

(1) Foreign Policy...

"We want Afghanistan to be the connecting point for transferring of the energy of the Central Asia to South Asia and this is something that only Afghanistan can do for Pakistan," Ghani added.

Ghani said Afghanistan needs mutual cooperation in its regional policy to empower the country economically.

"Afghanistan can develop well and for making progress we need regional cooperation and without such cooperation going forward in terms of economy is not possible," Ghani said.

In his 18-minute speech, Ghani talked about peace as well. He said Consultative Loya Jirga will be held on the specified date and that it should be a national Jirga. (Tolo news)

(2) Peace Movement...

"Peace needs to be maintained and should be negotiated among those who are fighting against each other. Taliban needs to sit with President Ghani and should put an end to the war," said Maulawi Abdulhadi, a religious scholar.

"Those who pick up guns, including Taliban and Daesh, have no honor. They are killing the people," said Alia, a student in Nangarhar.

Other speakers at the event called on warring parties to leave no stone unturned in reaching their goals through peace talks.

The Helmand Peace Convoy

They got the name when a group of at least a dozen activists staged a protest in Lashkargah City last year on March 2018 against an attack that killed around 16 people that month. About a month later, the activists left Helmand on foot for Kabul.

The activists walked through towns and villages, crossed provinces and met with local residents along the way. For 38 days, they walked and as they progressed, so their numbers grew.

About 700kms later, the group of eight had grown to an estimated 100. They arrived in Kabul on June 18 and handed over demands for a ceasefire and peace to both the Afghan government and the Taliban.

During their stay in Kabul, they held sit-in protests outside diplomatic offices in Kabul. They also met with President Ghani on a Kabul street where they asked him to accelerate the peace efforts.

The activists, whose ages ranged from 17 to 65, came from all walks of life and include students, athletes and farmers among others. It was these and other activists that then extended their walk from Kabul to Balkh. (Tolo news)

(3) Khalilzad Regularly...

is an assembly of delegates from different layers of the society - is not the one which has been mentioned in the Afghan Constitution. "It is a consultative Jirga," he added.

The Jirga was supposed to be convened in March but the High Peace Council announced April 29 as a new date for the event where almost 2,000 delegates, 30 percent of them women, will attend to discuss the red lines and the pathway for peace.

"We have planned that the upcoming Jirga will be convened for four days and it will be divided into 50 working groups," Daudzai explained.

When asked about the Taliban's participation in the Jirga, Daudzai said the group can also attend the Jirga.

"No area will be deprived of sending their delegates to the Jirga," Daudzai stressed. "We will welcome it if anyone attends the Jirga as representative of the Taliban. We are discussing on whether the Taliban should also be invited or not."

Another debated issue among critics and politicians is the next Qatar meeting between Afghan political parties and the Taliban - same as the Moscow meeting which was held in February. The Afghan government has not decided on its presence in the meeting, Daudzai said.

"The upcoming Qatar meeting is hosted by an academic institution, and so far we have not decided to attend the event. In my view, the meeting should be held after the peace Jirga," Daudzai suggested.

Meanwhile, Daudzai welcomed Khalilzad's meetings with representatives of the EU, China and Russia for consultations on the Afghan peace, and called a good step.

"Some countries had some questions regarding Doha talks that what has happened there. It was a good step that the US invited representatives of those

countries and shared the information with them," Daudzai said.

According to the US Department of State, Khalilzad held two-day talks with representatives of EU, China, and Russia for consultations on the Afghan peace process in Washington DC on March 21-22.

Khalilzad and EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan Roland Kobia they agreed that bringing an end to Afghanistan's war and achieving peace must be the key objective, and that violence should cease, the US Department of State said in a statement. (Tolo news)

(4) USAID Supports...

customers and improved their understanding of customer needs. In last year's trade fair, businesses made approximately AFN 15.5 million from wholesale contract agreements and approximately AFN 2.9 million in direct retail sales. (PR)

(5) UNAMA Condemns...

civilian government administration. The deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime. UNAMA reiterates that under the principle of distinction parties to the conflict are obligated to distinguish between combatants and civilians at all times.

