

(1) Ghani Defends...

strategy was amendatory for common wellbeing and said Afghanistan was close to the target of becoming the area of regional cooperation.

The president hailed ulema's role in the rule of law and development and said they always raised their voice in support of the government and security forces.

While thanking the ulema, the president said: "It is a time of immense happiness and joy that our ulema know mega economic projects are helpful in bringing peace and they support them."

Ghani stressed over impartialness of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and added: "To ensure the independent status of the election bodies, I, Dr. Abdullah and Sarwar Danish have never expressed views regarding the commission's functioning and other affairs."

The president termed peace a dire demand of the people and added only a handful of individuals in the country doubted the peace process and felt uneasy regarding peace.

"We will not retreat from the path we have chosen for peace and stability and want to tell the Taliban that the welfare of Islam and Afghanistan is in peace talks so that the issue of bloodshed could be resolved," said the president.

The president said Afghanistan currently earned 2.5\$ billion revenue which needed to be surged to at least 8\$ billion in order to get economic self-sufficiency.

Ghani said Afghanistan's economic condition could improve its water resources were properly managed.

The country's geographical location through which China could be connected with Iran and the energy corridor could connect Central Asia and South Asia, said the president. "By enhancing the connectivity resource, Afghanistan could become economically independent."

The president pledged to bring drastic reforms in education and higher education sectors of the country. (Pajhwok)

(2) Kazakhstan...

Russian Railways, and these latest advertised moves are only likely to further restrict potential options in transportation cooperation.

Pakistan has usually presented the simplest transit option whenever feasible, but problems have regularly cropped up there too. Islamabad suspended overland US military supplies transit for eight months in -2011 12 after US troops killed dozens of Pakistan soldiers on the Afghan border.

US ties with Pakistan have endured yet another setback since January after Washington announced it was suspending what the New York Times has calculated might be around 1.3\$ billion worth of annual military aid. Inevitably, the snub was accompanied by a tweeted barb from Trump, who accused Pakistan of giving the United States "nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools." Such is the level of irritation in Islamabad that Trump may even be pushing Pakistan into Russia's arms, creating an alliance that could severely hamper any Afghanistan strategy.

This rapidly devolving situation provides useful context for understanding why Trump seemed so eager to roll out the red carpet for President Nursultan Nazarbayev in January. During their meeting at the White House, Trump praised Kazakhstan fulsomely for its "continuous logistical support and access to Afghanistan."

Does this all make Kazakhstan a spoiler of Russia's efforts to complicate Washington's life in Afghanistan? Yes and no. Astana has since the 1990s negotiated a careful diplomatic balancing act between West and East, a fact that Russia obviously factors in its decision-making. That said, Kazakhstan has evinced growing signs of uneasiness over its obligatory strategic symbiosis with Russia and taken tentative measures to address this. (Agencies)

(3) People Concerned...

I hope this will put an end to the suffering of the Afghans," he remarked.

He added the people demanded the conduct of transparent Wolesi Jirga and district council elections on schedule. He assured President Ashraf Ghani: "This house will support your legitimate actions in the interest of the people and the country."

The president also delivered a speech to lawmakers and stressed the need for fair elections, stepping up the peace process and strengthening security and political stability. (Pajhwok)

(4) ANIM Wants...

concerts in the US, Oman, Germany, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, China and India." While urging people to respect music and stop opposing the art, she says this virtuosity shows Afghanistan's soft image that needs to be promoted globally.

Nasir Sarmast, head of ANIM, says many of students are those who lack the opportunity to learn. The institute currently has 250 students, compared to 100 in 2010.

He hopes the number could surge to 300 this coming year. ANIM has won the musical right award (2010), the best regional performance award (2015), the open musical award, the global musical award and other global accolades.

He said members of the institute would make trips to India, Switzerland and Portugal in May this year to introduce Afghanistan's music to the world. ANIM was included in the top 100 global institutes in 2017. (Pajhwok)

(5) Tashkent Vows...

