

(1) Current Academic...

to the president. He said the number of hospitals and healthcare centers had increased from 11 to 136 in Balkh and a result the mother-child mortality rates had reduced.

Noor said 19 new healthcare centers were built in last solar year in the province. About education development, he said 680 schools and madrasas where 620,000 students studied were operational in Balkh. Fifty percent of students in Balkh were girls and 55 percent of around 13,600 teachers were women in Balkh, the governor said.

Ghani thanked Noor for developments in Balkh and said he did not find better place than Mazar-i-Sharif, home to Mawlana Balkhi, Ali Murtaza, Rabia Balkhi, Ulema and Mujahideen to ring the school bell.

"You practically saw Afghanistan is non-detachable from Central Asia, if the enemies of Afghanistan try to block roads on us, they should know we have access to many other routes," he said.

He said Afghanistan would be connected with China and Iran through Kunduz, Balkh and Herat railways.

The resident said the current education curriculum was unresponsive to students and teachers were under high pressure.

Ghani said 6.9 million school books would be distributed in the next two weeks. A commission would be also created to monitor and evaluate education activities across the country.

After his speech, the president accompanied by Atta Mohammad Noor, Ulema and Hajj and Islamic affairs officials inaugurated a reconstructed mosque Rawza Jami Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif city. (Pajhwok)

(2) Millions ...

handicrafts, different types of improved quality seeds (vegetables, beans and fruits), dairy products, agricultural products, packed standard products, dried fruits, agriculture machines and greenhouse products.

The show was held from Wednesday to Friday in Badam Bagh in Kabul.

According to MAIL, a total of 117,341 people visited the exhibition, generating 3,792,721 afghanis in income from the sale of agricultural products, domestic products and handicrafts of domestic producers, farmers and herdsmen. Meanwhile, 89 contracts worth 162,457,150 afghanis were signed between businessmen, entrepreneurs, investors and farmers at the show, the statement said.

A total of 1,187,500 afghanis was collected as rent from stalls at the exhibition. (Pajhwok)

(3) Afghan Carpet ...

stopped the international tourists from visiting the country, who purchased the bulk of carpets, which badly affected the business.

Crackdown against Afghan is taking care of the rest as well and soon there will only the vestiges of a thriving business be left here, he said.

Abdur Rehman, an artisan who works in a carpet-factory near Bakhshu Pul area on Charsadda Road area of the provincial capital said that about 30 Afghan artisans who were working along with him have left for Afghanistan due to the crackdown against refugees.

He said that this factory was in operation for past 15 days and doing a thriving business so far; however, ongoing crackdown was badly affecting the business. "Pakistani government crackdown was against Afghan refugees was creating labor problems for establishment like their factories," he said, adding that currently they were finding it difficult with hiring artisans.

He said a carpet measuring six feet weaved by four people takes at least three months to complete, while the pricing is determined by quality of ma-

terial as well labor. "This has in turn also brought down the demand and the situation is likely to further deteriorate as the Afghan continue to leave Pakistan in large number.

He said that if the number of the artisans goes down, then these establishments would also not be able to meet the demand and contracts.

He said that there were various varieties of Afghan carpets like Turkoman, Kazak and Tajik.

Nasir Ismail a carpet artisan at another factory in Afghan Colony area of the city said that previously there were at least 30 people worked at the factory where he works.

Majority of artisans have now gone back to Afghanistan in due to the crackdown and now there were only three to four artisans were left at this factory. "Work used to be very good in the some years back and now it has rock bottom," he said, adding that it has also decreased the demand as well. He said that in case the factory closes down then they would not have any other recourse other than shifting to some other business.

Humra Qul, a resident of the Turkuman Camp located in the Nowshera district, where hundreds of Turkoman Afghan refugees live said that he came to Pakistan some 30 years back and had no idea how he could be relocated to Afghanistan and start a life there.

He said that they were associated with carpet business and were contributing to the Pakistan's economy. "Our women were preparing carpet in homes and males were daily wagers and on this way we were earn of our bread," he said.

He said that going back to Afghanistan was very risky for them as last year an Afghan family migrated to Qanduz from Haripur area of Pakistan and 15 members of the family were killed by militants. "We want to stay here and want safe future for our children and do not walk back into the crosshair of the death," he said. (Pajhwok)

(4) Scanners at ...

land would be resolved soon, he said.

