

(1) Taliban's...

Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States met in Kabul to discuss reopening the peace talks. Preliminary agreements had the next round in Islamabad in mid-March, but Taliban said on March 5 it would not take part in negotiations until foreign soldiers left the country and its fighters were released. (Sputnik)

(2) US Should ...

Afghan Air Force (AAF) still needed a lot in terms of support and training.

The US is training AAF pilots and supplying it with MD-530 light-reconnaissance helicopters. It also plans to provide Afghanistan with 20 A-29 Super Tucano close air support aircraft.

Aziz believed the Taliban could not achieve an outright victory on the battlefield. However, he said the group was capable of continuing the insurgency for an indefinite period.

For that reason, the advisor said, the goal of peace in Afghanistan could be achieved only through an Afghan-owned reconciliation process. Tending to downplay the Islamic State presence in Afghanistan, he said Pakistani Taliban's splinter groups – with no connection to Iraq and Syria – had joined the outfit for mercenary motives. (Pajhwok)

(3) Iran Supports...

Afghan-led efforts that lead to security and stability in the country," he said after a meeting in Kabul with Foreign Ministry officials.

Meanwhile, Kabul and Tehran officials agreed on some issues regarding addressing the plight of Afghan refugees and Afghan prisoners in Iran.

"We should have a list of those Afghans that are imprisoned in Iran in order to know that who are they and then take the next step to help them," said Afghan Foreign Ministry's deputy chief for administrative affairs Nasir Ahmad Andisha. (Tolonews)

(4) China Offers ...

delegation headed by General Fang Fenghui, chief of the Joint Staff Department of the People's Liberation Army, Afghan officials said.

"A commission has been assigned to make the wish list," the Journal quoted Mohammad Radmanish, the defense minister's deputy spokesman, as saying. The list might include light weapons, aircraft parts and uniforms, he said.

China's total military aid offered to Afghanistan, including the latest one, amounts to just over \$70 million and was originally promised on the sidelines of a conference in Russia last year. The sum is small compared with aid provided by other countries, including the U.S., which has invested tens of billions of dollars in Afghanistan's security forces. The U.S. has welcomed greater Chinese involvement in Afghanistan in recent years. "We support any role, China or other nations can play in bringing long-term stability to Afghanistan," a State Department spokesperson said, according to the Journal.

The Chinese Defense Ministry has said that relations between the two militaries have been improving in recent years and that more cooperation is in the offing, including in training.

"Both sides are willing to further deepen military exchanges in various fields and strengthen pragmatic cooperation in counterterrorism, training and training of personnel in order to contribute to safeguarding regional security," the ministry said in a statement. (Monitoring Desk)

(5) Afghanistan,...

including Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock; Education; Higher Education; Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled; Public Health; Public Works; Refugees & Repatriation; Rural Rehabilitation & Development; Water & Entergy, Women Affairs, IDLG & General Directorate of Physical Education, for additional 92 projects worth US\$ 19.24 million. Another 87 projects worth US\$ 25 million are under process of approval by Government of India. It is expected that these projects would also commence in the near future, the statement stated.

It further stated that It may be recalled that the Small Development Projects (SDP) scheme, with an initial outlay of US\$ 20 million, was unveiled during Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's visit to Afghanistan in August 2005. It covered a wide range of projects from installing hand-pumps to building schools, health centres, bridges, vocational training centres, retention walls, veterinary clinics, sanitation

projects, minor irrigation projects, etc. Under Phase I & II, 135 projects worth approx. US\$ 19.8 million were sanctioned and majority of these have already been completed and are contributing to the wellbeing of Afghan citizens. In November 2012, the Government of India provided an additional sum of US\$100 million for Phase III of the SDP scheme, also extending the assistance across all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Under this phase III, a total of 217 projects have been sanctioned so far (125 projects in September 2014 and 92 projects in March 2016).

