any outstanding CTF issues and ceded ground in negotiations to strike a deal, but that the US was determined to see Pakistan suffer.

US officials say Pakistan remains weak on terrorist financing prosecutions and has not done enough to combat money-raising capabilities of Islamic charities controlled by Hafiz Saeed, whom the US has designated a terrorist. The officials blame Saeed for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which killed 166 people.

In the run up to the FATF meeting, Pakistan sought to gain favor by seizing control of parts of Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF) charities, which the United States terms "terrorist fronts" for militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Saeed, who founded LeT in 1980s, denies orchestrating the Mumbai attacks.

Diplomats have cast doubt on whether the takeovers are long-lasting, or simply a short-term move to appease FATF member states and ease pressure on Pakistan.

Ismail said Pakistan's law-enforcement shortcomings are often confused for lack of desire, especially at provincial level, where police officers are poorly trained when it comes to terrorist financing legislation.

"The will is there," he added.

Ismail ruled out Pakistan's retaliating against Washington over the FATF listing. He said the country would keep working to improve its CTF capabilities and win the confidence of Britain, Germany and France, who co-sponsored the US motion in Paris.

Pakistan hopes to be removed from the grey list in six to 12 months from June, when it will be officially placed on the watch list, Ismail added. Despite rising growth on the back of improving security and China's vast infrastructure investment, Pakistan's economy has come under renewed stress during the past year.

Its foreign currency reserves are shrinking and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned Pakistan's macroeconomic stability is weakening amid a ballooning current account deficit and a widening fiscal deficit.

Ismail said he did not foresee the FATF decision acting as a brake on Pakistan's economy, which, with growth above five percent, is expanding at its fastest pace in a decade.

"I would rather not be in the list, but I don't think it will hurt" economic growth, Ismail said, adding that ordinary Pakistanis would not see any impact from the FATF move.

He conceded, however, that being placed on the watch list did not help Pakistan's tarnished image abroad, and "doesn't help" with its efforts to attract more foreign direct investment, a major goal of the government.

But he urged foreign investors to look past the negative headlines, and pointed out that Pakistan's economic growth accelerated even during the period the country was last on the watch list. From 2015-2012, exports and foreign currency reserves expanded, while its stock market shot up by more than 200 percent, he said.

"We are focused on improving our economy and overcoming this little hiccup," he said. "We will continue on our path forward." (Reuters)

## (7) Technical Teams

connect Afghanistan to Europe in the closest way," MoCI spokesman Musafir Quqandi said.

Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) meanwhile said the Lapis Lazuli Route will connect Afghanistan to European markets which will then have a positive impact on Afghanistan's economy.

They asked government to do all it can to implement the agreement with the four nations. "In Afghanistan there are issues such as roads, security and electricity that should be considered for implementation of this project," ACCI financial deputy head Tawfiqullah Dawari said.

Economic experts also said the corridor will play a significant role in the growth of Afghanistan's economy.

"This corridor can decrease Afghanistan's transit problems and also increase Afghanistan's trade volume with Europe," economic affairs analyst Shoaib Rahimi said.

The Lapis Lazuli Route will start in Afghanistan's northern Aqina port in Faryab province and Torghandi in western Herat province and will run through to Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan.

From there it will cross the Caspian Sea and will

link the Azerbaijani capital Baku to Tbilisi and Georgia's Black Sea ports of Batumi and Poti.

It will then connect with Kars in eastern Turkey before linking to Istanbul and Europe.

The Lapis Lazuli Route agreement was finalized after three years of talks and was signed during the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA VII) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. (Tolo news)

## (8) Armed Forces

and security personnel performed a joint Attan (local dance). Government officials and tribal elders addressed the event as well.

Afghan Air Force dropped postcards on the participants of the event from the air which further increased to the participants' enthusiasm and emotions.

Governor Gulab Mangal said Nangarhar had been secured from high level threats posed by the rebels as result of the people and security forces sacrifices.

He said it was the right of armed forces that their sacrifices should be hailed and those mothers should be respected who offered their sons for defence of their land.

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ali Shujae, deputy commander of the 201st Selab Military Corps, assured that Afghan security forces would sacrifice their lives but not their trenches and would defend the mother land at the cost of their blood.

Police Chief Brig. Gen. Abdul Rahman Rahimi said the enemy was trying to hatch different kind of conspiracies to further deepen distance between security forces and the people.

Similar event was organised in Kandahar, in which security forces, government official and youth took part.

Gen. Imam Nazar Bahbod, commander of the 205th Atal Military Corps, said Afghan security forces had been engaged in the defence of the country with full commitment and bravery.

Governor Zalmi Weesa said security forces showed their bravery and suppressed the enemy properly.

Similar event was held in Lagman province as well. (Pajhwok)

## (9) US, India Assure

while the Indian team was headed by Joint Secretary Dr. Deepak Mittal.

At the outset, Karzai thanked both countries for their contribution in the areas important to Afghanistan and the region, according to a statement from the ministry.

