

(1) IEC Criticized...

committed people and those who are not accused (of fraud) should be appointed in order to bring reforms to the electoral commissions. The commission should be committed to keeping up good values otherwise anything they say will be only a slogan," said Shah Mahmoud Mal, a member of Afghanistan Election Watchdog.

"This shows that there are things ongoing inside the election commission as it appoints officials without considering their capacity. It should appoint officials based on its strategy in order to use them at their best level," said Wahid Farza, a member of Afghanistan Lawyers Union.

According to the IEC framework, the heads of the IEC offices in provinces should be appointed in a free competition process. (Tolonews)

(2) UN Chief ...

The meeting took place on the sidelines of annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which opened here Wednesday to examine the impact of the rapid transformation of work on women and girls, including in the areas of equal pay, unpaid care work, the informal economy and in technology.

According to UN Women, the priority theme of this year's largest inter-governmental meeting is "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work." (Xinhua)

(3) UNSC Extends...

requested continued support efforts to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, and reiterated the importance of accelerating the establishment of a fair and transparent justice system. In that vein, the Council emphasized the importance of ensuring access for relevant organizations to all prisons and places of detention in Afghanistan.

Further in the text, the Council reiterated its support for the Government of Afghanistan, and in particular to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), in their fight against terrorism and violent extremism, calling upon the Afghan Government, with the assistance of the international community, to continue to address the threat posed by the Taliban as well as by Al Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) affiliates and other terrorist groups. (PR)

(4) Russian Backs...

"Afghanistan considers Russia a key partner in the region and Moscow's cooperation on the war against terrorism very important," the statement quoted the visiting advisor as saying. In a separate statement, the NSC said Atmar also met the head of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). "We maintain sustained dialogue with our Afghan friends and with you personally."

"We communicate with you regularly in your various capacities," Lavrov told Atmar. "Russian remained in favour of developing further cooperation with Afghanistan in trade, economic and humanitarian spheres and in helping strengthen the combat capability of the Afghan security forces, with a view to ensuring security in your country."

He added it was important to continue talking about ways to promote national reconciliation in Afghanistan. "In recent months, we have taken a whole number of active moves in cooperation with Afghanistan and key outside players."

"We are planning additional steps in this direction, and we hope to mobilise the will of the international community to move along this path," he said. Organised crime, human trafficking, terrorism and other issues were also discussed. Atmar said being a CSTO observer Afghanistan believed in a joint strategy against common threats. He said Afghanistan was prepared to jointly work with the CSTO for regional stability. CSTO was established in 1992 and currently Russian, Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan are its full members.

Atmar's visit to Russian comes at a time when Moscow has started taking more interest in Afghanistan. Russian confirmed it has been in contact with the Taliban for the sake of peace in the region. (Pajhwok)

(5) Report Claims ...

I was the mayor, most of these problems were resolved, especially the issue of green zones and urban development plans. A number of the issues that have been written in these documents date back to even 20 years ago," Safi said. Helmand residents meanwhile said such cases must be investigated. "Some of the land that is being used today was grabbed by powerful men," Esac Ali, a Helmand resident said. "Not only are a number of Helmand's former officials involved in these cases, but it has been said that even governors and ministers are involved," Abdul Haq Zowakman, a Lashkargah resi-

dent said.

"Anyone who did something wrong, who was cruel and corrupt was promoted. Anyone who worked honestly was ignored. There is no doubt about it," said Bashir Shakir, a member of Helmand provincial council.

Reports in the past have indicated that numerous task teams have been appointed to investigate the misuse of power by officials over the years, but sources have said that high-ranking officials are never investigated.

"We have had far too many examples where people have been able to get away with corruption, also large corruption. The anti-corruption justice center is a small, but significant step forward," said Franz-Michael Mellbin, EU ambassador to Afghanistan.

Despite progress having been made over the past few years in dealing with corruption, the country is still plagued by the scourge, which is seen as a major obstacle in Afghanistan's growth and development. (Tolonews)

(6) UNSC Resolution ...

and Road) Initiative, and regional development projects ...," said the resolution.

In Resolution 2274 which was adopted in March 2016, the council also called for strengthening the process of regional cooperation, including through regional development initiative such as the Belt and Road.

