

(1) Peace Talks

after suffering more than three decades of war and violence. The analysts, however, blame the delay on Pakistan, accusing the Pakistani government of once again playing intelligence game with Afghanistan.

"The Afghan government trusts Pakistan very soon, that's why, they rushed in starting the program," female lawmaker Fawzia Kofi criticized. "But now the government has realized that Pakistan has not been honest in the past 10 years and will not be after this either."

Efforts for bringing peace to Afghanistan can be counted among the works that the National Unity Government (NUG) focused in the past six months.

As part of his peace efforts, President Ashraf Ghani twice visited Saudi Arabia and also Pakistan and China soon after forming the unity government with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. (Tolonews)

(2) Kabul Electricity

in Salang within four weeks. "The Breshna Company did not have the necessary preparations in place and enough equipment to resolve this problem," Deputy Chairman Abdul Qadeer Bahman said on Saturday. "This company must pay serious attention."

The electricity shortage in the capital is said to have caused a minor commercial depression. The downed lines in Salang were a result of heavy snow falls.

The Breshna Company has said that over seven million AFN worth of equipment has been purchased in order to reconstruct the downed lines. (Tolonews)

(3) Balkh Protestors

ended at the provincial council office.

In a six-point resolution, the demonstrators asked the Hajj and Religious Affairs Ministry to adopt a clear strategy for controlling extremism and terrorism. It also stressed the execution of Farkhanda's killers and release of 31 abducted passengers.

Separately, the Modern Thinking Society (MTS) offered fateha at its office in Kabul for the soul of the woman, who was killed by a mob for allegedly burning the Quran. (Pajhwok)

contemplating at this point cutting off our removal of troops from Afghanistan and contemplating new military authorization for increasing our operations in Syria and Iraq, this insulation from the real impacts serves our government in being able to continue to conduct these wars in the name of the war on terror, with not only horrendous cost to the people in the region, but we in the United States suffer from what the budgetary costs of unending war are," said Social Responsibility and co-author of the forward to the report. The report which is titled (Body Count: Casualty Figures after 10 Years of the "War on Terror") further states that 80,000 have been killed during the War on Terror in Pakistan while at least one million killed in Iraq alone. The War on Terror started after September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States that left close to 3000 people dead. (KP)

(5) Farkhanda

Interior Minister Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi and Hajj Minister Faiz Mohammad Osmani were summoned by the Internal Security Committee of the Wolesi Jirga to brief MPs on the issue.

Keramuddin Reza Zada, a lawmaker and member of the panel, said there were reports that prior to being murdered Farkhanda had made calls to some embassies.

Without naming any specific embassy, he said the woman's case should be elaborately investigated since there were a lot of rumours.

Fawzia Kofi, another legislator member of a fact-finding committee, suggested Farkhanda's phone calls be heard since rumours about her contacts were spreading fast.

Her colleague Abdul Ahmad Durrani condemned Farkhanda's killing but said: "If someone burns the Quran I swear none of us would be able to control our emotions. The Quran

has been burnt and it shouldn't be condoned."

Haji Zahir Qadir, Wolesi Jirga first deputy speaker, stressed the investigations should be comprehensive and the fact-finding committee must demonstrate neutrality.

Interior Minister Ulumi, however, said: "Farkhanda was a victim of some inflamed emotions. Lack of proper knowledge about religion was the main reason behind her murder."

"We have no evidence that proves she had made contact with foreign embassies," he said, adding in coordination with the National Directorate of Security (NDS) they would hear her phone calls.

Hajj Minister Osman acknowledged no evidence had been found that Farkhanda had burnt the Quran. If such evidence was found they would share it with the public, he promised. (Pajhwok)

(6) Call to Ensure

International Women's Day at the US Embassy in Kabul, Mrs. McKinley said: "Let's come together and seek justice for the 27-year-old Farkhanda."

The people behind her killing must be brought to justice, she stressed, saying: "Together we can fight more effectively against violence and prejudices." She said the role of women was vital in the development of nations.

Fatima McKinley lauded the nomination of four women as ministers-designate by the national unity government. She urged the government to create more opportunities for women in education and health sectors. (Pajhwok)

(7) Ministries Flouting

the affairs of his ministry. A number of parliamentarians, expressing their concerns at vague the criterion for awarding scholarship, alleged the candidates appearing in entry tests faced unspeakable problems because of certain anomalies. Some senators asked the Ministry of Higher Education to facilitate female candidates in entry tests.

