

(1) Sustainable

for peace talks with the Taliban, who need to give up violence, sever any ties to the Al Qaeda terrorist network and to support the constitution of Afghanistan.

"Within that framework, the president and the government of Afghanistan have enormous latitude to work with the Taliban on defining that future. And as I said, President Obama is committed to doing everything possible to help support President Ghani, CEO Abdullah and the people of Afghanistan."

Convinced that the passage of the Bilateral Security Agreement has created the flexibility for Obama to continue supporting the training and equipping of Afghan forces, he also referred to engagement with Pakistan and its reciprocity.

The announcement of support for keeping Afghan security forces at their peak strength of 352,000 through 2017 was a strong message to the Taliban and other violent groups that the US was prepared for long-term to support to Afghanistan, he said.

Ghani said enduring peace from strength would bring regional cooperation, and it was important that all regional actors translated their words of the need for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan into deeds. "We hope very much that the past will be overcome and the future will be different and would correspond to our vision," (Pajhwok)

(2) MoF Reports

trajectory. On the other hand, a number of independent analysts have raised doubts about the accuracy of the MoF's seven percent figure. Some say given the extent of the economic downturn experienced over the past year and the high level of corruption around the country, particularly among revenue sources like customs offices, the gap between reality and the government's ambitious projections is likely much bigger.

"Considering the unsuitable economic conditions and presence of corruption in the government administrations in Afghanistan, an overall seven percent decrease is not correct," economist Aziz Atefi told TOLONews. "This reduction is more than what the officials from the Ministry of Finance have said," he added.

The Ministry of Finance set an initial goal of 133 billion Afghanis in domestic revenue during the first three months of the new fiscal year, but was only able to gather 100 billion Afghanis. The shortfall reportedly compelled the ministry to request 530 million in emergency aid from the international community.

Despite ongoing concerns about corruption in the Afghan customs offices, especially after controversies surrounding widespread graft in the Herat customs office last year, MoF officials maintain that they were able to reach their goal of 11.8 billion Afghanis in revenue from customs in the first three months of the fiscal year. (Tolonews)

(3) No Plan to

the issue, acting AG Noorul Habib Jalal told the Meshrano Jirga on Tuesday. "The Presidential Palace has received a report that a number of attorneys are 12th graders."

Subsequently, he informed the senators, "we have been directed to ascertain their qualifications." In compliance with the orders, 212 of the 1,920 attorneys were examined, the acting AG said.

Of those evaluated, 72 were undergraduates, 70 without professional qualifications and 70 others had graduated from military universities. But the test was not aimed at firing the attorneys, he explained.

Five percent of the 212 AGO employees could not answer even ordinary questions, Jalal claimed, saying they would be transferred to other branches and the rest would continue in their positions.

Earlier, public representatives called the test an insult to workers who had years of experience behind them. They warned firing the attorneys could trigger a crisis in the country. (Pajhwok)

(4) India Extends

about 480 think-tanks. India is partnered with Afghanistan Economic and Legal studies organization. India conducts training sessions, forums and events every year which is attended by Afghan Researchers and Scholars from different think-tank organizations.

"We share the training facility that we do for them so once in a year we meet say for example senior member of these think tanks of these organizations come and take part in three full day programme so throughout the three days one of the things that we do we majorly do is to look at everybody's annual plans in this year

what are the plans and activities they have planned, what are the kinds of projects they are going to do and really make them think through," said Baishali Bohmjan, Director for Development for outreach, Centre for Civil Society.

The centre takes initiative in providing ideas to bring development in the lives of Afghan people.

"Of course there is lot of security threats but they feel that young people are ready to demand more freedom, demand greater peace, the youth are exceptionally vocal about what they want what they do not want and they are turning into activists. Last year we had about 20 young people from the youth organizations coming to CCS. We spent the whole day trying to talk about what are the ideas to change Afghanistan so its young people taking interest in what are the big top thing that can change Afghanistan and how do they go back and put this learning into their practice," added Bohmjan. India as part of global community supports the cause of each country by exchange of thoughts, ideas and putting the challenges in a common platform and providing long term solutions for development. (ANI)

(5) Kerry Unveils

2012 enduring strategic partnership agreement. Kerry said later in the year he would be traveling to Kabul to join Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani in hosting a meeting of the bilateral commission, which would be the first since 2013.