Those who have organized and enabled such attacks must be brought to justice and held to account.

UNAMA expresses its heartfelt sympathies to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured. (PR)

(6) China, Pakistan Have...

China's support to Pakistan in regard to its sovereignty, Shah Mahmood Qureshi said, China is a voice of reason and wisdom in our region.

We value and appreciate China's support and for its call to exercise restraint and upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. We welcome the Chinese efforts and its good offices to stabilize the situation in our region.

To a question about the current regional situation, the Minister said, recent developments in South Asia are well known to the world. The world is also aware of how the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan has acted to deescalate the situation.

Pakistan has convincingly manifested its quest for peace in the region by offering dialogue to India and investigation of the Pulwama incident if credible evidence was made available.

To a question about CPEC, Qureshi said Philosophy of PTI and our government is people-oriented and people-centric.

As reflected in the Pakistan-China joint statement issued in November 2018, both the countries agreed to focus on socio-economic development, job creation, improving people's livelihood, poverty alleviation, industrialization, development of industrial parks and agriculture- that is Phase-II of CPEC with the premise to build on the achievements of Phase-I.

President Xi Jinping's visionary Belt and Road Initiative, he said has drawn the attention of the world and countries along the Belt and Road are seeking means of collaborative and integrated economic development.

CPEC is the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative. It is primarily a bilateral project between Pakistan and China. CPEC will bring economic dividends to the region.

We are open to project-based participation of third countries including Saudi Arabia in the development of CPEC.

The Minister informed that at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, the Prime Minister Imran Khan will attend the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in April 2019. He is expected to hold meetings with Chinese leadership on the sidelines of the Forum. More details will be released in due course. (Monitoring Desk)

(7) Presidential Candidates...

The Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) also opposed the new election date and said the decision was made without consulting political parties.

The HIA in a statement said delaying polls was illegal and would cause consequences. The power should be transferred to the new government on May 22 in accordance with the law, it said.

The party, led by presidential candidate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, said the national unity government would lose its legitimacy after May 22 and the country would face with a constitutional vacuum. "No one including the IEC has the right to extend the period of the current government."

The source added the IEC had no respect for law and people's votes and

was trying to remove political parties and their role from the election process. On the other hand, seven other candidates, who have formed a consultative council, welcomed the new election date.

The seven presidential candidates in a statement said that September 28 was a right date for holding next presidential and provincial council elections as well as Wolesi Jirga election in Ghazni province.

The statement said postponement of elections was a great chance for the IEC to improve its capabilities for fair and transparent polls and to win public trust. (Pajhwok)

(8) CEO, FM Rabbani...

Support mission.

Currently 1,200 German soldiers are stationed in Afghanistan, most of them in northern Balkh province.

The Afghan government welcomed German extension in its troops stay in the war-torn country for one more year in the NATO Resolute Support (RS) Mission. (Pajhwok)

(9) Civil Liberties...

from inside the mosque. Sadat spent four years in the male get-up.

"It is painful to imagine returning to those days," she said.

"I advise the families, if those days returned, they should stay at home. I advise the girls not to come out of their homes and do not dress in male outfits, because in that case, one forgets herself. For four years, you desire to put nail color or you want to comb your hair, you want to wear the dress other girls wear, but when you cannot do all that, you take all your desires to grave," she explained.

Muzhgan works in the Administrative Office of the President has a bachelor's degree in economics. She also writes poetry and stories. (Tolo news)

(10) New School Year...

buildings by 90 percent within a year. "At least 300 school are equipped with internet services and we are working to equip 1,000 more schools with these services," he said.

He said that according to new figures, almost 500 schools were reopened and as many schools have remained closed, mostly due to security issues.

According to Ministry of Education's website, at least 49 million textbooks were published last year to be distributed for the new school year.

Lack of professional teachers, adequate textbooks and buildings has been one of the main problems for education over the past years.

