

(1) No Compromise...

emphasizing peace was unachievable through war. "We do not want a peace that will cost the lives of our people."

He declared that a regional perspective had been created for Afghanistan's peace, which, he insisted, was a hope for Afghanistan's peace.

"The environment has changed in the region and Islamic countries, and this change has brought us hope. But one thing we should keep in our minds is that reaching peace needs tactics, therefore we have held consultative meetings in this regard and we will continue that."

Ghani stated that over 450 religious scholars from more than 117 countries gathered few days ago in Saudi Arabia where they discussed the factors behind terrorism and extremism and the misuse of Islam.

However, the speaker of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the Parliament) emphasized on the transparent and unhidden talks with the Taliban.

"These days, optimistic messages about peace talks are coming from political gatherings, but because of increased insecurity and insurgency in the country, the issue is uncertain," Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said.

Ghani, however, kept insisting on achieving peace through dialogues, saying peace was his target through peaceful ways.

"This target cannot be achieved by shedding the blood of our innocent citizens," he said, warning that if the process does not start, those who ignored the sacrifices made by the people of Afghanistan would be responsible for the consequences. (Tolonews)

(2) Afghan and ...

"Interactive session between British High Commission Delegation at PAJCCI Secretariat" in Karachi, Pakistan, Junaid Esmail Makda, Director of the PAJCCI elaborated on the importance of bilateral trades saying that "the business communities across the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan are keen to strengthen bilateral trade and promote documented economy; therefore it is imperative to encourage genuine businessmen and formal economy which would help increase in GDP and tax collection."

British delegates were keen to express their appreciation of this initiative by the PAJCCI for holding such forums whereby the presence of representatives from Afghan Ministry of Commerce, Afghan Consulate, and other relevant customs officials and stakeholders allow a discussion to resolve all the obstacles that sometimes prevent both bilateral trade and transit trade among Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. (Wadsam)

(3) Etisalat Group...

and it can be served smartly, where needed," he said. "But providing universal access to broadband poses a challenge for telcos because network investments not only have long pay-back periods and capex on infrastructure today yields diminishing returns."

Mr. Julfar said that "new investment models based on semi-public funding from governments or infrastructure-sharing models defined by regulators are urgently needed and should be encouraged."

Sharing his views on 'connecting billions across the developing world', Mr. Julfar said: "The benefits of increasing connectivity are clear to see in economic, social and environmental fields, but there is a clear digital gap. Some 60 per cent of the world's population remains unconnected, the majority of which is in rural areas of the developing world."

By 2020, approximately 3.8 billion men and women, or half of the world's population will be connected to the internet via mobile and a vast majority of the new users will be in developing countries. "Telecommunications revolutionises everything we do; it is the industry that changes all other industries. Governments know it. That's why, over the past 10 years, more than 150 governments have developed or are developing national broadband networks. The primary goal is to make the country benefit from the economic impact of broadband. And we share a common interest to keep investing in the future internet."

Mr. Julfar proposed a number of changes the telecommunications ecosystem - Governments, Regu-

lators, Internet companies and NGOs - should embrace. These include: new competitive models to allow telcos to focus on market value creation through collaboration between private and public sectors to distribute more choice, affordability and welfare to citizens.

Mr. Julfar added: "Some of the most innovative models today come from emerging countries. Etisalat Group takes a different approach in various developing countries that it operates in, and not one size fits all. Our ability to be flexible to meet individual market need drives our growth across the region. This flexible approach has enabled Etisalat Group to extend service provision for millions of people."

Etisalat Group today encompasses 19 countries across two continents, and includes dynamic emerging markets across the Middle East, Asia and Africa serving over 182 million subscribers.

Mr. Julfar was joined on the panel by HM Queen Maxima of the Netherlands, United Nations Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development; Mr. Jon Fredrik Baksaas, Chairman, GSMA and President and CEO, Telenor Group, and Ms. Ann Cairns, President, International Markets, MasterCard. (PR)

(4) IEC Deputy...

Abdullah Abdullah that promised electoral reform as a condition of forming the national unity government. "Therefore, the agreement is impractical [...] the formation of commissions over other national commissions that were formed within the framework of law has no legitimacy," he added

Pressure has mounted on the national unity government since the new year to pursue electoral reform before the upcoming parliamentary elections. Demands for reform are grounded in the commitments made in the agreement that brought Ghani and Abdullah together in the wake of the presidential election, yet that agreement itself was motivated by the controversy that emerged around allegations as well as evidence of sweeping fraud conducted by election officials. Earlier this week, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) reported that there would be investigations into 15,000 temporary employees and 20 permanent employees of the IEC.

