

(1) President ...

suggested the use of technology in 2002 elections, which did not happen but this time we are committed to using technology to ensure transparency in elections."

Ghani said: "We have a strong commitment to conducting elections and free and fair election is important for us therefore the democratic exercise should be conducted in a transparent manner and without meddling." CEO Abdullah and second Vice President Sarwar Danish also expressed their views regarding the use of technology during elections. Finance Minister Eklak Hakimi briefed the meeting about his meetings with donor countries regarding election.

He said the donors had pledged support to the Afghan government in holding future elections. (Pajhwok)

(2) 2017 Anti-...

judicial sector; and corruption within the security forces. Then it will also look at the need to try to prevent corruption from actually happening. At the end of the campaign we will have a large anti-corruption conference in May, as we had last year," he said.

Meanwhile, watchdogs overseeing the anti-corruption campaigns in Afghanistan have said that EU's 2016 anti-corruption campaign was a positive move toward curbing the scale of corruption in the country.

"We hope that this time also, the campaign lead to the establishment of an anti-corruption commission. The Afghan government had committed establishment of the commission two years ago, but it has not fulfilled its commitment yet. We hope that the pressure which is mounted on the government by our international partners, particularly the EU, will force the government to establish the commission," said Mohammad Nasir Taimoori, a member Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

Over the past decade, corruption has been one of the major concerns for the Afghan people and the international community.

However, during this period, several counter-corruption were established in the country, but tangible outcomes out of these efforts were not achieved and Afghanistan still tops one of the world's most corruption countries. (Tolonews)

(3) Saleh Appointed...

for reforms in security sector. It said Amrullah Saleh was appointed as minister for the new ministry and in addition he was also appointed as head of the high board for appointments in the security and defence sectors.

Amrullah Saleh had earlier discharged duty as head for the National Directorate of Security (NDS) for a few years during the presidency of ex-president Hamid Karzai but when the consultative peace Jirga came under a coordinated attack, he was dismissed.

Meanwhile, according to another presidential decree, Sayed Fazil Sancharki was appointed as the deputy publications minister for the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) replacing the Muzhgan Mustafawi. Mustafawi was also appointed as finance and administrative deputy minister for the MoIC replacing Zardasht Shams.

Sancharki has been discharging duty as advisor to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah.

At the same time, based on another presidential decree Ahmad Sayed Mahjoor was appointed as finance and administrative deputy minister for the Ministry of Higher Education and Tafsira Hashimi as deputy chancellor for the Kabul University. Earlier, Naderi was appointed as supreme head for administrative reforms and civic services yesterday.

It has been rumored that there was a deal between President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah regarding the appointment of those aforementioned in exchange for Naderi's appointment; because last year Abdullah strongly opposed the appointment of Naderi. (Pajhwok)

(4) Above 2,400....

women were recorded across the country. Zarghona Mostaghfir, an official at the Prosecution Office, told a press conference in Kabul that her office had registered 2,442 cases this solar year.

Of the cases 1375 were recorded in Kabul, 125 in Balkh, 250 in Herat, 116 in Nangarhar, 17 in Logar, 80 in Kapisa, 28 in Samangan, 31 in Bamyan, 37 in Jawzjan provinces.

The remaining incidents happened in Ghor, Panjshir, Sar-i-Pul, Maidan Wardak, Paktia, Nimroz, Farah, Parwan and Badakhshan provinces, she said, adding some of the cases had been referred to courts. She linked the persisting violence

against the gender to widespread illiteracy, unawareness about laws, insecurity and lack of women's unawareness about their rights.

Parveen Rahimi, the Director of Fighting Violence against Women Prosecution Office, said over the past six years her office had established prosecution offices across the country aimed at enforcing law and enabling women to find access to courts.

She said her office had signed agreements with different institutions on creating awareness about violence against women, the relevant law, and women's legitimate rights.

The Fighting Violence against Women Prosecution Office was committed to providing job opportunities to female prosecutors at judicial organs by setting up secure work environment for them, she said. (Pajhwok)

(5) Kabul lodges ...

A MoFA statement received by Pajhwok Afghan News said the Pakistani diplomat was summoned in the afternoon over torturing of Afghan migrants in the country, cross-border shelling and violation of Afghanistan's territory by Pakistani helicopters along the Durand Line.

