

**(1) U.S. Tries to...**

officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They'll stop being a facilitator, they will stop the pressure they are applying" on the Taliban, one U.S. official said, recounting Pakistani warnings conveyed to Washington.

Pakistan has publicly denied any role in the suicide bombing. But the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant group claimed responsibility for it, and India has long accused Islamabad of supporting them.

The United States has likewise accused Pakistan of ties to Taliban militants who are fighting in neighbouring Afghanistan against American and U.S.-backed Afghan government forces.

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Reuters has previously reported, however, that U.S. officials have recently seen a positive shift in Pakistan's behaviour.

Pakistan, long at odds with the United States over the war in Afghanistan, has played a behind-the-scenes role in supporting U.S. peace talks with the Afghan Taliban, including by facilitating travel to negotiations.

Current and former U.S. officials caution that Islamabad could again choose to act as a spoiler.

"I don't believe that Pakistan has the capability to straight out make peace happen in Afghanistan, but they definitely have the capability to make peace not (happen)," said Laurel Miller, a former senior State Department official.

**MOVEMENT OF TROOPS**

In the past several days, India and Pakistan have appeared to dial down hostilities that brought the arch enemies to the brink of another war. But it's unclear whether the calm will hold.

A Pakistani official in Washington, speaking on the condition of anonymity, cautioned that unless the tensions were reduced, there was a "very strong likelihood" that Pakistani troops would be moved from the border with Afghanistan to reinforce positions near India.

Pakistan's U.N. Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi told Reuters that Islamabad's focus could completely shift to its eastern border with India.

"If the crisis with India continues, Pakistan will be obliged to keep our entire focus on our Eastern border. That may affect our efforts on our Western front," Lodhi said.

The Pakistani official in Washington said Pakistan had not been focused on Afghanistan since tensions with India increased last month, and it would have implications for peace talks.

Some current and former U.S. officials say Islamabad may be over-stating the risks of fallout on Afghan peace talks, which resumed over the weekend in Doha. Speaking on condition of anonymity, they noted that Islamabad has its own self-interests in mind as it seeks to influence the peace process in neighbouring Afghanistan.

But other U.S. officials acknowledge a major crisis involving India would be all-consuming for Islamabad, and say it's another reason why lowering tensions is so important.

In Afghanistan, which fears its country is being used as a proxy for tension between India and Pakistan, the foreign ministry summoned Pakistan's envoy to Kabul after he made similar warnings.

Veteran diplomats say that if the United States pushes Pakistan too hard on combating militants, Islamabad could diminish its support for the peace process.

Dan Feldman, a former U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said many of the Pakistani officials who dealt with India were also responsible for Afghanistan, and that tensions could impact peace talks.

He said a lack of U.S. focus on South Asia was problematic.

"We need much more focus and strategic thinking from the Trump Administration on this region, and an effective way of implementing that strategy," Feldman said. (Reuters)

**(2) NAI Welcomes...**

Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan considers that the provision of information in Afghanistan is at a poor state, any action and decision which facilitates the flow of information is appreciated but asks the government, in addition to existence of documents to access information, may work on practical steps to facilitate the process. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Martyred Soldiers...**

yet to be discharged."

A copy of this letter is dispatched to the Governor's House on 02/01/2017 and to the Urban Affairs Department on 05/08/2018.

The documents also reveal another letter to the incumbent Mayor of Qarghyio district Eng. Zymal Alkozai has written to the Urban Affairs Department.

This letter, a follow up to the previous letter, reads: "The plots demarcation process

has been delayed since 2014 and a follow letter is being sent to you in this regard so that action be taken."

Complains of the martyred NSDF families

The families of the martyred security personnel say they submitted 50,500 afghanis each with difficulties to the government for obtaining plots but none received them so far to build shelter for themselves.

Syed Nazem, father of martyred security personnel who was killed in a bomb blast in the Shajoy district of Zabol province five years back, said the money they submitted to the government was beyond their affordability.

Shah Mohammad, a resident of Kandol locality in Alishang district, said his nephew was killed in a gunfight with rebels. He said he relieved a plot's ownership document four years back, but not the plot so far.

The widow of a security personnel, also talked to Pajhwok reporter. She said her husband was serving at one of the check posts in Alishang district.

She said currently she lived in a house against rent in Mehtarlam and she had also submitted the required money for a plot four years ago.

Public, civil society activists hold authorities responsible

Senator Mer Hatam Tarakhel from Laghman province accused local officials in Laghman of having committed negligence in distribution of plots to the families of the martyred soldiers.