Nevertheless, Hotaki seemed to scoff at the possibility that crimes were committed by members of the IEC. "When there is no crime and you insist on bringing changes, what logic are you going to present?" he asked TOLONews on Friday. "This means you are violating the law," he added.

On the other hand, IEC Commissioner Sareer Ahmad Barmak, in a recent interview with TOLONews, contended that holding parliamentary elections this year under the supervision of the current IEC leadership would be catastrophic. "When the organizer shows deficiency in the election process or the election slips into crisis, then the issue remains unresolved, and, naturally, your next move is a move toward the same crisis, our perspective of reform is in general the same thing," Mr. Barmak said. Just a few weeks ago, the European Union's (EU) top representative in Afghanistan also warned against holding the elections without enacting reform within the IEC. The EU stressed that corruption and incompetence among election officials it was led to the 2014 presidential election crisis. (Tolonews)

(5) Airport...

and Transport. Munawar said the asphaltting of the only overhead bridge also remained incomplete and asked the Ministry of Finance to provide them more budget in order to resume construction works on the projects.

Nimroz airport manager Hidayatullah Yaqoubi said the airport was in bad condition and only helicopters could land at the airport, not planes.

The public works director said a 100-bed hospital also remained incomplete and only 20 percent of it had been built. (Pajhwok)

(6) TJCG Pushes...

to publish its report on war criminals and violators of human rights in Afghanistan. "The report, 'Drawing the dispute', was contained by the Karzai administration and now it is being contained by the human rights commission," TJCG member Abdul Basir Faizi said. The TJCG has criticized the AIHRC

and the Afghan government for not being more transparent about the report. "With the publication of the report, all hidden facts would be disclosed and those involved in violations of human rights and war crimes and work in high level government levels would be exposed, therefore the government should publish the report," another TJCG member named Abdullah Ahmadi said.

The social justice watchdog also touched on upcoming negotiations with the Taliban. "We are quite concerned about the transparency of the talks and the government shouldn't ignore the crimes committed by the Taliban," another member of TJCG named Wadood Pedram said.

Meanwhile, Balkh Acting Governor Atta Mohammad Noor, who was named in the HRW report as a human rights violator, has warned that he will file a complaint against the HRW report to the United Nations. "The report is totally political and neutrality hasn't been considered in it, there are some hands behind the report published by the Human Rights Watch," Noor's spokesman Munir Ahmad Farhad said.

The HRW report named eight Afghan strongmen who have allegedly been involved in human rights abuses, drug smuggling, kidnapping and hostage taking. HRW asserted that the Hamid Karzai administration failed to ensure prosecution of violators of human rights and called on the national unity government to turn over a new leaf. (Tolonews)

(7) Abducted Pas...

underway to free the abducted passengers has now stopped due to weather, according to military officials.

The MPs added that during the operation, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) described the enemies as affiliates of Daesh and not Afghans because they "were speaking in foreign

There is no news on the location and condition of the 30 Hazaras who have, possibly, been relocated elsewhere in Zabul. (Tolonews)

(8) Taliban Reject ...

gunmen reportedly stopped the buses in Shah Joy District of Zabul province and separated the 30 passengers and kidnapped them. The kidnapers have reportedly taken the passengers from Shah Joy District to Khak-i-Afghan District of Zabul province where a large scale military operation has begun to release them.

According to the officials, over 100 members of the group responsible for the kidnapping have been killed so far in the operation. But no official statement has come forward to state whether the military has found the where about of the passengers.

Before, the military operation kicked off last week, local elders also tried to negotiate the release but their efforts also did not give any result. Ata Jan Haqbayan, chief of the provincial council of Zabul who was part of the group of the local elders formed for releasing the 30 kidnapped passengers said he believed the kidnapers belong to the Islamic State (IS). (KP)

(9) 'Media to...

, he said, adding that in the past there were several channels claiming to be speaking on behalf of MoI.

He said that government was committed to ensure that media had access to information under established laws. (Pajhwok)

(10) President Ashraf...

be formed soon in order to create a transparent and trustworthy environment for the next elections.

"The electoral reform commission will be established soon to work on short, medium and long-term reforms in order to create a reliable environment in respect to the elections," Ghani said.

Touching on the issue of corruption, he promised to continue his fight against the phenomenon that caused the country to be known as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

"We have strived against the corruption and will continue to it. As decided in all three branches of courts, the Kabul Bank debtors need to pay off their debts or the court verdict will be enforced." In addition, he emphasized that during the past six months he focused most of his time on security plans. Moreover, he promised to introduce the remaining members of the

cabinet to Parliament in the near future, something that has been delayed for almost six months.

Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, the speaker of the House of Representatives, also stressed the need for reforms in the election system of the country.

"The presidential election has brought us to bring an electoral reform," Ibrahim said, emphasizing the coming parliamentary election must be held timely and in accordance to the Constitution.