Proposed in 2013, the initiative has so far gained the support of over 100 countries and international organizations, and more than 40 have signed cooperation agreements with China. (Xinhua)

(7) Workshop Held ...

and Development (BMZ), the Afghan-German Cooperation has been working with the Afghan government to promote rule of law in Afghanistan. The civil society component of the program especially focuses on strengthening the linkage between civil society actors and the Afghan Government as well as on capacity building for civil society actors. Relevant legal topics are addressed through the supported civil society organizations. (Wadsam)

(8) Large-Scale...

would be hired on the basis of capabilities not relations.

Mohammad Nabi, the Helmand education department Islamic studies, head said that 139 schools have been closed due to security concerns depriving thousands of students from education this year. Thirty employees of education department and 35 students have been killed in last few years, he added.

Tribal and border affairs director Ahmad Naveed Nazari said that war has affected the values of region as well. "We used to solve our problems through local council (Jirga), there is no such meeting due to insecurity", he added.

Helmand commerce department director Mohammad Khan Nasart said that many industrialist and entrepreneurs have left Helmand over security concerns.

Religious scholars' representative Maulvi Mehar Dil said that ongoing fights have left adverse effects on religious aspects. He added, "Half of the mosques are closed and people are not going to mosques for prayers due to fear of insecurity". (Pajhwok)

(9) Saplings...

in the Takia Diwana area of Old Aibak, said 230 better-quality saplings had been planted on his land by professional agriculture experts.

"The plants I received are better compared to those sold in the market. I hope they will be more productive," he said.

The Agriculture and Livestock Department says 3,450 acres of land has been cultivated with pistachio, grape, apricot, cherry, peach and apple with support from the World Bank since 2010. (Pajhwok)

(10) "GMIC Effectively ..

connection bridge between the government and people and it would shorten distance between the two sides.

He said one of his primary goals was to hear people's voice and protect their rights.

Deputy spokesman to the president, Shah Hussain Murtazavi, said, "We will witness a wide range of developments, initiatives and improved coordination among people and the government under the leadership of new head for the media center,"

The nature of war has changed in Afghanistan and the region and the enemy want to damage people's trust on the government by spreading propaganda among them, he said. He added one of the main goals of GMIC was to open up people's mind with correct information. (Pajhwok)

(11) Pakistan Participates.

threats. He stressed on the need of bilateral engagement for border manage-

ment and counter-terrorism cooperation to prevent cross-border movement of terrorists.

The meeting discussed the need of continued efforts for peace talks between Afghan government and Taliban under an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process. The delegates also emphasized that regional economic cooperation and connectivity would strengthen prospects of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

This was the first senior officials meeting for the next Head of Asia Ministerial Conference which would be held in Baku, Azerbaijan later this year. (PR)

(12) Pak Refugees...

He said polio was a harmful disease so people should prevent their children from it by giving them anti-polio vaccines.

Adam Khan, a resident of Barmal district, said that the polio vaccination campaign was suspended in their area as Waziristan refugees did not want their children vaccinated.

"Their thoughts are negative about polio vaccines, but officials concern should at least implement the campaign in our area where people want their children vaccinated," he said.

Paktika public health director, Dr. Wali Gul Kharoti, said polio vaccine was good for eradication of paralysis, hepatitis B, measles, pneumonia, TB and many other diseases.

He also said that a number of displaced people in Barmal district prevented the polio campaign.

Kharoti said he was trying to resolve the problem through negotiations and let the vaccination campaign implemented in refugees areas where polio cases have been discovered.

Mohammad Azam, a psychologist, said people's views have disrupted about polio vaccine campaigns in the recent past.

He said people believe their children would turn shameless and disrespectful if they were vaccinated.

He asked the people not to decide themselves and follow directions from their elders and experts.

Thirteen positive cases of polio including seven of them in Barmal district alone have recorded in Afghanistan current solar year. (Pajhwok)

(13) 'Countries ...

such threats or assaults, the article adds. Pakistan occasionally shelled rockets into the eastern border areas of the country and the Afghan government has repeatedly accused the neighbor country of providing safe havens to terrorist groups.