Government of India attaches great importance to its Small Development Project scheme in Afghanistan as they have a direct impact on the lives of ordinary people. It was in this spirit that during his recent visit to Kabul H.E. Prime Minister Modi announced India's intention to again increase the SDP outlay to US\$ 200 million by 2020. The Embassy of India looks forward to working with the Afghan leadership, the Ministry of Economy, the various line Ministries and other implementing agencies as we design and implement meaningful projects that will touch the lives of many Afghans across this beautiful country, the statement stated. (PR)

(6) Peace is Key ...

ambassador to Kabul Jean-Michel Marlaud also emphasized the need for peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

"I have read the communique which has been published by the Taliban last Saturday and I think it is a great disappointment for everyone. Still it is not necessarily the end of the process. We know that there are always ups and downs and we do hope that there will be direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban because this is the only way to bring peace back to Afghanistan," said Marlaud.

The French ambassador said it is important for government to start talks with a clear idea of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

"It is quite clear that in the last 14 years there has been a lot of progress in Afghanistan. The Taliban and some of their declarations seem to recognize part of this progress. It remains to be seen how things really happen on the ground when they control place but of course you cannot make peace trying to come back to the kind of middle ages that they imposed to Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001," Marlaud added.

The comments come after the United States also emphasized that if the Taliban does not join the peace talks before the spring fighting season, they will face the full wrath of the troops.

The US Foreign Ministry said that Taliban only have one option and that is to join the peace process. (Tolonews)

(7) Afghanistan ...

horizon (2015-2035) and would entail elements relating to gas demand and supply outlooks and scenarios; development of market assessments and netback analysis; review current policies and plans in context of gas development; assessment of the financial requirements and needs; evaluation of pricing options for various segments via domestic sales and transit/exports; develop a planning model and train Ministry of Mines and Petroleum staff on its use; assessment of environmental, socioeconomic, and non-monetary impacts; review of other countries' experiences with gas supply chain development including compressed natural gas (CNG) sector; and formulation of an Afghanistan Gas Sector Master Plan and Implementation Strategy (with sequencing of priority investment projects).

Speaking at a workshop on Tuesday, Minister of Mines and Petroleum Daud Shah Sabah said the master plan is important for the gas sector in the country and that it will pave the ground for further investments in Afghanistan. "The master plan has been initiated with \$1.7 million USD funded by Asian Development Bank, the U.S and German development organizations which took two years to prepare it," he said.

"The master plan will be implemented up to the end of 2035," he added. He said the recognized gas reservoirs in Afghan-Tajik and Oxus River areas has been estimated at 74 million cubic meters of natural gas and that using of the resources is vital for the country. He added: "The draft will be sent to the Economic High Council next week and if the council approves it, it will be a master plan for Afghanistan's gas sector."

Meanwhile, a number of senators welcomed the move by the Afghan government. "Economic challenges will reduce once the project is im-

plemented and we welcome the initiative by the Afghan government," said Senator Lailuma Ahmadi. (Tolonews)

(8) Kabul-Logar ...

province. During a visit to Pul-i-Alam, the provincial capital, Wahidi announced the optic fiber line would be extended from Kabul to Logar, a project to be started in the near future.

After the optic fiber project was made operational, the internet facility would be provided to the Logar university, the civil hospital and some schools free of cost, he said, adding that "I intend to expand the process to districts of the province later."

During the visit, Wahidi opened a two-storey building for the Afghan Post Office. The building has 10 rooms and was constructed in one year time at a cost of nearly 7 million afghanis. "I plan to establish an internet centre for the youth of Logar to avail internet services free of cost," the minister said.

Governor Mohammad Halim Fidai said 85 percent people of the province had access to telecom facilities and the issues of internet would be resolved after the inauguration of the internet project.

Police chief Syed Qaribullah Sadat asked the minister to provide the internet facility in Logar as soon as possible. (Pajhwok)

(9) Sakhi, Kalimzai...

board elections, Mohammad Alam Eziydar was first deputy chairman, Mohammad Asif Siddiqui second deputy chairman, Abdullah Qarlaq secretary and Najiba Hussaini deputy secretary.