The approval of laws on election, higher education, and violence against women are said to be among the main tasks of Parliament in its final year. (Tolonews)

(11) 268 Lives...

Punisher, Badakhshan, Parwan, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Laghman, Daikundi and Bamyan were hit with severe weather causing casualties and injuries.

NDMA officials stated that a number of Panjshir villages are still surrounded by snow, while other villages may face another avalanche and/or flood.

"The exact number of villages still covered in snow is unclear," Deputy Chief of NDMA Mohammad Aslam Sayas said. "What is important is that rescue teams are trying to open the routes to these affected areas so that aid and food can be transferred. Right now, aid is being transferred by air."

Meanwhile, President Ashraf Ghani emphasized on increasing the capacity of organizations who respond to natural tragedies, during his speech at Parliament on Saturday.

"The recent avalanche in Punisher is a tragedy on an international level," Ghani said. "This just goes to show that the climate is changing and we must build our capacity in responding to such incidents efficiently and effectively in order to prevent casualties."

As the climate changes in Afghanistan, the organizations responsible for quick and efficient response to natural disasters have not improved their abilities and capabilities of reaching and aiding the Afghans affected. (Tolonews)

(12) Concerns Raise...

the evening as truck weighing stations are closed, making way for a smooth transport without paying the transit tax.

"There are six police check points on the highway and the police just take money from the drivers and allow them to continue smuggling," Abdul Manan, a tribal elder, said.

District Governor of Dara-e-Sof, Ahmad Ali Hassani, said the issue has been raised several times to security officials to prevent further smuggling, but no action has been taken.

"I have written dozens of letters and appeals to the governor and security agencies to stop the smuggling and embezzlement, but unfortunately measurements have not been taken so far," Hassani said. "They [smugglers] pay the tax once and show the same receipt several times, escaping the tax."

The increase in smuggling has led several drivers to park their trucks and not transfer any goods.

"Because of the coal mafia, we have parked our trucks for the past month," driver Mohammad said. "This smuggling situation is massive. Local officials all have a hand in this."

Rejecting the claims of smuggling and embezzlement, Director of Dara-e-Sof, engineer Abdul Ghani Mansour said that the "capacity" to smuggle does not exist.

"I'm sure there is no smuggling," Mansour began. "We have a low number of drivers who transfer the coal. This is all in our control. We are overlooking the process." The coal mines of Dara-e-Sof mine contributes to one billion Afghanis annually, roughly \$173 million. (Tolonews)

(13) Female ALP...

quit battling as long as the Taliban existed in their area.

Mullahkhail confirmed that the control of whole village was taken from the Taliban after three days of fierce battle, leaving 26 Taliban insurgents dead including four commanders.

"The bodies of four Taliban commanders are lying on the ground along with their weapons," Mullahkhail said, adding 24 insurgents were injured in the fighting.

The police forces who took part in the operation after fighting in Sangin district said they were helped by the Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers after being surrounded for three days.

"We resisted and finally suppressed them," a police soldier said.

The Zulfikar operation was launched three weeks ago in Sangin and other northern parts of Helmand which was then expanded to the southern parts, clearing several villages from militants.

Sangin is one of the most insecure districts of Helmand which is also a major route for narcotics and drug trade, providing funding for insurgency. (Tolonews)

(14) Increasing Blasts...

and injured all the police," he said. He said mostly security personnel and government officials fell prey to such blasts, but the casualties had a psychological effect on people and their daily activities.

A shopkeeper, Muhammad Rahim, who experienced a blast in front of his shop last week, said "I still remember the irritant, loud blast and feel concerned all the time."

But a police officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said many bomb blasts had been prevented in Khost City despite the increase in them.

Khost police chief Brig. Gen Faizullah Ghairat also confirmed the issue and said they had put in place all required measures to prevent terrorist incidents.

"As a custodian of law, I assure Khost residents of their security at all cost," he vowed. (Pajhwok)

(15) Sabzak Tunnel...

snowfall has also once again halted efforts at reopening the strategic Salang highway, which was closed a week ago due to heavy snowfall and avalanches. The highway connects central capital Kabul with nine provinces in northern Afghanistan.

Avalanches and flash floods triggered by heavy snowfall and rains have killed more than 300 people across the country over the past two weeks. (Pajhwok)

(15A) Afghan students...

know much new and interest about Kazakhstan, traditions and culture of Kazakh and Russian people, found new friends. Students from various world countries study at the faculty, thus we had a possibility to get a closer to know people of various nationalities and cultures. I like to study in KazNU very much.