Heads of US and Indian delegations hailed the initiatives taken by Afghanistan in important development areas, reiterating their full support for them. (Pajhwok)

## (10) Afghanistan

triumphs at the World T20 in 2012 and 2016.

After winning the toss and choosing to field first, West Indies appeared to have the contest in their pocket after reducing Afghanistan to 71 for 8 in 23 overs.

Without their captain, Asghar Stanikzai, who has been hospitalised with appendicitis, Afghanistan appeared rudderless as the left-arm seamer, Sheldon Cottrell, set the tone with two wickets in the first five overs of the match. But Afghanistan's spirit is redoubtable at the best of times, and when Samiullah Shenwari and Gulbadin Naib came together in a ninth-wicket stand of 91 in 11.5 overs, Afghanistan found themselves back in the contest.

With bad weather reducing the match to a -35 over affair, West Indies lost Gayle and Shai Hope early as they chased a revised total of 140, but Evin Lewis and Marlon Samuels appeared to have steadied the pursuit with a stand of 44, ESPN reported.

However, Sharafuddin Ashraf bagged Lewis and Jason Mohammed for a duck in the space of four balls to leave West Indies teetering on 80 for 4, and when Shapour Zadran added Samuels for 34 three overs later, the writing was on the wall.

Dawlat Zadran returned to rip through the tail with final figures of 4 for 26, which included a hat-trick that saw the end of Shimron Hetmyer. Captain Rashid Khan - the newly crowned No.1 bowler in ODI and T20I cricket - subsequently sniped out the final two West Indies wickets with his leg-spin. (Tolo news)

## (11) Voluntary Repatriation

of Registration (PoR) cards. Around 4.3 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan under the UNHCR-facilitated voluntary repatriation programme since 2002.

The Proof of Registration card allow Afghan refugees the right to temporary legal stay in Pakistan.

"Every Afghan refugee has the right to return to Afghanistan as long as his or her decision is well-informed and voluntary," said Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, UNHCR Representative in Pakistan, adding that UNHCR continues to advocate that the repatriation of Afghan refugees needs to be voluntary, safe, gradual and carried out in a dignified manner.

Ms. Menikdiwela said UNHCR acknowledged the people and government of Pakistan for hosting Afghan refugees for nearly four decades.

Ms. Menikdiwela called upon the international community to provide support to Afghan refugees and their host communities in Pakistan, as well as provide targeted development assistance in Afghanistan to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees to avoid further displacements.

UNHCR provides approximately USD200 to every registered individual upon their return to Afghanistan. Returnees receive the cash grant

at UNHCR encashment centres in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

## (12) 'Paan' Use Can

a dermatologist, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the use of "Paan" was responsible for 90 per cent of oral cancer.

Moreover, Paan causes infections in the jawbone, behind and under the lips, causing cancer tumors in this area, destruction of ovaries, laryngeal cancer, stomach ulcer, memory loss, transmission of infection diseases, environmental pollution and other small and big health issues, he added.

Dr. Sufi said the use of Paan among the youth mainly stemmed from psychological problems and other issues like poverty and economic problems.

Types of Paan and its use by youth

Nasrat Ramz, one of the shopkeepers in Kabul City who sell Paan, cigar and vegetables, said there are different kinds of Paans such as Paan 55, Paan 24, Paan 66 and Paan Kol. "These are different in taste and quality but their price is the same. These Paans are in fact Pakistani and Indian Naswar."

Syed Mahmood, one of the youth who chews Paan, said: "All of my friends used Paan, so I also tasted once but later I got addicted to it, now I cannot quit it."

When asked if he knew what diseases could Paan cause to him, he said he knew it was dangerous for health, but he did not believe it could cause cancer.

"This is manufactured in Afghanistan and one type called Paan Kol could cause cancer", he believed.

But Ahmad Barakzai, 20, another addicted youth, said the worst drawback of Paan use was the bad smell from mouth. He said he was aware of Paan's disadvantages as even necessary warnings had been mentioned on its packet. (Pajhwok)

## (13) Framework Deal

transmission line between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Once completed, the project will be able transfer up to 4,000 megawatts of power from Turkmenistan into Afghanistan and Pakistan. ADB, as an anchor development partner in the energy sectors of the three countries, would continue assisting in the preparation of analytical studies for systems stability, reliability and grid interconnection.

It will also assist in conducting studies for regulatory and legal, technical, commercial and systems dispatch; as well as project assessment, including project feasibility, technical design, and preparation.

ADB will also help coordinate project planning and the provision of financing; facilitate energy trade negotiations among the 3 countries; finalise an implementation roadmap; and finance the investment project. (Pajhwok)

## (14) Abdullah Closes

and their country, as well as government's national goal to restore a just, credible and durable peace after many years of conflict, displacement and destruction.

He said throughout the day, there had been a spirit of engagement among the delegates, who represented 25 countries and international organizations.

He said all speakers expressed their constructive views based on a realistic assessment of the situation in and around Afghanistan, as well as on global trends that call for effective measures to combat terrorism.

"This process is mutually complementary, and its success relies on developing a common stance to enable more effective approaches and policies."