"I have studied both in public and private schools but the quality of lessons is not good in public schools," said Arifa, a student from Kabul. "I call on government to pay more attention in this respect."

"Our demand from government is to provide more opportunities for us and to build more schools," said Erfanulla, a student from Kabul.

Kabul governor Mohammad Yaqub Haidari who attended a ceremony on the new school year in Surobi district in Kabul said they will use all their efforts to support education.

"We will try that the children do not remain out of schools. The main reason of war, backwardness, use of drugs and other problems is having less progress in education," said Haidari.

A number of teachers said paying attention to education is the only option which can solve Afghanistan's problems.

"The learning cycle will not move forward without the teachers and instructors," said Massouda Alamyar, a schoolteacher.

"Education is mandatory for every man and woman. We should be careful and should not be deceived by anyone or any group," said Burhanuddin Sedaqat, a religious scholar. (Tolo news)

(11) Military Identifies...

of U.S. soldiers killed so far this year in Afghanistan. The deaths underscore the difficulties in bringing peace to the war-ravaged country. (AP)

(12) Govt Asked to Act...

expressed sorrow over the MP's assassination and called it a great loss for the Afghan people.

He said Obaidullah Barakzai was a fighter for his country and a patriot and consistently worked for peace in Afghanistan.

A number of ministers, presidential candidates, governors and politicians as well as the Afghan public on social

media also showed their anger over the incident. (Pajhwok)

(13) Paktia Begins...

one of the farmers, said: "It is a good project but seed and personnel provided for the project are not enough. First the technical team should identify places where pine nuts and walnuts can grow."

It is worth mentioning that Paktia produces thousands of tones of pine nuts and walnuts annually. In the past, these dry fruit were transferred to Pakistan from where it was exported to other countries. (Pajhwok)

(14) Kurds to Rally...

Turkey's main secular opposition party to help challenge Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party.

Millions of ethnic Kurds will vote in the March 31 election. (Fox News)

(15) Thought Crime

University School of Public Health, found herself the target of liberal rage after her research challenged a sacred tenant of LGBTQ dogma. She published a paper which supported the thesis that some young adults who identify as transgender but previously showed no symptoms of gender dysphoria may have been influenced to "transition" by social media, friends and their environment.

The resulting uproar caused the professor endless grief - even after an exhaustive post-publication review of the paper confirmed her key conclusions. She lost her consulting job and some local clinicians even called for her immediate firing from Brown. Ironically, Littman is not a conservative - showing that a liberal worldview won't save you from the outrage mob. In an interview with Quillette, she claimed that she received pushback because her paper "did not support the gender-affirming perspective." James Watson alleges link between race and IQ

The scientist who discovered the structure of the DNA molecule, and received a Nobel Prize for his findings in 1962, found himself on the receiving end of social justice wrath in 2007, after suggesting a genetic link between race and IQ. According to Watson, his unpopular position on the subject quickly transformed him into an "unperson." The ire of the scientific community eventually led to his expulsion from most of his positions, and left him bereft of public speaking opportunities for years to come. Stripped of most sources of income, Watson was forced to sell his Nobel Prize medal.

Undeterred, he recently said that he stands by his controversial idea that there's a genetically-backed "difference on the average between blacks and whites on IQ tests."

It was not Watson's only eccentric idea. He believes, for example, in a link between sunlight and libido - and that doesn't devalue his genuine input in genetic research. Nonetheless, his thought crime essentially led to his banishment from the public stage and the scientific community. (RT)

(16) 'Foreign Mercenaries...

"Assassins and paramilitaries have been recruited using large amounts of money so that they can be sent to Colombia to receive training," he said. "Marrero was involved in contracting people from Guatemala and Colombia to comply with the recruitment and training plan for assassins."

Information gathered from Marrero's cell phone indicates that the opposition was planning to put together eight to 10 hit teams, each comprising at least eight mercenaries, to carry out assassinations, sabotage and acts of terrorism against government institutions in Venezuela.