He said he had shared the issue with authorities concerned several times but they always neglected the issue.

Zahidullah Musazai, head of the Youth Council, said the issue had become 'old' as many governors and officials assured its resolution, but failed.

Officials explain their efforts and problems

Local authorities say not only the Farmankhel Township, but the townships for teachers and refugees in the Qarghaio district face the same fate.

Nasir Ahmad Himmat, the Qarghaio district chief, told Pajhwok that the governor's house had assured them of appointing a delegation to address problems plaguing the townships.

He confirmed parts of the Farmankhel Township had been grabbed by local people, which he called not the only problem.

Eng. Ziarmal Alokozay, mayor of Qarghaio district, said the Farmankhel Township was jointly designed by the Urban Development Department and the Qarghaio municipality and then the Ministry of Urban Development implemented it in 2016.

He said the township would be constructed on 1,500 acres of land, of which a two-thirds part had been distributed so far to the families of martyred soldiers and one part remained undecided.

"This township contains a total of 1,872 land plots of which 1,000 were formally distributed to martyred soldiers' families and each family submitted 50,500 afghanis to the municipality account," he added.

Alokozay said the land plots in the township were distributed to families of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP) and intelligence forces that lost their lives in line of duty and seven percent of the plots were allocated to people with disabilities.

He said ownership claims of the township plots by tribal people and negligence of the local administration regarding complaints were problems that impeded the plots' distribution.

The Laghman Urban Development Department also said they had committed no negligence in the land distribution and they were ready to start land distribution process as soon as the governor's house vacated the area.

Wafullah Eshaq, Laghman Urban Development Department director, confirmed the township faced some problems from tribesmen and said only the governor's house could deal with it.

But the Laghman governor's house said the land could not be distributed because those eligible for the plots should first register in a biometric system according to an order from the Presidential Palace.

Governor's spokesman, Asadullah Dawlatzai, said the biometric registration was aimed at preventing corruption and stopping individuals from taking multiple land plots under the same identity.

He said a delegation had been appointed to address the mentioned problems and the governor's house would find a solution after full assessment.

The issue of whether the money went to the government's treasures or personal pockets would be also investigated, Dawlatzai added.

Laghman is not the only province where families of martyred soldiers are faced with such issues, but these families in many other provinces of the country have received only ownership documents not the land plots.

The families of martyred soldiers also face

huge problems in obtaining death gratuity and are often obligated to give bribe.

Experts believe families would lose interest in sending their children to join security forces if the surviving family members are continued to face hardships.

Massoud Safi, one of the soldiers who lost limbs in the war, said people while seeing the situation of families who lost their members in the war, might rethink allowing their beloved ones to join security forces. (Pajhwok)

**(4) New Election...**

to bringing reforms to the election commissions.

Abdullah said emphasizing on holding presidential elections does not mean ignoring the peace process and that both peace and elections are the demand of Afghan people.

Abdullah said the new commissioners should announce the results of the parliamentary elections and that they should be prepared for the upcoming presidential elections - which have been scheduled for July 20.

This comes after President Ghani on Sunday by issuing four decrees announced the list of new members of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission as well as the heads of the secretariats of the two electoral bodies.

The commissioners were selected from amongst 81 candidates for whom 17 presidential candidates voted at a ceremony in Presidential Palace on Friday, March 1.

Based on President Ghani's decree, the new IEC members are:

- Sayed Esmatullah Mal, 36, who got nine votes out of 17 is from Balkh province. He has a master's degree in law.

- Mawlana Mohammad Abdullah, 36, who got nine votes, is from Panjsher province. He has a bachelor's degree in law from Kabul University.

- Awrang Zeb, 39, who got eight votes, is from Paktia province, has a bachelor's degree in agriculture.

- Mohammad Hanif Danishyar, 35, who got seven votes, is from Ghazni province. He has a bachelor's degree in sociology.

- Musafir Qoqandi, 36, who got eight votes, is from Faryab province and has a bachelor's degree in social sciences

- Hawa Alam Nuristani, 46, who got eight votes, is from Nuristan province. She has a bachelor's degree in law.

- Rahima Zarifi, who got six votes is from Ghazni province.

Habib-Ur-Rahman Nang was appointed as head of the secretariat of the Independent Election Commission, according to President Ghani's decree.

Based on President Ghani's decree, the new members of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission are:

- Mohammad Qasim Elyasi, 48, who got eight votes, is from Ghazni province. He has a PhD in philology.