Article 87 of the constitution states: "Each of the two houses of the National Assembly, at the commencement of their work period, shall elect one member as president ... and two members as first and second deputies and two members as secretary and assistant secretary for a period of one year.

"These individuals shall form the administrative teams of the House of People as well as House of Elders. Duties of the administrative teams shall be determined by the Regulations on Internal Duties of each house."

Recently, the Meshrano Jirga decided not to appoint its administrative board till the introducing of two-thirds of the senators. But on Tuesday, the lawmakers agreed to conduct administrative board elections. Eziydar and Sakhi were in the run for the first deputy chairman of the house. Sakhi grabbed 34 of the 65 votes cast. Kalimzai and Siddiqui raced ran for the 2nd deputy chairman slot. Kalimzai got 43 votes to win the position.

Qarlaq and Gul Ahmad Azami were candidates for the secretary position. Qarlaq won the race by winning 35 votes. Najiba Hussaini defeated her rival Qais in the election for deputy secretary by bagging 34 ballots. (Pajhwok)

(10) MoI Cautions ...

times to pave the ground for a role in defending the country. If we see our honor is under threat, we will enter the strongholds without permission," he told guests gathered at a ceremony on Tuesday that marked the second anniversary of the death of former vice president Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim.

In his statement, Danish said: "We welcome any move that encourages the security forces but creating forces should be done in accordance with the law." Meanwhile, some analysts commented on the possible consequences if some groups take up arms to fight insurgents – outside of the security forces' framework. Former military official Atiqullah Amarkhail said the current security forces are enough to fight insurgency in the country. "We have experienced security forces on whom we have spent millions of dollars. This is enough [for us]. Others should support and help government," he added.

"His [Sayyaf's] concerns on the current situation in the country are justified because he is a leader but it is not legal to go to war outside a legal structure," said MP Mohammad Reza Khoshak Watandost. The remarks come as experts say that the Afghan government's struggles have not yielded considerable results over the past 15 years and that insurgency is still a threat for the country. (Tolonews)

(11) ANA Facing...

tactical performance.

In a statement issued by AREU, they said the ANA has experienced "a very difficult situation over the past year, including facing serious problems in recruitment, mobility and

leadership". AREU said that the number of casualties mounted to dramatic levels in 2015, and that the ANA has for the first time begun facing serious problems in recruitment, including a mounting problem of ghost soldiers. The paper said that "the withdrawal of ISAF mentors from the ANA affected the overall logistical capabilities, planning, procurement, equipment maintenance and the administration, which resulted in lesser mobility of the ANA forces, compared to that of the insurgents". In addition to this, AREU stated that the tactical performance of the ANA is affected by a serious leadership problem. "Appointments to senior positions are still heavily influenced by political interference, often resulting in the appointment of incompetent commanders", the paper said. "As a result of all these, the morale in the ANA is in decline," their statement read.

They went on to state: "The political blockage in Kabul is a major cause of the inability of the MoD to improve its capability. But there are deeper causes too. The lack of equipment has been discussed in the media for years. Other causes are related to the post-2001 political settlement, which has not been discussed in this report. The weaknesses of the logistical system have been exposed more obviously, because the much-reduced RS (Resolute Support) mission can do little to address them."

They said that while deep reforms of the ANA are unlikely to be possible in the current emergency situation, some measures can be taken immediately to achieve rapid improvements. "One, recommended by many interviewees, is the replacement of the many commanders who have not performed. However, will the National Unity Government (NUG) summon the strength to remove them, despite the political protection that they enjoy?"

AREU is an independent research institute based in Kabul. Its mission is to inform and influence policy and practice through conducting high-quality, policy-relevant research and actively disseminating the results, and to promote a culture of research and learning. (Tolonews)

(12) President Ghani ...

in the west, the palace was mainly damaged after it was used for military purposes, including as a bunker, by the rival jihadist groups during the civil war in early 90s.

