

(1) Peace Needs...

But the talks are not completed yet. The talks will continue until we reach a conclusion."

Shaheen remarked: "The only solution is through peaceful diplomatic means. An agreement through peaceful means would be better for both sides..."

The US was trying to "find pockets" where there was "sufficient agreement" that everyone could begin to move forward, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in Iowa on Monday.

"I have a team on the ground right now trying to negotiate with the Taliban terrorists in Afghanistan, trying to find a way to achieve an Afghanistan that's not at war, that's not engaged in violence, that doesn't present a threat to the US..." (Pajhwok)

(2) President Pledges to...

women delegation, Asma Sahar welcomed the president and his team to Kunar and shared the problems being faced by the women and their demands in the areas of hiring in government institutions, implementation of national schemes, women activities, participation of women in peace process, creation of health centres, increase in the number of health workers, creation of parks and entertainment.

The president hailed the efforts of women in convening the Women Jirga in which Kunar women also participated and said two years back there was no mention of peace and today there is basic and national discussion going on regarding peace and reconciliation.

"In the Consultative Peace Jirga which would be held soon representatives from every district would take part special women," he said.

Ghani promised to pay attention to the problems faced by women in Kunar and added the government would invest on the resources of the mountainous province which is water and natural resources.

He issued directives to the governor to increase women participation in government institutions.

Separately, the president held a meeting with the provincial council members of Kunar.

The local representatives shared their demands with the president and informed him regarding the challenges and issues being faced by the people.

They asked the president to pay attention to the security issues in the bordering district, address the problems of refugees and displaced persons.

In addition, the local representative talked about the protection of forest, prevention of illegal demining, construction of water canals and promotion of Kunar from third rank province to second.

The president pledged to bring improvement in the security situation and added the demining law had been amended and natural reservoirs would be excavated legally and professionally in the future. He said steps were being taken to protect forests in Kunar.

The president also directed the head of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) to consider the promotion of Kunar province from third rank province to second. (Pajhwok)

(3) 7,246 cases of...

and some others were in their final phases.

According to him, around 1100 cases were decided in Kabul courts, 412 cases in Herat, around 300 in Balkh and the rest in others provinces. (Pajhwok)

(4) USAID Improves...

Mazar-e-Sharif to raise awareness about agricultural credit.

"This is a critical program in giving women the financial means to provide for their families, as well as the educational skills to understand how credit works and why it is crucial to their success," said USAID Mission Director Peter Natiello. "We will continue to support women entrepreneurs in agriculture and provide women with the tools to improve their lives."

The event brought together a number of top microfinance institutions in Afghanistan and financial experts to share their experiences with the women. About 80 participants learned about women's economic rights, the types of credit available—traditional and Islamic—and how credit can help

grow their businesses. They also discussed challenges that women face in accessing credit.

USAID focuses on wheat, high-value crops such as grapes and melons, and livestock. USAID helps producers, associations, traders, and agribusinesses to respond to market demand and help create market links between farmers and small, medium, and large businesses that allow the private sector to grow.

USAID's agriculture projects operate throughout the country, with project offices in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, and Kandahar. USAID supports sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, in line with Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock's National Comprehensive Agricultural Development Priority Program. USAID's programs contribute significantly towards economic growth and employment in Afghanistan.

With almost \$17 billion spent on development programs in Afghanistan since 2002, USAID provides the largest bilateral civilian assistance program to Afghanistan. USAID partners with the Government and people of Afghanistan to ensure economic growth led by the country's private sector, to establish a democratic and capable state governed by the rule of law, and to provide basic health and education services for all Afghans. (PR)

(5) Chinese Embassy...

exhibited in the Chinese embassy, said that she aimed to portray a positive image of women in Afghanistan.

(DOA)

(6) FMIC Marks the...

the civil society members to celebrate their achievements.

Minister of Public Health, Dr Feroz said, It is very important to not only have up-to-date technical knowledge and excellent skills but it is equally important to also have professional and personal values and be true to them." Mr Dave Metcalf, Ambassador of Canada to Afghanistan, Mrs Nurjehan Mawani, AKDN's Diplomatic Representative in Afghanistan and Mr Lee Hilling, Chairman of the FMIC Board shared their remarks and congratulated the graduating doctors and their families for their tireless efforts and support in making the programme such a great success.