According to a Pajhwok tally, more than 300 people were killed and 700 others wounded in 54 different attacks in Kabul during the past eight months. (Pajhwok)

(5) MPs React...

president's demand. However, a number of MPs said Ghani had warned that he will issue an order to dissolve the national assembly.

The Wolesi Jirga's Saturday session was held behind closed doors after the first deputy speaker's request.

"If you want me to share all the issues I discussed with President [Ghani], then the session should be held behind closed doors," Humayun said. After the session, a number of MPs revealed what Ghani discussed in the meeting with the first deputy speaker.

"President [Ghani] reacted unprecedentedly and warned that if MPs summon ministers, he will dissolve the parliament," MP Rahman Rahmani said.

However, President Ghani's deputy spokesman Dawa Khan Minapal said in a statement on Saturday that the president has not mentioned anything about the dissolving of the parliament in his meeting with the deputy speaker of the Wolesi Jirga.

"President [Ashraf Ghani] has not discussed the issue of dissolving of the National Assembly with anyone or any official," he said.

In response to the question whether the president has the authority to cancel the parliament, Abdul Subhan Misbah, deputy head of Afghanistan's Lawyers Union, said: "According to the authorities which have been given to president by the law, there is nothing which says president has the authority to dissolve parliament."

This comes after the Wolesi Jirga decided to summon in-

terior and defense ministers as well as the head of the National Directorate of Security to brief them on their findings about a group attack on Sardar Daud Hospital in Kabul which left dozens of people dead and wounded. (Tolnews)

(6) Taliban ...

weapons and ammunition. Launching military operation without air support is difficult," the police chief told TOLONews.

Mohammad Noor Rahmani, member of Sar-e-Pul Provincial Council, meanwhile warned that the residents will face a tough year if the province was not protected.

"Sar-e-Pul will fall to the Taliban if government does not launch a large scale military operation to clear the province of insurgents and retake the fallen areas from the Taliban," said Rahmani said. (Tolnews)

(7) MoD ...

ammunition, weapons and fuel are being sold and their procurement documents are passed," another MP, Abdul Rahim Ayubi said.

Reports indicate that corruption and embezzlement happen in insecure and volatile provinces.

"The ammunition is distributed under the supervision of a commission from investigative and intelligence sectors. The investigative and intelligence sectors meanwhile monitor and approve the use of the ammunition," Kunduz Police Chief Abdul Hamid Hamidi told TOLONews.

"I can say for sure that there is corruption in food supply for soldiers. Soldiers are not receiving the food which has been given to them in the contract," said Amruddin Wali, member of Kunduz Provincial Council.

This comes after the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, John Sopko, at an event in Duke University in the United States last week made shocking remarks on corruption in Afghan security agencies and said the combination of corruption and poor leadership in the security forces in Afghanistan is the root cause for their ineffectiveness. (Tolnews)

(8) 14 Paktia ...

lack of school buildings and other materials and hoped the ministry would resolve the problems.

The governor expressed concern over the closure of schools in Zurmat district and said efforts were underway to reopen them.

"Like other sectors, we have problems in the education sector as well. Most of our schools have no buildings. We also lack resources for schools and it was due to numerous problems that most of the schools in Zurmat district are closed." A member of the provincial council, Mohammad Rahman Qaderi, said the current situation of education in Paktia was of great concern.

"Education is basic need, but we have been denied equal treatment in this crucial sector as well. The current situation is not acceptable to us. Paktia needs a lot of work and we demand it seriously that education be given importance and attention."

Nearly 190,000 students, including 50,000 girls, are taught by 4000 teachers in 362 schools across Paktia. About 200 schools are without buildings in the province. (Pajhwok)

(9) Moscow R...

Services Committee, Scaparrotti said Moscow was "perhaps" supplying the Taliban. "I have seen the influence of Russia of late - an increased influence - in terms of association and perhaps even supply to the Taliban," Scaparrotti told the Senate Armed Services Committee, without elaborating.

In February General John Nicholson, the US commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, had testified that Russia is encouraging the Taliban and providing them with diplomatic cover in a bid to undermine US influence and defeat

the alliance.