Obaidullah Barakzai, a lawmaker from Uruzgan province, said, "We have the BSA agreement with the US so why Pakistan interferes and send terrorists to Afghanistan, the US government is responsible to defend our national sovereignty and do not allow our neighbor countries to interfere in Afghanistan affairs,"

"The BSA did not heal our pains, but it caused further insecurity in our country, the problems would not be solved by complaining from the government, the US should be pressed because it is a friend of Pakistan, it helped Pakistan more than Afghanistan in the past years," he said.

He asked the administrative board of the house to include the BSA as a reviewing subject in the house's agenda. First deputy speaker, Hamayon Hamayon, talking about the BSA, said, "The Afghan people did not get any benefits from this security agreement, our security situation is worsening, I ask all colleagues to study the BSA and find out who is blame for the failure,"

He said if the agreement was continued to be fruitless for Afghanistan in fight against terrorism than it should be a subject to think about it.

Pointing to Pakistan's support to terrorism, he said, "We ask all the countries who fight terrorism to add those states that support terrorist organizations to the blacklist,"

He also asked the United Nations (UN) to press states that sponsored terrorism and let the world be free of their evil activities. (Pajhwok)

(14) Tashwiq...

and appoint officials in senior posts," Mudabir said.

Commenting on the issue, MP Ramazan Bashardost said: "No law allows the Administrative Office of the President to run such a program. The administrative office of the president is not deaf or blind; it can see that there are offices by the name of human resources which deal with the appointment of officials for relevant government organizations."

"When a specific office is given to an institution, doubt emerges as to whether there is a political goal or (whether they are) seeking privileges in this bid," university lecturer Sayed Massoud said. Meanwhile, deputy head of the President's Administrative Office, Daud Nawrozi, accepted that the Tashwiq office is a parallel institution but said that he works for President Ashraf Ghani

and if any office refuses their suggestions, they will ask the president to put pressure on them.

"We have other offices as well but there is only one special office which is the Tashwiq office which conducts a special program for the president, and the administrative office has the authority to do this," Nawrozi said.

"We send top CVs to government institutions and then we follow it up within three months to see whether it is done or not. And then we take the information to President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah," he added. According to him, they have appointed 200 people through Tashwiq to date and they are working on a further 200 applications.

Nawrozi named the head of an institution in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was appointed through the program. (Tolonews)

(15) Taliban ...

plans and in the near future will clear the area of insurgents to maintain security for the Laghman people," said Shirzad. But residents of Mehtarlam city are worried about the Taliban's activities around the city as two weeks ago insurgents fought for two days and nights to take control of the city, but were pushed back by security forces.

Wahidullah, a resident of Mehtarlam city, said he is worried about the future and his family's security. In the last attack, Taliban advanced close to the area where Wahidullah's house is located.

"It was a very bad situation. Clashes were going on and Taliban had taken control of two police check-posts in our region and still they are in houses," he said. Security forces meanwhile said they are monitoring all movement and that additional troops are stationed in the city. "Taliban had entered the city, but we fought and pushed them back. Now they are in the houses 1km away from us," said one policeman Masoud. (Tolonews)

(16) Female Police...

she said. In response to a question on how her family feels about her serving in the force, she said she joined the police with the help of her parents and husband and no relatives of hers are against her.

Meanwhile, security chief of Badakhshan police, Mohammad Nabi, said women have an important role to play in the country's security. "Female police officers play an effective role in ensuring security as well as in search operations. Maria Akbari is a talented and experienced woman and we are happy with her," he said. Akbari meanwhile called on other women to join the police or other security sectors in order to serve their country. (Tolonews)

(17) Media Meeting ...

important step towards effective sewage management. Until the project's completion in 2019, Germany will provide more than AFN 3 billion funds. Apart from technical equipment, cooperation between different stakeholders was also crucial, Salah Kabeer, a civil society activist and water expert emphasized. He underlined: "The Afghan government, civil society and media need to work together to preserve our ground water resources." All panelists further highlighted the media's key role in increasing awareness among the population regarding questions on the efficient use of ground water.