First political department director at MoFA Musa Arefi told the Pakistani diplomat that Afghanistan was deeply concerned over what he called indiscriminate shelling and violation of the Afghan airspace by the Pakistani military helicopters. He asked the Pakistani side to immediately cease such provocative actions.

In return, the Pakistanu Chargé de Affaires promised to convey the protest and concerns of the Afghan government to the authorities and relevant officials of his country.

The Pakistan envoy was summoned after Afghanistan's permanent representative at the UN, Mahmood Saikal complained about the 'consistent breach of Afghanistan's territorial integrity by Pakistani military forces' to the world's body.

Saikal, while addressing the body's members, said that in recent instances approximately 1,375 mortar and artillery shells had been fired into Afghan territory since January 1, killing dozens of people and forcing more than 450 families to leave their homes, seeking refuge.

Relations between the countries have been tense over the past few weeks and Pakistan has sealed the two commercial and ground communications routes between the two countries--Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points--on the pretexts of claiming that insurgents are being sheltered on Afghanistan soil. (Pajhwok)

(6) Destruction of ...

explosion that occurred before the eyes of thousands of shocked people, but whenever he looks at the empty frames of Buddha statues, the sound of the explosion echoes in his ears and the scene of destruction of the two statues of Buddha reincarnates in his eyes.

Khan Ali says, "18th of Hooth, is a tragic day in the history of Bamyan." After a pause he continues, "it was in this month that two unforgettable tragedies occurred; one was the martyrdom of Abdul Ali Mazari, the political leader of Hazaras, in Char Asyab area of Kabul and the other, the destruction of the statues of Bamyan.

He is 74, and has spent most of his life in Bamyan and he witnessed the smoke that rose as a result of the demolition of two statues." After a bitter smile that shapes on his lips he adds, "look! Both of them became a sacrifice to a traditional and extremist ideology; an ideology that was born outside the borders of the country, from a completely different mindset and culture."

On the 7th of Hooth 1379, the leadership Council of Islamic Scholars and the Supreme Court of Taliban, at the order of the leader of the group, ordered the destruction of all the cultural heritage that according to their interpretation was Non-Islamic; according to this Fatwa, both the statues in Bamyan had to be destroyed.

Khan Ali says, "Following the order of destruction of the statues of Buhdda, hundreds of Talib warriors entered Bamyan. From their first steps in this province, they started chanting Allah-hu-Akbar and fired at the statues in order to gain oblation of heaven; but the local people were watching this scenes with chargin and were very worried because their history was being wiped out." He further adds, "The statues of Buddha always had cultural and historical value for the people of Bamyan, but Taliban believed that these statues are Idols and are worshipped, which is against the Islamic Law and must be destroyed." When the order of destruction of the irreplaceable statues of Salsaal, 53 metered and Shahmama, 37 me-

tered, was issued, efforts at the international level was also started to prevent the Taliban from the destruction of these statues. Kofi Anan, the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization, sent his special representative to Qandahar and asked the Taliban leadership not to destroy the statues of Bamyan. Director General of UNESCO, Cultural and Educational Organization of United Nations, the President of New York Metropolitan Museum, and Organization of Islamic Conference, asked the Taliban to abandon this decision

Hundreds of thousands of fans of the statues of Buddha and followers of the Buddhist religion protested against this decision of the Taliban. However, none of these international pressure and efforts had any impact on the decision of Taliban, which was the destruction of the statues.

Khan Ali further adds, "At the time when international efforts were being made to dissuade the Taliban from destroying the statues, tanks, cannons and explosives from different provinces of the country were being transported to Bamyan for the destruction of historical sites of this province."

For a while, Khan Ali stares at the historical city of Gholghola, Zahak and the caves of the Buddha era and then with a glance at the empty frames of the Buddhas of Bamyan, he continues as if he remembers something new, "Throughout history, whoever came here robbed, destroyed, and went away."

According to Khan Ali, Taliban were not the first group who threatened the cultural heritage of Bamyan based on special aims, rather, the first time that the Islamic army conquered Bamyan, they took part in destruction. Similarly, Changez Khan in 1222, Orangzeb in 1689 and Abdur Rahman Khan in 1892, all took part in the destruction of these two statues and some other smaller ones.