Kabulov had said in 2015 Russia was exchanging information with the Taliban and saw shared interest with them when it comes to fighting the Daesh extremist group. NATO troops have been fighting in Afghanistan since a US-led invasion in late 2001, following the Sept.11 attacks.

About 13,000 NATO service members are in Afghanistan, the bulk of them American, under its Resolute Support training mission. (Pajhwok)

(10) Woman Provides from other villages had also requested her for jobs but she has not enough resources and market for the handicrafts. "I can hire more women if the organisations concerned help me and find markets for our handicrafts in other provinces of the country," she concluded. (Pajhwok)

(11) PPP Wants ...

PPP spokesman stressed. "Such investigations cannot be made through selective leaks or public statements in the media. A starting point can be the Abbottabad Commission probing the bin Laden fiasco," he added.

Making the Abbottabad Commission report public would be in conformity with the narrative. Any other course would not be credible and would be seen as political witch-hunting," he said. (Pajhwok)

(12) North Carolina...

quirements. The fuel needs turned out to be entirely fabricated: upon receipt of the fuel, the troops sold the oil on the black market. The individuals piled up more than \$10 million for their efforts before they were caught, military newspaper Stars and Stripes reports. On another occasion, two secretive special forces operators artificially made excessive bids on construction projects to the tune of \$215,000, which the pair then sent back to their spouses in the US stuffed in envelopes.

The US Attorney General's office in Raleigh, North Carolina, has convicted 12 ex-soldiers for bribery, cash smuggling and other offences and has laid down sentences ranging from 10 months to 15 years, Military.com reported. The \$117 billion earmarked for building a prosperous Afghanistan has been swallowed into a sinkhole. "While we know we built a lot of schools and hospitals, it's less clear whether and how they're currently being used," Sopko noted. According to Sopko, entrenched corruption and "too little oversight," as US aid workers, contractors and armed personnel flooded the country contributed to the issue.

Other uses of the money were just plain ineffective, naive, or both: 15 years after the US threw 8.5 billion at illicit opium production, output of the drug has reached new record highs, The News & Observer notes. (Sputnik)

(13) 8 Militants, ...

had gathered at the house that came under attack.

Saleh said eight rebels were killed and three others wounded in the overnight raid. A car and two motorcycles belonging to the Taliban were also destroyed in the incident.

Syed Gulab Shah, a resident of the locality, confirmed to Pajhwok that security forces bombed a house last night. He said the house was destroyed and all local militants living there killed.

Charikh is an insecure district of Logar, located 26 kilometers south of Pul-I-Alam, the provincial capital. Some days back, 14 people including civilians were killed during a clash in the Baraki-Barak district of Logar. (Pajhwok)

(14) Putin Discusses...

countries. "I have always called for lifting the sanctions, which are counterproductive. Prohibiting lawmakers from talking with each other is an abuse of democratic rights," Le Pen was quoted by RIA Novosti news agency as saying. Le Pen is now running for the

French presidency on behalf of the far-right National Front party. The first round of presidential elections in France is scheduled for April 23. (Xinhua)

(15)US Sanctions...

that engage in proliferation activity with Iran, North Korea, and Syria," the State Department statement said in a statement. (Agencies)

(16)About 400,000...

last October. Of those, about 72,000 have returned home.

The UN representative called on all those fighting to allow civilians to leave areas of conflict for safer zones, and no one should be forced to come back home. (Xinhua)

(17)UN Envoy...

This includes addressing issues of governance, constitution, elections, as well as counter terrorism, security and confidence building measures. De Mistura said that opening bilateral meetings with both the Syrian government delegation and its opposition counterpart had enabled parties to touch upon issues of substance.

The Syrian government delegation, headed by Bashar al-Jaafari, has said from the outset that "counter-terrorism basket" should be prioritized considering the situation on the ground in Syria. (Xinhua)

(18)EU Needs Turkey ...

wave halted. I believe that in the spirit of this realistic politics, we'll certainly respect and even swallow certain things that we otherwise wouldn't respect. Unfortunately, this is how world politics works," said Fico.

EU and Turkey signed an agreement to stem the refugee-migrant flows to Europe, which includes the closure of the Balkan route to central Europe. (Xinhua)

(19)UN, Red..

those in hard-to-reaches and besieged areas," Haq said.