"Media Meetings 2017 - Afghan media for Social Responsibility" are a series of regular events held by Afghan-German cooperation and SAJNA. The meetings bring together experts from the public sector, civil society, development organizations and the media to discuss important development issues. (Wadsam)

(18) 63 Militants ...

Afghanistan but the anti-government armed militant groups have recently increased their insurgency activities in some parts of the province during the recent years. This comes as the Afghan forces are busy conducting counter-terrorism operations in the restive districts of Nangarhar under the Shaheen-25 operations launched several weeks ago. The operations are being conducted with the support of the US forces based in Afghanistan who are providing close-air support under a broader role granted by the Obama administration earlier last year to target the terrorist groups in the country. (KP)

(19) Concern Raised...

that our products are of good quality. But because people are more interested in foreign goods, retailers make a bigger profit selling the products as imported goods," said Hikmat Ali, a furniture manufacturer. Meanwhile, a number of trade experts have criticized government for not having regulations in place and strong marketing plans for domestic goods and called for government to step up its support of domestic industries. Experts said that a number of neighboring countries also sell Af-

ghanistan's products under their own name on the international market.

"We have lots of problems, good marketing is not being doing for domestic products therefore our products sell under the name and labels of other countries," said Samir Matin, the director of a local marketing company.

Manufacturers have also spoken out about the lack of support from government in terms of marketing domestic products. Abdul Samad, one factory owner, said that "despite current problems that industry owners face, most factories are facing a slump and government must support domestic products." These business owners also said government does not evaluate the quality of imported goods. Despite this, the domestic market often chooses imported goods over domestic products believing them to be of superior quality. (Tolonews)

(20) Nawroz Visitors...

Nawroz. While visiting the Hazrat Ali shrine with a friend he said: "We came here to Mazar-e-Sharif to celebrate Nawroz." Currently the city is adorned with lights and is teeming with visitors from around the country - all there to celebrate the new year.

Another visitor, Hamid, who is from Samangan province. He said he is optimistic about peace coming to the country and asked people to stand united in order to attain a secure Afghanistan.

TOLOnews reporter Arif Mosavi also spoke to some Helmand residents who were in Mazar for the celebrations.

"We hope that security is maintained across our country and all people stay in peace," said Helmand resident Jabar. "Most of the people buy bolani (traditional Afghan pastry) here; those who are financially well off are staying in hotels and everyone is buying bolani," said Ali, a bolani seller.

With the influx of visitors, traffic has increased in the city ahead of Nawroz but traffic police said they are working hard to keep the city free of any incidents. "We are working day and night to have a good traffic flow in order to prevent any bad incident," said Mohammad Naeem Osman, a traffic police officer in Mazar-e-Sharif city. (Tolonews)

(21) 1 Dead, 2 ...

policeman and another civilian were wounded. The injured were immediately shifted to the hospital where their health condition was reported stable.

Mujahid said, the perpetrators managed to flee the site of incident, but police captured their vehicle. Police launched search to arrest the assailants, he added. (Pajhwok)

(22) Policemen among ...

official had been evacuated to civil hospital. He said. A resident of the area, Abdullah Syedi, said two policemen were killed and five others wounded.

He said, he saw the two dead bodies of the militants but was unaware about injured rebels. Taliban have not yet commented about the overnight clash. (Pajhwok)

(23) Taliban Set ...

Meer Ghausuddin, Abdul Hadi and Hayatullah. Local authorities were unable to rescue them.

Abdul Wali Wakeel, the Provincial Council (PC) member said the captive tribal elders were release Friday night and joined their families.

He said the Taliban took one million Afghans against the releases of tribal elders. Wakeel said the release of the tribal elders was delayed because they demanded youth of the district resign their police and army jobs.

Three hundred youth from Azra district are in Afghan National Army (ANA) ranks, with 150 others serving in the police force. The Taliban have asked them to quit.

In addition, the insurgents have also called on residents of Akbarkehel locality to remove security posts from their area. In the past, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had confirmed the captivity of the tribal elders, saying the movement had evidence of their cooperation with the government.

Mujahid said the cases of the leaders were being investigated. He had also hinted at their release provided they stopped cooperating with the government. (Pajhwok)

(24) Afghans, ...

of Islamabad, rounded up 46 suspects, including 11 Afghan nationals, and also seized weapons and ammunition. It did not give further details.