Halima Rezaei, one of Bamyan's civil activists, who deals most of her time with books, adds after Khan Ali's points, "These statues, which were carved about 1600 years ago at the heart of a mountain in the north of Tagab of Bamyan, had their bodies covered with green and red silk cloths and their ears and necks were decorated with precious jewels at the peak of their glory."

She says, "The face of the statues were coated with gold. Their eyes were made from precious jewels in such a way that when a candle was lit at night, the eyes sparkled from far away. When Muslim Arabs took over Bamyan during the reign of Hajjaj Bin Yousuf, they took away lots of statues along with their jewelries as spoils. They shaved off the gold temple of 'Bait Alzab' and the gold coating from the face of the statues of Buddha, from the forehead section downward." Talking with much more emotion now Halima Rezaei further says, "In the past, Bamyan was one of the important domains of influence of Buddhism. Here, was the intersectional point where east met west; hundreds of Buddhist monks were busy in worship, and education in the caves of this valley. Followers of the Buddhist religion, came here from the farthest points of earth and dropped precious jewels, countless coins and brocade cloths as a sacrifice."

She is an educated girl and a drama writer. she continues, "The historical remains that have been obtained from this location, shows a mix of influence of Greek, Turkic, Persian, Chinese and Indian cultures, a mixture of culture which cannot be found anywhere else. Based on this fact, the destruction of the Buddha in this province, is the destruction of cultural heritage of the whole humankind." Khan Ali steps into Halima Rezaei's words and breaks his silence with a hoarse sound, which seems as if something is stuck in his throat, "It was 18th of Hooth 1379 when the Taliban got in lines to offer the Friday prayer, opposite to the statues of Buddha. All the Talibs were armed with different kinds of weapons and fired at the statues of Buddha for three days and nights."

He continues with chargin, "Finally, at the dusk of 21st of Hooth, 1379, a horrendous blast, which even trembled the peaks of Kohi-Baba mountain and also the world, broke apart the strong and firm stature of Salsaal and Shahmama and fell on the ground and changed into a hill of dust before the perplexed eyes of hundreds of millions of people who were trying to prevent the destruction of these statues."

Sajjad Mohseni, one of the elders of Bamyan who was watching the destruction of these statues from the side of Kohi-Baba mountain says, "After the complete destruction of the Buddhas of Bamyan, the Taliban celebrated the next day as an Eid and

they sacrificed two or three cows in every province, but UNESCO called this act of Taliban as cultural terror." Sayed Mirza Hussain, being a Taliban captive at the time, was used for the destruction of the statue. He says, "After Buddha got destroyed, Taliban sacrificed nine cows before the ruins of Buddha and said, 'we are Abraham, who destroyed the idols' and they distributed the meats of the cows among their own men."

Since the destruction of the statues by Taliban, the people and civil activists of Bamyan have constantly requested for the reconstruction of these statues. They say that in order to return Bamyan its old glory, the statues must be rebuilt. But Halima Rezaei says, "The ruined statues are the symbols of ignorance and despotism, and therefore, they must remain as ruins." She further adds, "If till yesterday, the two statues of Buddha represented the past civilization and ancient history of this country, from now on, the empty frames are memorials from the extremist religious rule."

Official authorities of Bamyan says that the repair and reconstruction of these statues is a national and international project and the central government of Afghanistan and the international community must decide on it. He adds, "However, if these statues are repaired, Bamyan can once again become a site of attraction for the world, which will result in increased trips of tourists to this province."

"There is no agreement on the reconstruction of the statues. Previously, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had said that they have no plan to rebuild the statues; however, still both national and international archeologists are doing research on the ruins of the bodies of the statues."

Sayed Ahmad Hasanpoor, acting director of Information and Culture of Bamyan, says, "in the 13th meeting of Archeological experts, which was held in Germany with the presence of UNSECO, the reconstruction of one of the ruined statues was talked about and it was agreed upon to rebuild the 47 metered statue, called Shahmama."

Previously, Japanese experts had also expressed that one of the statues should be rebuilt. Meanwhile, it is said that 70% of the ruined statue must be present in order to rebuild it. Khan Ali believes that the government doesn't want the statues to be reconstructed in order to appease the Taliban.