- Zuhra Bayan Shinwari is from Parwan province and has a bachelor's degree in law.

- Din Mohammad Azimi, 44, who got six votes, is from Ghor province. He has a master's degree in criminology.

- Mohammad Yunus Toghra, 42, who got eight votes, is from Faryab province. He has a master's degree in administration.

- Sayed Qutbuddin Roidar, 39, who got seven votes, is from Paktia province and has a bachelor's degree in religious sciences.

Based on President Ghani's decree, Chaman Shah Etmedi is the new head of the secretariat of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission.

This comes after all commissioners from the two electoral commissions - the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (IECC) - were dismissed from their posts, including the two chiefs, after President Ashraf Ghani signed off on an amendment to the electoral law.

Ghani approved the amendment on February 20, which resulted in the instant dismissal of the commissioners - including IEC chief Abdul Badi Sayyad and IECC Aziz Azizullah Aryayee. (Tolo news)

**(5) Pakistan's...**

According to Reuters report, so far, four airports were opened on Friday and according to Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), curbs were expected to be removed on Tuesday.

"Some airports are open," its spokesman, Mustafa Baig, as quoted by Reuters, adding that airports in the capital of Islamabad, the southern port of Karachi, and the cities of Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Faisalabad were partly functional.

The report adds that the Pakistani official did say not why the reopening of airspace, originally scheduled for Monday, had been delayed.

The tensions between Pakistan and India worsened after last month New Delhi said that Indian air force jets carried out air strikes on militant camps inside Pakistan.

According to the New Delhi, 12 Indian fighters targeted a hideout of Jaish-e-Mo-

hammad group in Balakot area in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.

The Indian media reported that the Jaish-e-Mohammed group was involved in Pulwama attack on February 14 that killing 40 India's CRPF personnel. (Tolo news)

**(6) Govt Committed...**

Mr. Khan Jan Alokozay, Deputy Chairman of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Mr. Shir Baz Kaminzada, Chairman of Chamber of Industries and Mines, Ms. Manizha Wafeq, President of Afghan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry besides supporting coordination process with Ministry of Finance, addressed the traders and industrialists' problems and called for more government attention.

At the end, a coordination commitment letter between Ministry of Finance and private sector was signed. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Press Freedom...**

"This plan has two key points: first, it illustrates government's priorities in the next solar year," he said.

According to him, the plan is another step forward in strengthening access to information and coordination between government institutions and journalists. (Tolo news)

**(8) Afghan Youths...**

should be engaged in the process," said Ghulam Sakhi Horyan, head of a council of Herat students.

The young activists said a peace which is imposed by foreigners on Afghans is not acceptable. They said an acceptable peace is the one in which all Afghans are fully engaged.

"Women should not be sidelined in the peace process," said Qadriya Wahidi, a Herat resident. "There is a need for men and women's active engagement in the peace process."

"Taliban should come and join peace and talk with Afghans because they are our own compatriots and there is no need to fight between each other. They [Taliban] should stand by their people instead of standing against them," said Mahmoud, a Herat activist.

The remarks by Herat youths come at a time that many Afghans have recently raised their voices about peace through different gatherings, calling for preserving the achievements of the past 18 years in the peace process.

On Saturday, two gatherings of women were held on peace - one in Kabul and another in Jawzjan. Those who attended the gatherings said freedoms should not be sacrificed for peace.

The women activists said women should have an equal part in the peace process as men.

This comes as the US negotiators and the Taliban members are engaged in direct talks in Qatar for the fifth time since last September.

US chief negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad last week described his meetings with the Taliban members as "productive".

This time, the Taliban's delegation consults their discussions on peace with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Taliban's deputy leader and head of their Qatar office. Critics said Mullah Baradar's presence will give the group the chance to make decision on important matters while talking to US negotiators in Qatar. (Tolo news)

**(9) Kabul Loses...**

1975 for the establishment of Afghanistan's diplomatic mission in Jeddah.

However, its ownership also remains a mystery. MoHRA insists the land belongs to Afghanistan. But due to governmental negligence over past decades, control of the plots was lost.

Noorullah Ghafoori, an official at MoHRA, confirmed to Pajhwok Afghan News the land in Makkah had been included in Haramain Sharifain's development programme. However, the official explained, the Afghan government had not been compensated for the plots.

The plot in Jeddah had been handed over by King Faisal to Afghanistan for the establishment of a diplomatic mission. But a big question mark also hangs over this plot's ownership.