I see a real result. It came as a surprise for us that at this faculty we can be engaged in science, to participate in student scientific conferences. But we not only seriously study, but take test well: we have excursions, visit interest rememberable places of Almaty city, celebrate together holidays. We gladly participated in Nauroz celebration. Both students from various countries and lecturers of faculty prepared their national dishes, danced and sang during the holiday. All that was a very pleasantly and memorably. I think that each of us - the foreign students - continued study in this excellent university with a great wish". Anyone can get education in Al-Farabi KazNU. University doors open for you.

(16) Woman Stabbed ...

the policeman as Abdul Rahman, a resident of the 7th police district of Herat City, the provincial capital. Rahman visited his in-laws in their home and stabled his fiancée to death after a verbal clash, Ahmadi said. Details of the murder were being uncovered as the policeman had surrendered to authorities.

In Baghlan, Mir Alam, a local elder, was travelling home with his family in a car from Pul-i-Khumri when intercepted by insurgents, who separated the elder from family members and shot him dead, said Baghlan police Chief Brig. Gen. Aminullah Amarkhail.

He added Mir Alam was an elder in Dand-e-Ghori locality and the motive behind his murder was yet to be ascertained. (Pajhwok)

(17) EU Shows ...

about sanctions. Alexis Tsipras's election victory in Greece has strengthened the dovish camp.

A key decision that the EU must face soon is whether to extend economic sanctions against Russia which it adopted for one year last July. Unanimity is required to extend them.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said on Friday that a debate was going on in the EU, with some countries saying the bloc should state now that it would extend the economic sanctions until the end of the year.

"Others say it would be a bit contradictory to say, on the one hand, Minsk is being applied and on the other hand we are going to go (extend sanctions) until the end of

year," Fabius told reporters in Riga. He said a decision on whether to extend existing economic sanctions on Russia could wait until around July.

"If Minsk develops positively, then it is likely that nothing new will be done on sanctions," he said. If, on the other hand, there were serious violations to Minsk, sanctions remained available, he said.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius, an EU hawk on Russia, said on Friday that extending sanctions to the end of the year was "the least we can do".

Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said on Saturday existing sanctions would probably be extended until year-end.

"What matters is that ... we maintain unity within the EU, and above all that we continue to put on pressure so that things change on the ground," he said. (Reuters)

(18) IS Advances ...

gained control of at least 10 villages around Tal Tamr, which lies about 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of the Turkish border and is under Kurdish control.

If Tal Tamr falls, IS would dominate a key road in Hasakeh province that links to their bastion to the east in Iraq's second city of Mosul.

In February, IS kidnapped 220 Assyrians from areas neighbouring the town, prompting 5,000 people to flee the countryside in fear of the jihadist advance.

So far, 23 of the kidnapped were released in exchange for a "jizya," or tax paid by non-Muslims.

Before Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011, there were roughly 30,000 Assyrians in the country, out of about 1.2 million Christians.

In Hama province, a "special operation" by government forces destroyed dozens of vehicles in an IS military convoy, Syrian news agency SANA said.

Quoting an unnamed security source, the agency said Syria's air force struck the vehicles, killing among others Deeb al-Oteibi, one of IS's self-declared provincial governors.

The Observatory said there were regime air strikes in the area on Friday and Saturday, but it was not clear when the commander had been killed.

Most of the central province is under the control of President Bashar al-Assad's regime, but significant areas, including the suburbs of the provincial capital, are held by IS and other rebel groups. (AFP)

(19) Accept That ...

Republic, which did not withdraw its ambassador. Norway and Switzerland, which are outside the EU, are also supportive.

Such countries say that the threat from Islamic State has made Assad the lesser of two evils, seeing a need to re-engage with Damascus as a potential ally against the extremists, according to the diplomats.

U.S. officials at the United Nations did not have an immediate comment on Ja'afari's latest statements.

They noted recent comments to the Security Council by Washington's U.N. ambassador Samantha Power rejecting the argument that countries should partner with Damascus to more effectively fight extremists. The United States and other Western powers have condemned Assad for widespread human rights violations since the uprising against his government began in 2011.

But Ja'afari insisted that keeping Assad, who was re-elected last year in a poll his foes regard as illegitimate, was the only path to peace and unity. (Reuters)

(20) Chinese Leaders ...

pursue benefits of the people of both sides to realize national rejuvenation.

Liu Yunshan, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said governments of various levels should fully implement the strategic layout of "Four Comprehensives" put forward by President Xi Jinping.

Strict discipline of the Party must be emphasized so as to enhance its creativity and capacity, Liu said in a panel discussion with deputies from Anhui Province.

Joining a panel discussion of the delegation from central China's Henan Province, Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli urged more endeavors to develop the central part of the country.

Zhang said greater efforts shall be made to promote grain production and build key economic zones in the region. (Xinhua)