In order to prevent further damage to the ruined statues and their frames, a German institution has taken the responsibility of strengthening the demolished statues and its empty frames. The works of strengthening Shahmama has been complete, however, works on Salsaal, which had to start in the spring of 1394 has not started yet.

Khan Ali on the other hand is worried that improper construction around the demolished statues, has put the empty frames at risk. He says, "The works for strengthening the statues and their frames, which are in the process of demolition internally, are done with normal bricks, wire and clay."

Along with other historical sites of Bamyan, the statues of Buddha, which at times was considered as one of the biggest stone statues standing in the world, for a long time remained as a main center of attraction for tourists in Afghanistan.

(7) Hospital Attack: ...

the defense ministry's intelligence department for being unable to discover such attacks before it happened.

"Most Afghan National Army soldiers get killed because of weak intelligence and this must be changed," said Ajmal Balochzada, political activist.

The question, how the terrorist made their way into the hospital and how they transferred weapons without being seen, has not been cleared up.

"The terrorists were not dropped from the sky on hospital. There are people inside hospital and in security departments that help them and it shows ANA weak intelligence," MP Arif Rahmani said.

The MoD says the appointed commission had made progress in investigating the case and the result of the investigations will be shared with the public soon.

The attack was a very complicated and many questions remained unanswered. (Tolonews)

(8) Security Cluster ...

with those vulnerable areas and they know how to prevent destructive attacks by the terrorists," he said. According to these plans, the air forces will play a vital role in elimination of insurgents while commandos and police Special Forces also will take

part in offensive operations.

Although security forces have assured people of maintaining security and defeating insurgents in next war season, Afghans remain skeptical about the implementation of the plans and maintaining security in vulnerable areas.

"Unfortunately, security officials are not doing their jobs. The head of security is busy doing other work and it can affect security forces," said Mohammad Alim Ezadyar, first deputy of senate. (Tolonews)

(9) Saleh Urged...

Command 505, deputy of 404 zone, deputy of public protection force.

"Some posts have been held by the acting chiefs for over the past six months. Efforts are underway to appoint qualified people to these posts," said MoI spokesman Sediq Sediqi.

"The establishment of this ministry under the leadership of Mr. Saleh has taken place on the basis of the power sharing issue, not on the basis of qualification or the situations in Afghanistan," said MP Abdul Hai Akhundzada.

Saleh's duties include advice to the president on the appointment of new security officers, monitoring and implementation of a professional growth plan for high officers and giving advice on bringing about reforms in security departments.

He will also participate in meetings of the security council.

Saleh severely criticized the security leadership following Wednesday's deadly blast on Kabul military hospital. However, there are hopes that Saleh would be able to implement satisfactory reforms in the security sector. (Tolonews)

(10) Illegal Arms...

illegal arms as dangerous because they played a role in creating insecurity in the province.

Abdul Qader Kamel, a political affairs expert, said: "I believe until the resources of insecurity exist, the situation will remain the same. Terror, kidnapping, murders and other crimes will increase," he warned.

Most incidents of killing and kidnappings are blamed on men carrying illegal arms in Herat. (Pajhwok)

(11) Ghazni Residents...

and militants had recently increased, creating problems for people.

"When there are clashes, people cannot come out of homes to do business or find labour jobs."

He said several Taliban militants were killed during a clash with security forces four days ago.

"The weather is still cold, as it turns warm, there will be more clashes." He demanded the government conduct a massive operation against militants.

In Andar district's Nani area, resident Mohammad Sharif told Pajhwok Afghan News that the Taliban twice stopped vehicles on the Kabul-Kandahar highway and searched them during the past 10 days.

He said there had been clashes twice last week. The clashes lasted several hours, blocking the road for people. The resident said Andar district was located close to the provincial capital, Ghazni City, but the militants roamed freely there.

Similar views were expressed by residents of other districts and demanded of the government to take measures for improving security.

Ghazni governor Abdul Karim Matin said there were more security problems in 15 of Ghazni's 17 districts. But he said: "We have planned major operations in some areas in order to improve the security," he said.

The governor said security forces from Ghazni and neighbouring Zabul province would jointly conduct an operation against militants in Zabul's Khak-i-Afghan district. Matin assured of every effort at maintaining security.

Gen. Nizamuddin Khanjar, the 203 Thunder Military Corps commander in Ghazni, said security forces had full coordination in maintaining security in the province.