The Central Asian state desired to create a new venue for peace talks between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. The world's top diplomats have been invited to the conference.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, his Special Representative for Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini are among the invitees. Representatives from China, Russia, the United States, Britain and many other countries are also expected to attend the meeting. The conference may adopt a resolution calling for the integration of the armed opposition into the political life of Afghanistan and condemning all forms of terrorism. (Pajhwok)

(6) India and Afghanistan...

and infrastructure projects. The construction of the major Salma Dam, the new Afghan parliament building, Zaranj-Delaram highway, and some other projects are among the key investments India has done so far in the country. (KP)

(7) Barmak Pledges...

Sema Samar, head of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), said women should feel themselves secure and take part in every field of life.

"We should give women honorable positions and they should not be limited to search and transfer of documents in offices only.

Col. Palwasha Talash, deputy police chief of the 101st Asmae Zone, during her speech urged women to join police force and serve the country through this way.

"I feel proud to be a policewoman, and want my sisters to join the force as there is no problem and the recruitment doors are open and you can serve the country through this way," she said.

At the end of the gathering, some women officers were conferred with medals and appreciation certificates. (Pajhwok)

(8) We didn't Play...

apiece, with Dawlat Zadran taking two and Mohammad Nabi one.

The Afghan batsmen took a careful start, chasing the target of 197, but they a sudden top-order collapse.

Zadran and Shapoor, through their last wicket partnership, represented the only hope of a sensational victory. However, they fell two runs short of the target.

Rashid Khan told a press conference after the loss: "its part of the game. Our batsmen didn't play well and lost wickets quickly. We have played a lot of matches here and are familiar with playing conditions."

He added: "We are still in the run and treat the next two matches as crucial. We would try not to repeat the mistakes made in the last two matches."

Mushtaq Rahim, a cricket expert, said Afghanistan should win both matches by big margins to find their way to the supper-six stage. Afghanistan would take on Hong Kong and Nepal. (Pajhwok)

(9) Taliban Local...

of his fighters, were killed in a clash in Dawlat Abad district of Balkh province Tuesday morning, when they attacked parts of the district.

Qaderi said the clash lasted for two hours. There were no casualties among security forces. Janat Gul was reportedly responsible for the deaths of a number of security force members.

No further details were provided about the clash.

Taliban has not yet commented. (Tolo news)

(10) Human Right...

people back to Afghanistan although the justice ministry has pledged to come with a new assessment of the security situation by May. Four Dutch local councils - Maastricht, Tytsjerksteradiel, Leeuwarden and Coevorden - have already pledged not to cooperate with deportations to Afghanistan at present. (DW)

(11) Iran Working...

Caucasus region and via Turkey to Europe," said Sayed Qasim Zakari economic advisor to the embassy of Iran.

Meanwhile, a number of businessmen have called for export companies to standardize packing in order to increase exports.

"It's clear that the issue of certifications and other issues have been raised; businessmen must standardize (packaging), and businessmen must invest in this and when they invest in packaging and processing, they themselves have to take responsibility and this is their job," said one businessman.

This comes as government seals deals to also open major air cargo routes in a bid to break the tradition of dependence on Pakistan as an import / export corridor. (Tolo news)

(12) German Cabinet...

Minister Ursula von der Leyen told broadcaster ARD the move should be matched with accelerated reforms by Kabul.

She warned the mission would likely extend for some time.

"We need patience and a long breath, without question," von der Leyen told ARD, citing a history of progress and setbacks in Afghanistan in recent years.

She praised the military's success in training the Peshmerga, adding, "That is moving to a different level now," von der Leyen said.

In addition, the cabinet backed the continuation of surveillance and refuelling flights by the German military in support of allied efforts to fight Islamic State, as well as AWACs flights carried out on behalf of NATO.

Germany has carried out limited engagements abroad since World War Two, focusing mainly on training, surveillance, medical rescue and peacekeeping, although it participated in the 1999 air offensive on what was then Yugoslavia.

The minister acknowledged shortfalls in military equipment and personnel disclosed in a critical report last week, but said troops headed on overseas missions like those in Iraq and Afghanistan would be adequately equipped.