The creation of a New Development Partnership is aligned with the unity government's reform agenda, he said. This initiative reflects the strategic importance of the US-Afghan relationship and it recognises a new era of cooperation between the two governments.

"The partnership will promote Afghan self-reliance by using up to 800 million in US aid to incentivise and measure Afghan-led reform and development activities and strengthen Afghan institutions and fiscal transparency, and give the new unity government more opportunity to lead its own development trajectory," he said. In his remarks, Ghani said the government of national unity was an enduring phenomenon. One of its key characteristics was its honesty in dealing with the balance sheet that it had inherited," the president added.

"I very much welcome the energy initiative because that is the difference between Afghanistan of today and the Afghanistan of the future. This energy initiative will turn us into a hub where energy from Central Asia and also increasingly generated into - from Afghanistan will flow into South Asia. It would make the dream of Asian integration a reality," Ghani said. Summing up the day's proceedings, Abdullah described the meetings and the progress made as a new chapter in the bilateral relationship. "Today was a unique opportunity to once again take stock of what has happened, but, more importantly, the way forward..." (Pajhwok)

(6) List of 16

submitted. Their higher education degrees and citizenship documentation are likely to be put under the microscope once they are received, as falsified degrees and dual-citizenship have typically been the Achilles heel of cabinet nominees in the past.

"The list of cabinet nominees has been provided, but today we will discuss it and there is a chance that they might be included in the agenda for Saturday and be officially introduced," Second Deputy Muhammad Nazeer Ahmadzai said on Tuesday.

For the most part, lawmakers have responded positively toward the list of nominees, which will provide the last appointments needed to fill the remaining gaps in the national unity government. President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah had been under growing pressure to name the remainder of their cabinet as soon as possible, with over six months passed since they took office.

Meanwhile, Khalil Ahmad Shaheedzada, the Deputy Chairman of Religious, Cultural and Higher Education, has said that the review of the nominees will begin once their qualifying and background documents are ready. "We are waiting for their education documents and ID cards to be submitted to us, so that we can start our work," Shaheedzada said. The Office of the State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs is responsible for gathering the documents.

Muhammad Nabi Farahi, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, says the documents will be ready for the lawmakers to review as soon as Wednesday. "Starting tomorrow, everything will be done from our end," Farhi said. "We have completed some of the educational documents today, and will end our work today and will send

it tomorrow."

Nevertheless, the remaining gaps in the national unity government's cabinet, even with the 16 new nominations, continue to frustrate many. In particular, the lack of a new nominee for Minister of Defense has raised questions about security management around the country.

"Still, considering the fact that the nominee for the Ministry of Defense has not been introduced, a serious gap is felt and continued delay in the announcement of the nominee for the Ministry of Defense shows that the president still has not come to a final choice for this position," said Kabul MP Qayoum Sajadi. "In addition, earlier there were some reports the president is having a hard time choosing the nominee for the ministry." (Tolonews)

(7) MPs Raise

appraisal of the threat posed by Daesh in Afghanistan. "Officials from National Directorate of Security have said in Senate that Daesh does not exist, but officials from the Ministries of Defense and Interior have said that Daesh does exist," Kabul MP Farhad Sediqi said. "So, if they exist, please provide clarification about the whereabouts of the group and about their activities."

The acting director of the NDS, Hesa-uddin Hesa-uddin, responded to the lawmakers by saying that the Taliban has been fractured and that many of their disaffected members have begun to fly the Daesh flag. "After the operations in the Waziristan area by the Pakistani military, a number of foreigners have come to Afghanistan from Pakistan, in districts such as Khak Afghan of Zabul," Hesa-uddin said. "They want to attract our youth to Daesh and start their operations in the northern parts of the country in order to achieve their goals."

One of the most high-profile Daesh-claimed incidents in Afghanistan so far was the kidnapping of 31 Hazara travelers along the Kabul-Kandahar highway last month. Representatives were eager to find out more details about the government's response to the abductions on Monday.