At least 60 people had received special paramilitary training in Colombia and half of them have allegedly already infiltrated Venezuela, following the failed attempt to bring in the so-called humanitarian convoys from the US on February 23.

"At least 30 paramilitaries hired from El Salvador, Honduras or Guatemala - trained in Colombia - entered Venezuela. We are looking for them. We have already identified some," he said on state television, showing screenshots from Marrero's phone as proof and accusing the US of running the operation. (RT)

(17) Norway Cruise...

deck in stormy weather. "Most of our passengers are senior citizens ... imagine what it's like to hang there on that wire. It must be a terrible experience but they seem to have handled it

very well," Hagen said.

The helicopters are on standby in case the captain decides to restart the airlift, the rescue service said.

The 915 passengers were mainly from the United States and Britain, the rescue services said. There were also Canadians and Australians on board, among others, the cruise company said.

Some 20 injured passengers had been taken to hospital, Viking Cruises said, while others had only minor injuries.

One was taken to St. Olav's Hospital in Trondheim and others were taken to local hospitals.

"Many have also been traumatized by the experience and need care when they arrive on shore," the Norwegian Red Cross said.

The ship has been able to restart three of its four engines on Sunday morning but still needed assistance.

The tugboats, one in front and the other behind, were towing the ship at 7 knots (13 kilometers per hour). The vessel is about 80 kms from Molde, Norway's maritime rescue service said. (Reuters)

(18) The Making of...

clasp his folded hands inside his traditional pheran cloak.

The family said it has not heard from Owais since.

Owais is one of a rising number of local militants fighting for independence of Kashmir - an insurgency being spread on social media amid India's sustained, iron-fisted rule of the region.

Hundreds of thousands of Indian troops and armed police are stationed in this lush region at the foot of the Himalayas. India and rival Pakistan have always disputed the area and in the past three decades, an uprising against New Delhi's rule has killed nearly 50,000 civilians, militants and soldiers, by official count. Historically, that insurrection has largely been led by militants from Pakistan, who have infiltrated into the valley.

But now, an increasing number of locally-born Kashmiris are picking up arms, according to Indian officials. About 400 local Kashmiris have been recruited by militants since the start of 2016, nearly double the number in the previous six years, according to government data. India says Pakistani groups continue to provide training and arms - a claim Islamabad rejects. (Reuters)

(19) Iraq Parliament...

Adel Abdul-Mahdi ordered an investigation into the incident, which residents blamed on corruption and lack of rescue means. He also called for the governor's sacking. (AP)

(20) Chinese Leader...

The palace said Monaco is seeking to boost its trade and economic cooperation with China, without providing details on eventual contracts to be signed.

Monaco last year clinched a deal with Chinese tech company Huawei to develop its 5G telecommunications network - a thorny issue for several European countries.

The U.S. government says Huawei's 5G network could give Chinese security services a backdoor to spy on consumers, and has pressed European partners to shun it. Huawei says the fear is unfounded. Monaco banned all flights in its airspace during Xi's brief visit and any sailing in its waters or mooring in its luxury yacht-filled harbor.

The Chinese leader will dine Sunday with French President Emmanuel Macron in the French Mediterranean resort town of Beaulieu-sur-Mer. A police boat and police divers worked to secure the area before his arrival, and security cordons blocked several roads in Nice, where Xi will stay overnight. Xi will sign energy and other contracts with Macron on Monday, then meet in Paris on Tuesday with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. (AP)

(21) Royal Adviser...

following years as a royal insider.

The prosecutor said Qahtani had met the operatives charged with Khashoggi's repatriation ahead of their journey to Istanbul. When Khashoggi resisted, the lead negotiator decided to kill him, according to the prosecutor.

Asiri is on trial, the seven sources told Reuters.

Three of the sources said that Maher Muteb, the lead negotiator, and Salah al-Tubaigy, a forensic expert specialized in autopsies, are also on trial and could face the death penalty.

The sources said the defendants have legal counsel and have defended themselves in court by claiming they did not intend to kill Khashoggi or were merely carrying out orders. (Reuters)