Pakistan still hosts an estimated three million registered and undocumented Afghan refugees. The latest arrests came on a day when Taliban militants assaulted outposts in the northwestern Khyber tribal district on the Afghan border, killing two paramilitary troops. The army said the pre-dawn "terrorist" raid was launched from across the Afghan territory and retaliatory fire killed at least six retreating assailants. Separately, a pair of suicide bombers armed with automatic weapons at-

tacked a training center for the Frontier Constabulary security force, killing an officer and wounding two others.

The commandant of the institution, Liaquat Ali Khan, told reporters the bombers tried to sneak into the facility, which housed more than 70 recruits at the time, to "cause maximum casualties, but the guards quickly responded and neutralized both the assailants." One of them was gunned down in the shootout. The other was killed when his suicide vest was hit and exploded during the gunfire, he added.

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, an offshoot of the Pakistani Taliban, took credit for both the attacks. Pakistan insists the militant group operates out of Afghan border areas and has repeatedly called on Kabul to take action against it.

Islamabad unilaterally closed Afghan border crossings after last month's attacks and authorities said the restriction remains in place, though authorities have hinted at lifting it soon. (VoA)

(25) Common Bonds...

"At least we have something in common, perhaps," Trump said casually, referring to 2013 reports that the U.S. was monitoring Merkel's cellphone conversations. As for the most recent report, Trump said he shouldn't be blamed for quoting a Fox News analyst who had accused British intelligence of helping Obama spy on him. (AP)

(26) Former U.S.

was from a military general at the North American Aerospace Defense Command, who said his computers showed 200 missiles on the way from the Soviet Union to the United States.

It took Perry, the then under-secretary for research and engineering, several days to determine what he called an "human error of our system." (Xinhua)

(27) Trump's Visa...

based on religion, and the courts have ruled that the ban, which bars entry of citizens from six Muslim-dominant countries for 90 days, amounts to blanket discrimination against Muslims and is thus unconstitutional.

Supporters of the ban contend it is not a ban on the Muslim religion, noting that it only covers Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

The ban does not cover dozens of majority Muslim nations across the world, such as Indonesia, for example, the world's largest Muslim nation by population. (Xinhua)

(28) White House...

concerns were understood and heard and it would be relayed to the White House." On Thursday evening, Spicer repeated the Fox News claim that British intelligence agency GCHQ was used by Obama to spy on Trump

Tower in the lead-up to last November's election. The comments prompted GCHQ to issue a public statement that said, "Recent allegations made by media commentator Judge Andrew Napolitano about GCHQ being asked to conduct 'wiretapping' against the then president-elect are nonsense. They are utterly ridiculous and should be ignored." (Xinhua)

(29) UNHCR Opens...

million U.S. dollars to continue providing urgent assistance to internally displaced persons from Mosul and also for Iraqis who have crossed to Syria, he said. The appeal includes a new request for an additional 7 million U.S. dollars in the next 10 days and 30 million U.S. dollars in the next two months, the spokesman added.

Mosul witnessed a fighting between the Iraq government forces and Islamic State (IS/Da'esh) terrorists

The Iraqi government force's advance toward Mosul came after the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced on Feb. 19 the start of an offensive to drive the extremist militants out of the western side of Mosul, locally known as the right bank of Tigris River which bisects the city. (Xinhua)

(30) French President

agents when they were trying to check his car near Stains, north of the Paris region, before fleeing. He was seen later at Vitry-sur-Seine in the southeastern suburbs of Paris, for car-jacking before leaving to Orly airport. French Interior Minister Bruno Le Roux confirmed earlier that the assailant was known to the police and intelligence services. (Xinhua)

(31) Relations with ...

two leaders deemed it reasonable to revitalize the Joint Working Group on Energy and Infrastructure Issues and the effective work of its Joint Subgroup on Oil and Gas Cooperation in the field of implementation of CASA-1000 power project. In order to increase the volume of trade turnover between the two countries, taking into account the great opportunities in this direction, it was suggested to use the effective activity of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. (Daily Times)