In order to find an answer to the question, Pajhwok contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' spokesman Sibghatullah Ahmadi several times, but he said the issue was not related to the ministry.

Ghafoori recalled: "Ahmad Shah Baba had bought 300,000 square metres of land - some 900 metres from Kaaba - 261 years ago in the solar year 1136.

"The land had been dedicated to the Afghan pilgrims but with the passage of time, the property was usurped and added to the Haramain Sharifain's development programme."

In the solar year 1350, former king Zahir Shah purchased land with two five-storey buildings, 400 meters from Haramain Sharifain, in Zawqul Hamza village to facilitate Afghan pilgrims. The property was called Rabat NaderShahi.

According to him, the property of Afghanistan was demolished in 1374 and included in the development programme but its legal status was yet to be accurately determined.

"President Ashraf Ghani, during his recent trip to Saudi Arabia, took up the issue with his hosts. The Saudis promised him an investigation into the matter at the earliest possible," Ghafoori informed.

He said a joint delegation, including representatives from justice, foreign and hajj ministers, wanted to travel to the oil-rich kingdom to investigate the issue but the Afghan ambassador to Saudi Arabia opposed the move.

"The Afghan envoy in Saudi Arabia told us that he had shared the issue with the officials concerned and they had sought some time," he added.

During the government of Hamid Karzai, Mohammad Yousuf Niazi, minister of hajj, had appointed an attorney in Saudi Arabia, assured that no decision had been taken on the acquisition of land,

Pajhwok repeatedly tried to contact the Saudi Arabian embassy in Kabul on the issue, but failed. (Pajhwok)

**(10) 60pc of Rehabilitation...**

Amir Amanullah Khan to Zahir Shah - fully used the facility.

He added when former rulers of Afghanistan used to visit Jalalabad during the winter season, they stayed at Seraj-ul-Emarat in the afternoon.

The Nangarhar Shahi Manai (Kingdom Palace), now the known as the Governor's House, is among the historic buildings in the province. (Pajhwok)

**(11) Taliban Commanders...**

Three other militants were wounded, Yurish added.

He said no casualties were reported among security forces.

Taliban has not commented on the report. (Tolo news)

**(12) 5 Taliban Militants...**

designated district governor for Yafal Payan district, was among the detainees, who wanted to receive military training in northern Kunduz province.

The Taliban have not yet commented about the arrest of their comrades. (Pajhwok)

**(13) Seoul Calls...**

breakdown of the Trump-Kim talks in Vietnam raised further doubts about Moon's claim that Kim is genuinely interested in dealing away his nuclear weapons and about Moon's role as mediator.

"We hope that both countries will continue their dialogue and that their leaders meet again quickly to reach an agreement that was held off this time," Moon said at Monday's meeting, which was also attended by the prime minister, spy chief and ministers of defense and inter-Korean affairs. (AP)

**(14) U.S. Returns Higher...**

linked to that of the United States," Sondland added. "And this level of engagement and cooperation should be recognized appropriately in all settings."

The downgrade had meant that the bloc's Washington-based diplomats were less likely to be invited to high-profile events and had lower importance than under Barack Obama.

"We are pleased that the U.S. took the decision to revert to the usual practice," said a spokeswoman for the European Commission, the EU's executive. (Reuters)

**(15) Venezuelan Opposition...**

flight from the Colombian capital Bogota to Caracas is the most likely route.

However, it is possible that he plans to slip across the border with Colombia in the same way he left Venezuela, claiming on that occasion that he had help from Maduro's military.

Guido held talks in Salinas - a coastal resort town west of Guayaquil - on Saturday with President Lenin Moreno, and met with Venezuelan refugees.

On Sunday around noon he flew out of Salinas without revealing his destination. (AFP)

**(16) Pope: Vatican...**

Francis indicated he, too, embraced that interpretation.

Pius' actions will be scrutinized as part of efforts underway to decide if he should be declared a saint. Francis indicated that the church was confident that the papacy would withstand the findings by historians' studying the archives, saying Pius was "criticized, one can say, with some prejudice and exaggeration."

In Jerusalem, the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial commended the decision and expressed the expectation that "researchers will be granted full access to all the documents stored in the archives."

It noted that it had for years called for the opening of the archives, saying that will "enable objective and open research as well as comprehensive discourse on issues related to the conduct of the Vatican in particular, and the Catholic church in general, during the Holocaust." (AP)