"Unfortunately, people don't know where they are, are they in Zabul, in Helmand or abroad?" asked Bamyar MP Fukoori Beheshti. "Security forces must provide information to their families."

The security officials acknowledged their lack of forthrightness about the handling of the abductions, but maintained that they are doing everything they can to resolve the situation without any lives lost. "We are trying to release these 31 individuals safe and sound, without any harm to them," Minister of Interior Noor-ul-Haq Uloomi said. "We would not like to bring the issue in the media so much, as the work is handled at a high level." Earlier this week, news spread on social media that some of the 31 hostages had been released. However, General Murad Ali, the Acting Minister of Defense denied the reports' validity. "There was a rumor about their release, but this issue is not true," he said on Monday.

The visit to Parliament also gave the security officials the chance to voice concerns about the security protocol for MPs. According to the Minister of Interior, there are currently 3,000 policemen and 98 police rangers assigned for the protection of MPs, which he suggested was excessive.

"Over 3,000 policemen are with the MPs, 98 of our police ranger vehicles are with the MPs, and there are also a number of armories that are with MPs," Uloomi said. (Tolonews)

(8) 13 Passengers

added that the police have started investigations in this regard.

"Two men came to us and asked our driver that where from did he come? When he replied that from Kandahar, they killed him and moved toward another car," an eyewitness passenger Ataulah told TOLONews.

But the police chief of Maidan Wardak, Khalil Andrabi, blamed the incident on suspected Daesh militants, saying there were some alleged signs of Daesh in the attackers.

"The shooting that has occurred here are quite same like the brutal killings by Daesh in Iraq and Syria," Andrabi said.

However, no group including the Taliban has claimed responsibility for the killings so far. The highway between Kabul and Kandahar, lying on unsafe Zabul, Ghazni and Wardak provinces, have been very unsafe over the past few weeks since the abduction of 31 civilian passengers by unknown gunmen. Almost a month has gone since the abduction but the fate of abductees belonging to Hazara ethnic minority is still unknown. (Tolonews)

(9) HRW Wants

mob in Kabul an example of the gov-

ernment's inability to protect women from violence.

Ghani was asked to press Obama on closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and reopening investigations into torture and other ill-treatment of detainees by the CIA and US military personnel.

"US personnel tortured and killed detainees in Afghanistan," Sifton said. "Ghani should use his meeting with Obama to ask him to order or reopen criminal investigations."

Over the past 20 years, it alleged, the Taliban had engaged in extensive war crimes, including deliberate attacks on civilians and indiscriminate bombings. The US and Afghan governments should support efforts by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate abuses by all parties.

Ghani and Obama should publicly commit to making human rights and accountability priorities in their new joint security strategy, Sifton demanded. "It's time to reject the temptation of expediency over respect for human rights." (Pajhwok)

(10) Pentagon to

in that process, and it's our understanding - it's our knowledge that Obama is actively considering that request," Kerry said.

Ghani too left the final decision to Obama, saying the two nations strategic partners, bound by common interests and acting together to ensure the safety of the United States and Afghanistan.

"Numbers are a means; they are not an end in themselves. So we are not going to get involved in any discussion of numbers. That's a field for experts, and we defer to the judgment of those experts such as General Campbell..." he added.

The Afghan forces were in a tremendous and admirable process of change and evolution, taking on new missions, Carter noted, saying they were further developing their special

"With respect to the number of US forces, that is something that will be discussed with Obama tomorrow, but for the specific about US and coalition forces after 2016, our objective - and I think the president has made this very clear - is to be down to a very small enduring presence in 2017 and beyond," Carter said.

Ghani emphasised that Afghanistan is shifting from an emphasis on quantity to one of quality. "As the conditions change, we will be viewing and reviewing actively. What is critical at this moment with the train, advise, assist mission is on the one hand, to focus on training, leadership, and an orderly change," he said. (Pajhwok)

(11) Protests Continue

the investigation teams. She was killed in the presence of a number of policemen who were quietly watching the scene, something that has provoked the anger of citizens, human rights organizations and the civil society groups.