The healthcare provision in Afghanistan is in a critical need for specialist doctors. FMIC initiated its PGME programme in partnership with the Aga Khan University in April 2012 with support from the Government of Canada as a way of building and strengthening the capacities of national health professionals. The PGME programme is focused to improve access to specialized health care for women, newborn and children. The initial funding was provided by the Government of Canada through improving Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) grant continued by the Health Action Plan for Afghanistan (HAPA) grant, supported by Government of Canada, Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada and Afghanistan. The programme is accredited by Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health and is offered in seven disciplines – paediatric surgery, paediatric medicine, anaesthesiology, cardiology, orthopaedics, pathology and radiology. As of March 2018, 32 specialist doctors have graduated and 46 doctors in seven disciplines are in various stages of completing their trainings. By 2019 and 2020, programmes in cardiothoracic surgery and obstetrics and gynaecology are planned to be added. (PR)

(7) UK Forces May be...

and Al-Qaeda fighters.

"The British Army's SAS and the Royal Navy's SBS are expected to be part of the mission," The Independent quoted unnamed US and Western military officials as saying. The Pentagon has acknowledged considering all options on force dispositions. However, it says no decision has been taken on the issue so far. (Pajhwok)

(8) Govt Challenges...

violating the Constitution and mak-

ing appointments based on ethnicity, language and tribe, something against the constitution that guaranteed equal rights and opportunities to all Afghans.

Article 22 of the Constitution says: "Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, men and women, have equal rights and duties before the law."

Nabil, while referring to the governments of Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Hamid Karzai, said both leaders had lost opportunities which might be resulted in economic development, political stability, social welfare and cultural development.

"During Karzai's tenure, the conditions were different as everything had to be started from zero due to destructions in the civil war that followed a dark Taliban regime."

He said the post-Taliban era offered a golden opportunity to strengthen democratic institutions but it faced some challenges.

He said the achievements of the incumbent government could not be ignored, but challenges remained more than achievements.

He vowed to strengthen the system, security forces, fight against the fifth column within the government, if he managed to win the election.

He also promised to narrow the gap between mosque and Presidential Palace and lead the peace process in a different manner so people believe the process was in the hands of Afghan government.

Peace Process:

About the ongoing peace process, Nabil said if elected to the Presidential Palace he would dissolve the High Peace Council (HPC) and other institutions which have nothing to do with the peace process.

He stressed the Afghan government was the only side that could talk to the opposition and lead the peace process. He said a government delegation comprised of powerful individuals from and outside the government would be formed to lead the peace process in consultation with the Parliament.

About possible amendments to the Constitution as part of the peace process, he said such steps would not harm the rights and freedom of women in the country.

Referring to the notion that fighting and talking was not under the authority of Afghanistan, he said: "In peace talks, the sacrifices, achievements of the past 18 years and redlines of Afghanistan should not be ignored and we would look at peace as a long-term strategic goal for Afghanistan and would strive for peace with different approach."

He termed a political and national consensus as vital for peace process and said: "No one has the right to name himself as the leader of peace efforts under ethnicity, language and party titles."

Internal and Foreign Policies:

About internal policies formulated on the basis of internal situation, he said the implementation of law on every person would be his priority to maintain the law and order situation.

Nabil said special strategies and changes in the law were needed to deal with terrorism and organized crimes. He hit out at the government, saying there was no unilateral policy to deal with neighbours and a tactical approach was adopted, for which the people of Afghanistan paid price.

About his team's foreign policy, Nabil said: "No hidden interest would be considered by his government in neighbouring countries and he would stand against covert interest of neighbouring countries."

He said Afghanistan should become a point of transaction and communication between neighbouring countries, not a place of confrontation.

He pledged to stop interferences of foreign countries in the election process and other important national issues in line with the laws and international norms and conventions.

CEO and premiership posts

Rahmatullah Nabil said no CEO post existed in his electoral ticket yet, but it could be possibly added by amending the Constitution through a Loya Jirga

(Grand Council).

He said centralization of power should be changed and authorities devolved as well as the nation should be given representation in important national issues. "But for now, any steps in this regard are premature and against the law."

"Considering problems of the past 18 years, it is essential to bring reforms to the system and other areas. Before discussing these issues, we should increase the authorities of deputies and governors and should elect mayors through a ballot," he said.

Nabil stressed any changes in the structure of the system should pass through the Constitution, a Loya Jirga and public views.

Amendments to the Constitution

Rahmatullah Nabil insisted on amendments to the Constitution and said he would create a commission for providing suggestions on bringing changes to the Constitution just one week after winning the elections.

He said one of his suggestions before a Loya Jirga would be inclusion of premiership and third vice-president posts and these changes were the authority of the Loya Jirga.

He said his other suggestions included creation of a court to keep implement the amendment package and review other laws about their compatibility with the Constitution and interpretation of law. He said more authorities to governors and local administration and choosing mayors based on votes would be his other suggestions before a Loya Jirga.

Coalition with other presidential candidates

Nabil rejected rumors he was joining forces with other presidential candidates and said such statements were just propaganda.