The new governing coalition has already agreed to add 10 billion euros to the military budget over the next four years, but von der Leyen has said further increases will be needed to rebuild the German military after years of spending cuts. (Reuters)

NEC Approves Socio-Economic Objectives for 12th -5Year Plan

ISLAMABAD - A meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) chaired by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Wednesday noted the economic indicators that have improved significantly since the PML-N government took over and approved the socio-economic objectives for the 12th Five Year Plan (2023-2018).

The meeting also authorized the Planning Commission to prepare draft plan in consultation with the provincial governments and other stakeholders here at the Prime Minister's Office.

The meeting also approved enhancement of sanctioning powers development of forums of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and FATA, according to which the sanctioning limit for Development Working Party (DWP) of the three regions has been increased to Rs. 400 million while the Development Committees (DC) would be authorized to sanction the development expenditure upto Rs. one billion, a press release said.

The meeting was briefed on achievements made so far during the 11th Five Year Plan (-2013 2018). It also highlighted various achievements made during the period, it was informed that besides improved law and order and overall energy situation 7,653 MW have been added till December 2017 to the installed capacity of 20,000 MW available in 13-2012.

The meeting was informed that 3,163 MW would be added to the national grid by June 2018. It was also noted that a all time high level of indigenous oil production was witnessed at 100,698 bbls/day as compared to 76,000 bbls/day in 13-2012.

Discussing economic gains made during the 11th Plan, it was informed that the average annual growth rate of GDP which was at %3.0 in 13-2012 increased to around %5 with the decade's highest growth rate of %5.3 in 17-2016.

The meeting noted that industrial out-put growth has increased

from 2.7 to %5.6 with 9 years highest industrial growth of %5.8 in 16-2015. Growth rate of the manufacturing sector rose from 1.6 to %5.0 and the large scale manufacturing grew from 0.6 to %4.7.

The inflation rate which stood at an average of %12 was brought down to %5.2 during this period. The meeting was informed that early harvest projects of CPEC project were on track with 42 projects being implemented through PSDP 18-2017.

Highlighting large public investments made during the 11th Five Year Plan, the meeting was informed that 1415 billion were invested in the energy sector during 18-2013 as compared to Rs. 706 billion in 13-2008.

The investment in road sector rose from Rs. 218 billion to Rs. 850 billion. It was informed that Rs 118 billion were invested in Higher Education Commission as compared to Rs. 86 billion during 13-2008.

The meeting was informed that the total national development outlay was increased from Rs. 1.042 trillion to Rs. 2.247 trillion. Federal PSDP allocation increased from Rs. 425 billion to over Rs. 1.000 trillion and public investment to GDP ratio increased from 3.5 to %4.3.

The meeting was also briefed on socio-economic objectives for the next Five-Year Plan along with provincial priorities which would be aligned with national level objectives.

The NEC while approving socio-economic objectives of the 12th Five Year Plan (-2018 2023) authorized Planning Commission to prepare draft plan in consultation with the provincial governments and other stakeholders. The meeting also reviewed the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 18-2017 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Framework. (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbek Specialists to Get Training in Harvard and Tufts

TASHKENT - Experts of the Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS) under the president of Uzbekistan as well as other Uzbek specialists will get training in the leading US universities such as Harvard and Tufts.

Corresponding agreements have been achieved during the visit of the Uzbek delegation headed by the ISRS director Vladimir Norov to the US, the Uzbek news agency Sputnik reported on March 7.

According to the information, the sides discussed cooperation in the educational sphere, training of specialists and establishment of contacts between Uzbek and American analytical bodies during the round table held at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Harvard University.

"We have reached agreement on organization of training for the ISRS specialists in Harvard, as well as on holding of live and video-conference master classes for Uzbek civil servants by the Harvard specialists. On top of that, we discussed possibility to organize visits of the Harvard students' groups to Uzbekistan," the ISRS said.

The Uzbek delegation also met with the John Kennedy Management School's Dr. Christopher Smart and dean of the Fletcher Law and Diplomacy School at the Tufts University James Stavridis, who was a head of the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

The news agency noted that the Harvard University is one of the most renowned and old universities in the US and the whole world. (Trend)