Babari informed the MPs his ministry was working out a plan to award scholarships in line with provincial quotas. President Hamid Karzai had directed ministries to shift the power of giving scholarships to the Ministry of Higher Education, but the orders were not fully complied with.

The Higher Education Ministry, he said, was in contact with embassies of India, Pakistan and Russian in Kabul but had not yet received a positive response. He urged officials to respect the rules of his ministry and avoid interfering in its affairs.

"Everyone should demonstrate seriousness in dealing with educational issues for the sake of a better future for our children," he remarked, saying the ministry had conducted the university entry test in 38 different cities.

According to his information, 219,000 students appeared in the test, including 54,000 for higher studies and 24,000 for admission to semi-higher government educational institutions. Some 7,983 were found cheating and many others could not reach the target. (Pajhwok)

(8) Rising Human

Afghan youngsters had been imprisoned in Iran.

Khawaja Aain cited working on rain-fed farms as the only source of income for the people in Kalafgan district. Consequently, young people are easily trapped by drug smugglers because of poverty and joblessness.

Abdullah, a resident of Char Toot village, said one of his brothers was hanged recently in Iran on drug smuggling charges. The smugglers have been enticing youth into trafficking contraband to the neighbouring country.

"After five days, we came to know my brother has reached Iran illegally. The smugglers handed him drugs and police detained him there. He was hanged after spending three years in jail. We collected his body from Iran", Abdullah recalled.

Young people from Kalafgan district are mostly poor and can be easily trapped by mafia and gangs. A number of youngsters have been missing for five to 10 years. No one knows their fate.

Nasima, a mother of five, screamed she was living a miserable life. Her spouse has not contacted her for the past five years. "My husband has been working in Iran but has been out of touch for five years. I ask the government to help Afghan prisoners languishing in Iranian jails."

Officials in Takhar, condemning human smuggling, pledged concrete steps to address the issue without further delay. "We despise human trafficking. Smugglers have trafficked many young men to Iran, where they have been in a predicament. We plan to arrest human smugglers," Sunnatullah Taimouri, the governor's spokesman, told Afghan Pajhwok News.

Many Afghan go abroad in search of work, but those travelling to Iran, often go through assorted ordeals -- hanging and life imprisonment included. A Kalafgan dweller said over 100 residents of the district had been hanged or awarded life imprisonment on drug smuggling charges.

There is no official data of Afghan prisoners in Iranian jails but reports put the figure at more than 5,000. Most of those hanged in Iran belonged to Kalafgan district. Iran has enforced strict laws to counter drugs trafficking.

Over the past five years, there has been a noticeable surge in the persecution of Afghans in Iran, drawing strong reaction from the people on this side of the border.

In Kabul, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says the government of Iran has been asked to commute the execution of death-row Afghans into life imprisonment but the demand has not been met yet. (Pajhwok)

(9) Call to Ensure

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(10) Kandahar Governor

"All your acts should be in line with the established rules.. such violations are no longer tolerable."

The acting governor praised the district administrative and police chiefs of Arghandab, Dand, Daman, Zheri, Panjwai, Maiwand, Spin Boldak and others for their efforts to maintain security and resolve people's problems.

On poppy eradication campaign, the governor said Zheri, Panjwai, Maiwand, Shah Walikot, Arghistan and Takhta Pul were the districts where the banned plant had been sown.

He asked the meeting participants to stay firm in the way in poppy cultivation and drug smuggling.

The National Solidarity Programme also came up for discussion at the meeting and it was observed the programme had not been properly implemented in most of the districts.

The acting governor said: "A number of district councils get released funds under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), but they don't use the money on welfare projects. The district chiefs need to seriously investigate this problem and prevent it."

He said NSP funds should be used on development projects like roads, drinking water and other facilities in areas where the security situation had improved.

Weesa also asked the district chiefs to work for reopening schools which had been closed due to insecurity in cooperation with tribal elders, religious scholars, influential figures and public representatives because such schools existed in many towns.

The governor also said anti-polio campaigns were not being properly carried out in districts. He asked district officials to increase awareness and establish contacts with insurgents and convince them that the polio vaccination had nothing to do with politics.

He also recommended action against amulet sellers and other such superstitious activities

aimed at deceiving people and playing with their lives.

Deputy Governor Abdul Ali Shams expressed similar views and asked district administrative and police chiefs to enhance cooperation and coordination among them for the sake of improved military and civil affairs. A number of district chiefs talked about problems in their respective districts and urged the provincial administration to help them resolve those problems.