"The Taliban have always used people's homes in the war and we care about civilian lives," he said, adding that security forces had inflicted heavy casualties on the militants in various parts of the province.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied the fighters used people's homes as bastions. "We always care about local people's lives."

The fighting season traditionally begins in the spring and abates during the winter months." (Pajhwok)

(12) 5 Taliban ...

(2,562 deaths and 5,835 injured) between 1 January and 30 September, representing a one per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2015. Ground engagements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, followed by suicide and complex attacks, and improvised

explosive devices (IEDs), UNAMA said, adding that the anti-Government Elements caused 61 per cent of civilian casualties - 1,569 civilian deaths and 3,574 injured (5,143 total civilian casualties). (KP)

(13) Afghanistan...

Mohammad Shahzad blasted three foums in the first over to make his intentions clear. He lost his partner Najeeb Tarakai for 1 but continued to play attacking cricket. Usman Gir got his first chance in the series and stitched together a brief stand with Shahzad.

The 233/8 was Afghanistan's highest score in T20Is and versus Ireland. They are hot favorites to whitewash the series after this display.

O'Brien took a 4-for whereas Jacob Mulder earned a 2-for but still had no answers to Afghanistan's blitz with the long handle.

Ireland have already lost their last 4 matches against Afghanistan and will be hoping for the likes of Paul Stirling, Thompson, Porterfield and O'Brien to come good and not display another meek surrender against Rashid Khan and co.

A spirited fight is what Ireland has almost always provided. Today was no different. They showed spark and scrap to get past 200, but in the end, they had conceded just too many runs.

Afghanistan, in truth, were appalling in the power-play, but fought back nicely thereafter to thrash Ireland 3-0 in the T20I series.

This match, thus, was only being of academic interest. However, it will be far from being a dead rubber. The quality of cricket being played in this series has been exceptional.

While Afghanistan chased down 166 runs in the first game in 18 overs, the second rain-curtailed fixture saw the bowlers coming to the party. Rashid Khan (2-1-3-5) registered best figures by an Associate bowler in his side's 17-run win.

On the batting front, Najeeb Tarakai has had a brilliant run in the two games thus far. He scored 27 off 15 balls in the first game before going on to hammer 90 off 58 ball in the second game. In the third game to the young opener will look to make the most of his purple patch.

At the end of the match, the ICC congratulated Afghanistan on its remarkable form in the T20Is. (Tolonews)

(14) Torkham Closure ...

Meanwhile, money exchangers in Shahzada Market said the problems of residents will increase if the use of Pakistani rupees is not prevented in their areas.

"Government must act with determination to prevent the use of Pakistani rupees. If not, more people will face great losses," said Shahzada market spokesman Zerak.

Central Bank officials said the use of Pakistani rupees is not desirable for Afghans. The bank is not responsible for the losses businessmen incur due to the use of the Pakistani currency.

"The Central Bank is not responsible to pay compensation when people lose out because we continue our efforts to be responsible only for the Afghani currency's stability," the Central Bank spokesman Aimal Hashor said. (Tolonews)

(15) Afghan Forces, ...

Taliban insurgents and Afghan forces also broke out late on Saturday night in other parts of Khogyani and many Taliban insurgents were killed but the exact number is not clear so far.

At least four public order police forces personnel also their lives during the clashes, the provincial government said, adding that the ISIS militants were killed in US drone strikes in Kot district. (KP)

(16) Iraqi Forces ...

water facility, which provides the western side of Mosul with water, the statement said.

The troops killed many IS militants and destroyed three car bombs and 15 bombs, along with destroying a vehicle carrying IS militants, it added. (Xinhua)

(17) Dutch-Turkish...

time (0200 GMT), the Turkish official left her car and was moved to another car. She was moved back to Germany under the Dutch police' escort. A team of the Dutch Special Intervention Service arrived at the consulate before midnight and assisted the intervention.

Kaya wanted to visit the Turkish consulate to speak at a rally for a "yes" vote in the forthcoming constitutional referendum in Turkey.

Rotterdam's Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb said at a press conference at around 2 a.m. local time (0300 GMT) that the minister was seen as an "unwanted stranger," therefore she has to leave the country. (Xinhua)