"The UN is deeply concerned for the safety and protection of civilians following reports of fierce fighting in the north-eastern governorate of Hama over the last few days, as well as those in eastern Ghouta," he said.

Since the Syria conflict began in March 2011, an estimated 400,000 people have lost their lives, with millions forced to flee their homes. (Xinhua)

Austrian FM Criticizes "NGO Madness" in Mediterranean Migrant Crisis

VIENNA - Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, sharply criticized on Friday the efforts of NGOs in the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean, claiming they lead to more deaths instead of fewer.

According to Austria Press Agency, Kurz made the comments to the media in Valletta, Malta, as part of his visit to observe the operations of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, in the region.

The minister acknowledged that while some of the aid organizations conducted good work, there were many "that are partners of the people smugglers."

"The NGO madness must be stopped," he stated.

He was joined by Frontex director of operations Klaus Roesler, who agreed that the activities of criminal networks and people smugglers are often supported in this way.

In addition, he said migrants were being picked up by European ships increasingly closer to the Libyan coast. They board hazardous vessels and make a trip of only 12 nautical miles into international waters where they can then make a distress call.

Kurz reiterated his long-standing calls for the Australian model to be followed, in which boats are stopped and diverted to off-shore asylum processing centers. (Xinhua)

EU, Britain Divorce to be Peaceful, Mutually Beneficial: Lithuanian President

VILNIUS - The European Union will find ways to let Britain leave the bloc in a "peaceful and friendly way", Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė said Friday before leaving for the EU summit in Rome.

"We will find ways how to divorce peacefully, friendly, and mutually beneficially. Britain will remain the EU's partner and will never become an enemy," Grybauskaitė was quoted as saying by local media.

Grybauskaitė will participate in events marking the 60th anniversary of the European Union.

"EU member states have demonstrated time and again that working together can overcome the toughest challenges," she added, calling for a "strong political will" in order to renew the EU and develop into a stronger community. The president said that EU membership provided Lithuania with a "powerful engine of economic progress".

According to the presidency's statement, Lithuania's GDP per capita now amounts to 75 percent of the EU average, compared to 46 percent in 2004, the year when the Baltic country joined the EU. (Xinhua)

Okinawa Governor Vows "New Battle" Against U.S. Base Relocation Plan in Japan

TOKYO - Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga vows on Saturday to start a new battle against the U.S. Futenma base relocation plan pushed forward by the central government and the United States. "From this day, Okinawa's new battle begins. I will definitely not allow the construction of Henoko base," Onaga told a rally near the site for the relocation in the Henoko District of Nago city.

He also said that he would "employ all means" to scrap the land reclamation approval so as to block the relocation plan.

It was the first time that the governor participated in an anti-relocation rally since he was elected in 2014, according to local reports. Some 3,500 people attended the rally, including Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine and lawmakers representing the island prefecture.

The rally also adopted a resolution, requiring the central government of Japan and the United States to give up their plan to relocate the U.S. Futenma base from Ginowan to the less populated Henoko coastal area of Nago.

Onaga, well known for his opposition to the plan, revoked in October 2015 an approval issued by former governor Hirokazu Nakaima for the landfill work of the relocation plan. (Xinhua)

U.S. Presidential Envoy to Attend Arab Summit in Jordan

DEAD SEA - Jordan's Minister of State for Media Affairs Mohammad Momani said Saturday that a U.S. presidential envoy will attend the 28th Arab Summit held in Jordan.

Speaking at a press conference at the summit's media centre, Momani said the summit will also be attended by United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Staffan de Mistura.

The UN official will also take part in the Arab foreign ministers meeting and will brief them on the latest developments in Geneva talks between the Syrian regime and the opposition, said Momani.

He added that representatives from the UN, Russia and the EU will also take part in the summit. Referring to issues discussed during the preparatory meetings for the Arab Summit, Momani said the Arab League officials discussed the threat of terrorism and extremism and means to address them.

Discussions also focused on the need that Arab states take the lead in the fight against terrorism especially since terrorists seek to tarnish the image of Islam.

The Arab Summit, he said, will work on unifying Arab stances regarding the various issues.

Arabs also stressed on their rejection of relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, said the minister. (Xinhua)