"We will not sit quiet until the government doesn't prosecute killers of Farkhunda," a protestor said.

A number of public figures, former government officials and the members of civil society groups also took part in the protests.

"We all have come here to ask from the Supreme Court and government to Afghanistan to bring the perpetrators to justice," former presidential spokesman Wahid Omar said.

But some other protestors criticized the religious scholars for not delivering the real teachings of Islam to the citizens.

However, the security agencies have rejected the accusation against her as baseless, saying there was no evidence found that she had set Quran on fire.

The police have arrested 18 suspects including policemen in connection to Farkhunda's killing.

Her parents also strongly refuted the allegations against her, saying Farkhunda was herself a teacher of Quran and she could not commit such a crime.

"Farkhunda was innocent and all the accusations against her were untrue," interior minister Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi told the Parliament on Monday.

Her burial ceremony was held Sunday in Kabul where the women for the first time in Afghanistan's history carried the dead body to the grave. (Tolonews)

(12) 42 Suspects

It was initially claimed that the crowd had beaten the deeply religious woman, who had just finished a diploma in Islamic Studies, to death because she had burned a copy of the Quran. But the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs said its investigation showed no incident of a Quran's burning had taken place in the area.

Even senior police officials admitted they believed the allegation against Farkhunda that she had burned a copy of the book was false.

Witnesses have come forward to claim that Farkhunda was in fact murdered because she dared to question the superstitious practices of a local mullah who was known for selling charms to women outside a shrine in Kabul.

President Ghani, now in Washington on a landmark five-day visit, had condemned the lynching as "a heinous crime" and ordered an investigation.

The Presidential Palace-appointed delegation to investigate Farkhunda's murder formally began its probe a day earlier. (Pajhwok)

(13) 20,000 More

be increased to 120,000 after more girls are enrolled," the director said. He said all 72 girls' schools, including primary, middle and high, were operational in Khost City and districts.

A multi-sections institute was also available for female students in Khost City, where currently 30 students were registered, Bakhtiar added.

The education department has also been planning to open primary education centers this year for girls who had been deprived of education.

The director said his department had many achievements regarding girls' education last solar year that ended on March 21. "Nearly 10,000 illiterate women received education courses launched by UNESCO last year," he added.

Education officials say currently 400 schools, including 70 which have new buildings, are open in Khost City and districts. Nearly 360,000 boys and girls attend schools in Khost. (Pajhwok)

(14) Camp David

country, he paid tribute to our bilateral friendship, relationship, and shared values and the courage and the fierce independence of the Afghan people - a pride of independence that we have come to know well," Kerry said.

In his remarks, Ghani said he was 10 years old when Eisenhower visited Afghanistan. "I was 10 years old when President Eisenhower visited Afghanistan. All the school children were lined up to greet the President of the United States," he said.

"What impressed us most was he chose to ride in an open car. All other heads of state that visited Afghanistan would not show their faces to the public or stand in an open car. That openness is what has characterized the American attitude to life, to politics, and to engagement," the President said.

"Talking about President Eisenhower's visit to Afghanistan, there was a little bit of age revelation as well," Dr Abdullah joked soon thereafter referring to the remarks of Ghani. "Exactly," Ghani said.

"So I don't remember that visit; I'd heard about it," Dr Abdullah said. "Were you born?" asked Ghani.

"That's a different question," Dr Abdullah said amidst laughter. "So that shows that the relation goes back to the history, and then you have been with us during easy times and difficult times," he said.

In August 2007, the then US President, George Bush, had hosted the then Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, at Camp David. (Pajhwok)

(15) Kunar

Nangarhar called "Sharq". He said the firm had completed 70 percent work on the school building before abandoning the project.

He said he had discussed the issue with provincial as well as Kabul officials and had referred the construction company to the prosecutor's office, but there had been no positive response so far.

He said he had also submitted a report to the Education Ministry in this regard and repeatedly called the firm's officials to appear before him, but they did not.

Kunar police chief Brig. Gen. Abdul Habib Syedkhal said police were searching for officials of the Sharq company to find them and bring them to justice in cooperation with Nangarhar authorities.