He stated that the process was also multilateral because the Afghanistan case is not a purely domestic issue; nor is it a purely non-Afghanistan matter.

"However, it is up to the citizens of this country - regardless of affiliation - to agree and to come to terms with their disagreements, their dissatisfactions, their aspirations, and to form a common perspective that can be translated into a national vision."

He said: "At a talk in Geneva yesterday, I told an audience of practitioners that different explanations are given by different experts on the causes of the 40-year long Afghanistan conflict. Some say it's a function of geography; others point to the shifting tensions between contending geo-political and strategic interests, while others point to Afghanistan's relations to the State system."

"I am of the view that at varying degrees these causes have and continue to play a role. But one complicating factor is the use of violence and terror as a foreign and security policy weapon. It should no longer be tolerated," he said.

"That is why our challenge involves more than just opposite Afghanistan sides or just our countries in the neighborhood. It is within that context that today we are seeking new ways and means of reaching our stated objectives in a manner that can assure the kind of peace and security that is broadly supported, while it does not antagonize any legitimate stakeholder or their vital interests."

But he said, at the same time, Afghanistan can not ignore the reality that it has a -15-year-old covenant with the Afghanistan people that assures an Islamic Republic within the confines of a constitutional order, guaranteeing fundamental human and democratic rights, and a better life, while remaining mindful of cultural and traditional tendencies within society.

"The spirit of this covenant is solid, but the

path to peaceful and legitimate deliberation, amendment and change is also clearly stated under specific conditions," he said.

He went on to say that the other notion that is part of the Kabul Process theme is "cooperation".

"We have also learned over the years that political will precedes cooperation. How do we reach that stage is the question that needs to be answered by those who have lacked that resolve or acted as spoilers, if cooperation is to help us make headway."

He said international cooperation was critical as long as it was in accordance with laws and norms, including sovereign equality and non-interference.

"International cooperation can take on many forms and involve different actors. The United Nations and all relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council cannot be ignored, especially in regard to nation-state cooperation in the counter terrorism arena," he said.

In a message to neighboring countries, Abdullah said: "To our friends and neighbors in the region, we say: We have no option but to work together, share intelligence, coordinate and, when necessary, take action against terrorists regardless of their affiliation or motivations."

"We appreciate international condemnations when innocent lives are lost by wanton terrorism and violence. But condemnations are not enough. We also need to make better use of international law and humanitarian norms to prosecute and bring culprits - whoever they may be - to justice."

"On our side, we are committed to protecting and providing better security in cities, districts and villages, wherever our presence is possible and necessary."

"We agree that at the end of the day, we cannot achieve our security goals without having an inclusive political process in place. If we claim to have learned the hard lessons of the past, it should be clear that terrorist sanctuaries and infrastructures, wherever they may be, need to be on our radar screens."

In conclusion he said the Kabul Process aims to achieve several vital objectives: respect and defend the fundamental rights of our people, including women and children, while government provides a platform for the renunciation of violence and denunciation of international terrorism.

"The government's job is to manage this process through national, regional and international efforts," he said adding "we welcome your endorsement as we collectively take action to meet our objectives as soon as possible."

This comes after Ghani on Wednesday morning put an offer to the Taliban to join the peace process.

Ghani stated that if the Taliban comes to the negotiations table, government will allow them to open an office in the country, even Kabul if so desired, and declare them a political group. Other suggestions included issuing them with passports and possibly freeing Taliban prisoners.

Ghani also emphasized that government is ready to reconcile and make peace with the insurgent group. (Tolo news)

## (15) Rabbani to

immediate neighbors, our wider region, as well as our international partners," he said.

In his opening remarks, Rabbani said the delegates would focus on the Afghan government's vision for peace, regional and international support and the need for adopting a common counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics strategy.

Afghanistan was a multiethnic country, where an all-inclusive national settlement required the highest level of political integrity and altruistic leadership to help all communities see themselves as an integral part of the system.

He stressed the need for a system that provided equal socio-economic and political opportunities to all citizens. While the root-causes of conflict were external, any attempt to impose a system that preferred one community and ignored the rest would be detrimental to social cohesion, he warned.

In the lead-up to the meeting, the government and High Peace Council (HPC) engaged in nationwide consultations with political figures, civil society, the clergy, women and youth to bolster public support for a legitimate peace process.

"We renew our call on our neighbors and international partners to further strengthen our bilateral and multilateral counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics cooperation," the minister added.

He called the conference a significant opportunity for all to reinvigorate international consensus on joint efforts to defeat terrorist and criminal networks with no distinction.

"This can be achieved best when we adopt a common strategy to address these critical security challenges that confront our nations," Rabbani concluded. (Pajhwok)

## (16) Taliban don't

Nauert said, responding to a question on the letter.

"Ultimately, we don't see there being a military solution to the situation in Afghanistan. Ultimately, it has to be a political situation, a political solution," she added.

"And that can best be done, if the Taliban are willing to sit down and have talks. Certainly, the US government could have a role in that. But that's really up to Afghanistan," Nauert concluded. (Pajhwok)