Dar-ul-Aman palace and Taj Baig palace were constructed during the kingdom of King Amanullah Khan during 1919 to 1929. It was used as the Defense Department during the Soviet times and was partially damaged during military coup by Shahnawaz Tanai against Dr. Najeebullah former Afghan president. The former mayor of Kabul city Mohammad Younus Naw Andish stepped up efforts to attract local charity for the restoration work of the palace in mid-2012. (KP)

(13) 170 Badakhshan ...

Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) said in a statement.

The classes were open to all women interested in participating and gaining more knowledge of these important skills for work and their own business.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Badakhshan's Governor Ahmad Faisal Bigzad said: "Every developed society needs the participation of women in business and governmental institutions."

He said with more women in the workforce, their role in society, business and politics was more accepted, helping them to fulfil their responsibilities as equal members of society. The classes were held in the Women's Training Centre in the provincial capital, Faizabad, and marked the first of a range of training programmes for women in various subjects.

Badakhshan's Department of Women Affairs (DoWA) and the Provincial Governor's Office offered these courses as part of a first phase of training over 14 months.

The German government funded the classes at a total cost of over 2.7 million afghanis.

One of the participants of the food processing class spoke on behalf of fellow classmates when she explained: "We were all eager to improve our products but unfamiliar with the standard processes. Now, we are able to offer the best products available on the local market."

The second phase of classes is set to start soon for six months and women are welcome to apply for the courses. For the second phase, food processing classes will be replaced by tailoring. (Pajhwok)

(14) Greater Role for...

Day in Kabul. Ministry officials, healthcare providers and civil society organisations highlighted women's crucial contributions to improving healthcare in Afghanistan while calling for action to step up gender equality and increase the number of women working in the health sector.

"Women make vital contributions to public health strategies and plans and to the delivery of health services. The ministry remains committed to the equal rights of girls and women to receive quality healthcare at all stages of their lives," the minister of public health said.

Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz added increasing women's participation in all roles in the health sector at all levels was a key priority that was also emphasised in Afghanistan's new National Health Strategy and Policy for 2016-2020.

Dr. Bannet Ndyanabangi, UNFPA representative, renewed the UN agency's commitment to supporting MoPH to increase the presence of female health workers in both service delivery and management of the important sector.

"One of the key barriers is child marriage which is prevalent in Afghanistan, but under-documented. Globally, every day 37,000 girls under 18 years of age are forced into marriage that is denying their fundamental human rights. (Pajhwok)

(15) ANSF Stopped ...

local security officials, at least ten militants have been killed so far and sixteen others have been arrested. The anti-government armed militant groups have not commented regarding the operations so far. (KP)

(16) Taliban Attack on ...

local time today, triggering heavy fighting.

At least two blasts rocked the area and seven attackers, according to the official, had been killed in the blasts and gunshots of security forces until noon.

"A total of 16 attackers have been killed and their conspiracy to capture Gereshk district have been thwarted," Amanullah said.

The official, however, declined to comment on the possible casualties of security forces.

Meantime, hospital sources in Helmand provincial capital Lashkar Gah said that 21 injured people, five of whom are in critical condition have been taken to hospital for medical treatment until Wednesday afternoon.

Officials in Kabul have yet to make comment on the situation in Gereshk district. (Xinhua)

(17) Death Toll ...

Gen. Akhtar Mohammad Hamdam, the Zafar Military Corps first brigade commander, said the clashes between the two groups were underway in Ghodal, Karima Khana, Qala Kanjak and Parmakan villages of Shindand district. "The casualties could be very high, but exact figures are not available because the clashes are still ongoing," he said. (Pajhwok)

(18) Govt. Slammed ...

warning on a local television channel against gunfire on such occasions. But people ignored our warning yet again." A resident of the city, Tariq, said one of the victims was his cousin Istiraj, who was hit by a bullet while sleeping in his house. He assailed the government for failing to prevent such firing.