Acting governor Shujaul Mulik Jalala linked the incomplete project to signing its contract in Kabul and handing over the project to sub-contractors.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News nothing had been achieved from the 5.6 million afghanis contract for the school building. Jalala said such contracts should be signed by provincial governments in order to keep construction firms from abandoning projects.

"The Nangarhar Sharq Company has no office in Jalalabad or here in Kunar, it has no telephone numbers. I don't think the firm itself had started the project. It must be a subcontractor who fled before completing 75 percent of work, for which the subcontractor seems to have received funds." (Pajhwok)

(16) High Expectations

to discuss peace negotiations with the Taliban and the expansion of Daesh in Afghanistan.

"Today, our people want work, they want food. People are in horrible economic conditions. In their talks with the U.S., national unity government leaders must be effective in gathering more aid for Afghanistan," Takhar MP Mariam Kofi said on Monday.

"I think officials from the national unity government have gone to the U.S. to report on security and Daesh situations, while, from my point of view, the U.S. intelligence can tell them more about the situation in Afghanistan," Kabul MP Ramazan Bashardost said. (Tolonews)

(17) Surkhrod Elders

others said: "There are no tension among tribes in the Surkhrod district and hence no need to raise and deploy ALP force there in the presence of the national police."

But another elder and provincial council member, Abdul Qahar Qadir, called ALP deployment in the district as vital and urged the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) to increase the number of the proposed force above hundred. (Pajhwok)

(18) Jawzjan Carpet

one metre carpet was previously made for 4,000afis but the cost had come down to 1,500afis. "The industry had suffered a lot and nobody would know Afghan carpets in the not-so-distant future."

Yulberz Atayee, the Jawzjan chamber of commerce and industry head, said until 2012 they had 2 million square metres of carpet exports annually. The exports have now decreased to 200,000 square metres. Atayee added Afghan carpets were smuggled to Pakistan and subsequently sold as Pakistani products in international markets. "If the authorities are not serious and do not pay attention to creating industrial zones for us, our carpets will lose their marketability edge," he warned. (Pajhwok)

(19) Eastern Zone

election pledges. Another tribal elder Malak Samad Khan said leaders of eastern zone would continue struggling for their rights. He demanded the government bring reforms in the provincial administration. At the end, the gathering decided to form a 15-member commission to meet the president and inform him about their concerns. (Pajhwok)

(20) \$70mn Spent

(200) who visit the hookah bars daily. The amount calculated is only of those 150 hookah bars that the researcher had visited for the purpose of his report. "Unfortunately families have lost control on their sons and daughters and it's so obvious in our society. If the families do not care about this problem and the government does not take any prohibitory actions, we will witness dozens of youngsters victimized," Khaama Press quotes Mohsen Sharif, a cultural activist. In June 2014, the Afghan House of Representatives had passed a law prohibiting use of tobacco in covered locations. The law was passed to the Senate where it stayed for a year and was rejected thereafter. (Wadsam)

(21) 3,100 Fruit

chards were grown on 640 acres of land in Samangan, on 450 acres in Balkh, on 175 acres in Jawzjan, 140 acres in Faryab and on 300 acres in Saripul province. The World Bank-funded \$118 million NHLP is being implemented nationwide until 2018. The project was launched in 2008 and so far orchards on 27,500 acres of land have been established in the north. (Pajhwok)

(22) Weapons,

a huge quantity of arms and ammunitions in the area, which is considered the most dangerous in Helmand. A security operation code-named "Zulfikar" has been ongoing in the area over the past five weeks to subdue insurgents. The area, 10 kilometres from Lashkargah, the provincial capital, had been under Taliban's control over the past eight years and served as their stronghold. (Pajhwok)

(23) 12 Suspected

Tooryalai, Abdul Razaq, Wali Mohammad, Ahmad Gul, Shafiqullah, Ahmadullah, Atta Mohammad, Mohammad Haroon, Noor Agha, Saifuddin, Shir Agha and Abdul Shakur. NDS also states that the arrested individuals have confessed to their crimes during interrogation. Statements from the National Directorate of Security (NDS) usually do not contain information about the exact date of the incident but their statements are issued after recent activities. (KP)