"Our thoughts, programs and message are different from other presidential candidates, therefore I would not join any other candidate and will run independently," he said.

He said Afghans had the ability and should go for development and acceptance and get free from the ongoing situation.

Foreigners' role in choosing leaders of Afghanistan

Rahmatullah Nabil rejected donor countries, particularly America, had any role in determining leaders of Afghanistan and said, "We should go out of mental captivity and should not link everything to foreigners, we want to have strategic relations with the US, but I do not think they have a role in determination of Afghan president."

He said Afghanistan had been on the verge of a critical crisis in 2014 and the US intervened to create the national unity government for prevention of the political crisis.

"In 2014 elections, it was possible Dr. Abdullah Abdullah could have been declared as president by his supporters, also backed by Hamid Karzai while Dr. Ashraf Ghani was announced president-elect by the Independent Election Commission (IEC). This situation could have weakened the morale of security forces and put the country in danger if the situation would not have been controlled within 48 hours," he said.

Nabil said no foreign countries and their embassies would be allowed to interfere in internal and political affairs of Afghanistan.

Withdrawal of foreign troops

About possible withdrawal of foreign troops, Nabil said if the US left in a hurry without thinking about proxy wars and outside interference in the war-torn country, it did not mean the Afghan people could not defend their homeland and indeed they could defend.

He said the Afghanistan people suffered due to neighboring countries' interference and the US should not leave Afghanistan and should not to stop its assistance as well.

Nabil called on the US to leave behind a good legacy in Afghanistan and in the region, otherwise the Afghans would have pay the price because terrorist groups supported by Pakistan beat Russia in the past and now they wanted to defeat the US. "If this issue is overlooked, Pakistan will use terrorism as a tool not only against Afghani-

stan but against other countries in the region as well."

Reforms in the Electoral Commissions About electoral reforms, Nabil said changing faces in the electoral commissions would not help but a political will, transparent polls and reforms in the electoral law could.

"The previous commissioners were also academics and civil society activists, but because the system was not correct, they could not hold an election to be acceptable to all the people of Afghanistan and there were problems in the selection of new commissioners."

He said there were professional figures among those nominated for the commissioners, but the presidential candidates chose weak ones introduced by political parties.

He said the presidential candidates, who voted to select the commissioners, were yet to be approved by the IEC to enter electoral campaign.

Concerned about electoral engineering Nabil said: "We are concerned about electoral engineering by the president and some other candidates."

He called on the president, presidential candidates, politicians, electoral commissioners and other electoral partners to take lessons from the 2014 elections and support transparent elections and prevent interference. .

He urged the sitting president, presidential candidates, politicians, members of the electoral bodies and others to learn from the 2014 presidential and 2018 Wolesi Jirga elections and support a transparent upcoming presidential election in the country.

"If this time the election moves to the wrong side, it would not only a failure of the democracy but would push the country into a political crisis."

At the end, he urged the new election commissioners to put aside their differences and work for the people of Afghanistan and per the Constitution. (Pajhwok)

(9) In Kandahar...

Gul Mohammad, who has set up a carpet-weaving network inside his residence with support from the Rural Development Department, enjoys life after starting the business.

He also demands markets for carpets at home and abroad to lift poor women out of poverty by offering them gainful work in the industry. Officials from the department concerned visit his unit every week.

Apart from women, men who were formerly drug addicts are also involved in making rugs after rehabilitation. Gul Mohammad, one of them, says he had sought shelter in drugs due to unemployment and poverty.

Ingila Wolesyar, a Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department official, acknowledges significant progress has been made by the carpet industry in Kandahar.

She says MRRD has distributed carpet-weaving tools and equipment to 250 families to boost the rural economy. As many as 1,950 individuals have been provided with job opportunities.

About 280 metres of carpet was woven last year in Kandahar and the process continues, she adds.

Mohammad Naseem Ayubi, rural rehabilitation and development director, says they are trying to develop the industry and promote the rural economy. Hundreds of women and men are making carpets in their homes.

One metre of hand-woven carpet costs up to \$150 in the country and \$250 in international markets. (Pajhwok)

(10) Flash Floods...

said the damage and casualty estimates could rise as some provinces had still to conduct assessments.

"We have reports that 59 were killed 143 people were injured and many are still missing," Bahaduri said.

The floods had left many people desperate for shelter, food and clothing, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a statement late on Tuesday. The heavy rains could benefit farmers at least, as many were unable to plant crops last year due to a severe drought. (Reuters)

(11) Pakistan...

same page on the issue of bringing peace to Afghanistan, the diplomat claimed, calling for an early end to the conflict. (Pajhwok)