He claimed most of the gunshots were fired by policemen in violation of the law. "If the government punishes even one perpetrator publicly, the people will not dare fire again on such occasions," he believed. (Pajhwok)

(19) Afghan Forces ...

district along the border with Tajikistan in October. However, government forces after heavy fighting recaptured Darqad in January and since then sporadic fighting has been continuing in parts of the restive district. (Xinhua)

(20) Kam Air...

route connecting Kabul to Bamyan province has been at all time volatile during the recent months where numerous kidnapping cases have been reported. The anti-government armed militants are often stopping passenger cars in the route through Maidan Wardak province and kidnap the travellers. (KP)

(21) 10 Daesh, ...

large cache of weapons during the operation, Farhad added.

Balkh police spokesman Zia Durraani said four police personnel were wounded during the operation in Kishindih district. (Pajhwok)

(22) Iranian Citizen ...

Zaranj, the provincial capital. Provincial police chief, Brig. Gen. Dilawar Shah, told Pajhwok Afghan News Reza was rescued in Qabristani locality of Zaranj and handed over to Iranian border guards. With security forces investigating the incident, no one has been detained so far in connection with the kidnapping. The police chief gave no further details about the Iranian's release. Another security official, meanwhile, said: "When police chased the kidnappers, Reza was thrown out of the vehicle." The abductors had asked Reza's family for a ransom of 10 million afghanis, the source revealed. (Pajhwok)

(23) 4 More Insurgents...

offensives aimed at avoiding civilian casualties.

A large quantity of explosives, landmines and suicide vests had been destroyed in Afghan Air Force raids in the district, he claimed, saying security forces were closing in on Nawabad and Yatim villages.

The Taliban have not yet commented on the security forces' progress, but the group claimed Afghan Local Police (ALP) Commander Qarahhad been seriously wounded in Dobandi locality. (Pajhwok)

(24) MoI Probing ...

it angered people and created hatred for police.

Some others commented that such action by police was against humanity because Afghanistan law banned torturing humans.

Kandahar human rights commission officials also said they were concerned about the video clip.

The human rights commission acting director, Shamsuddin Tanweer, told Pajhwok Afghan News no one could torture a person without court's decision based on Afghanistan's constitution.

He said the commission would investigate the issue in cooperation with the military attorney to prevent such incidents in future. (Pajhwok)

(25) British Queen ...

the front page story in today's Sun newspaper," said a Buckingham Palace spokesman, adding the complaint relates to clause one of the Editors' Code of Practice.

Buckingham Palace earlier insisted that the Queen is "politically neutral" in the forthcoming EU referendum campaign. (Xinhua)

(26) Turkey, Belgium ...

cumbersome problem and further develop their cooperation in countering terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations, it added. Both welcomed the new momentum in Turkey's European Union (EU) accession process which should develop further in addition to the increased dialogue between both sides, while also reiterating the need to enhance cooperation in all Turkish-EU relations, including migration, according to the statement. (Xinhua)

(27) Polish...

of the past. Another contested change requires a quorum of 13 judges for rulings to be valid. Critics say the changes have paralyzed the court, effectively preventing it from acting as a check on the power of the ruling, conservative Law and Justice party, which has greater control over the country than any party in Poland's 27 years of democracy. (AP)

(28) Albania to ...

traditional interest of Bavaria, and that of the CSU for Albania is well-known," he said. Meta was quoted as saying that judicial reform is an immediate necessity in Albania's efforts towards EU membership. It is expected to help improve the business climate to attract foreign investment. (Xinhua)

(29) IS Commander...

the most wanted under a US program with a \$5 million bounty on his head. The United States stopped short of declaring him dead. The lack of a US presence on the ground makes it difficult to assess the success of operations targeting militants in Syria, and Shishani's death has been falsely reported several times. Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook described Shishani as "a battle-tested leader with experience who had led ISIL fighters in numerous engagements in Iraq and Syria. (AFP)

(30) Biden Gives...

over the proposed sums. Israel, which last year requested \$5 billion in future annual aid but whose officials have since set their sights on \$4 billion to \$4.5 billion, says it needs to expand its military, rather than just upgrade technologies, given spiraling arms procurement it anticipates by arch-foe Iran and Arab states. (Reuters)