Rozi Khan, the Mianshin district chief, said he and the district police chief performed their duty in a container because they lacked buildings. The security situation in his town is not satisfactory due to fewer policemen. He said security for the entire district could not be maintained by 100 policemen and the insecurity had crippled the education process. Some other district chiefs also raised problems and got assurances from about their resolution. (Pajhwok)

(11) Defusing 5,000

poses, he feels insecure after receiving threats on the phone from unknown people. Because of the threats, he said, his family had been in tension.

Maj. Gen. Nabi Jan Mullahkel, the provincial police chief, confirmed Haq's participation in military operations and called him a dedicated worker. He also appreciated Haq for saving the lives of civilians and soldiers.

Mullahkel said the Interior Ministry had its own exclusive strategy for defusing landmines but the police headquarters would appreciate personnel like Haq. He appreciated efforts of all policemen. (Pajhwok)

(12) Drought Damages

people of the area were reliant on agriculture. He said 50 percent of the farms had been hit by the drought.

Ilmi added some people had sold their livestock and migrated to neighbouring Iran. If the drought continues at least 10,000 livestock would perish, he added.

A tribal elder, Nabi Jan, said well water in the area was not fit for drinking. "People consume rainwater from a pond that causes different diseases," he said.

The estimated population of Zaranj is 300,000 and 90 percent of people do not have access to potable water. (Pajhwok)

(13) 2,000 ANA

induction of fresh officers would yield positive results, as security situation in some parts of the country had started deteriorating ahead of the summer. (Pajhwok)

(14) AP Journalist's

Afghanistan's Khost province leaving Anja Niedringhaus, A.P.'s photojournalist killed and AP correspondent Kathy Gannon wounded.

Naqibullah has not given a reason for the attack at A.P. staff that was covering the first round of presidential election in 2014.

Naqibullah has not given any reason for opening fire on foreign journalists but his defense lawyer says that he is not a normal person. (KP)

(15) Protest against

nikovs, machineguns and other weapons installed on their cars. This cannot be called a civil movement, they should raise their demands through legal channels," Khan said.

He warned tribal elders would take action on their own against the armed men if security organs failed to disarm them and the two lawmakers would be responsible for any possible consequences.

Qalandar district development council head, Gulab Mangal, also said if the protest movement was not controlled, it would result into unwanted problems.

On the other hand, Humayun, a member of the lower house, who leads the movement, rejected the existence of illegal armed men in the protest camp in Khost City.

"We both have six bodyguards each and each provincial council member has one guard each," he said, adding members of the movement carried small weapons only.

But he did not comment on problems created for traffic and governor's house officers by their armed supporters.

Provincial police chief Brig.

Gen. Faizullah Ghairat said a high-level delegation from Kabul was scheduled to visit Khost and investigate the issue. He warned anyone involved in illegal actions would be taken to justice. (Pajhwok)

(16) 2 Children

afghans per person which was not affordable.

Gul Ahmad said if the government paid no heed to their plight then children would be vulnerable to the life threatening disease.

Nesar Ahmad, a resident of Raghskan locality, said due to insecurity the vaccination campaign did not reach to all children in the province. "In every house there is a child who suffers from the disease."

Health officials assured to launch a major vaccination campaign across the province in next few days. (Pajhwok)

(17) ICU, CT-Scan

of other parts of the medical complex would be launched over the next three months and the medical store would be completed by the end of the year. (Pajhwok)

(18) Arab Leaders

including the question of whether there might be a single command or a coalition of national units, was still under discussion. Each country's participation is expected to be voluntary. But the proposal gained credibility because it was announced in part by the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the former general who led the military takeover here in 2013.

The idea "has been there before but not so seriously," said Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan, a political scientist at the American University in Cairo, noting that Arab joint defense treaties date to 1950 and a joint military command was previously formed for a time in the mid-1960s. "It is the renewal of an old idea, but this time the level of seriousness looks higher, even if we do not know yet whether the outcome this time will be different than in the past."

Speaking at the same meeting, Nabil el-Araby, the secretary general of the Arab League, vowed that the Saudi-led airstrikes against the Houthis movement would continue until the Houthis had surrendered, apparently leaving little hope for negotiations for a prompt end to the violence.

The campaign "will continue until all Houthi militias retreat and disarm, and a strong unified Yemen returns," Mr. el-Araby said, declaring that the intervention had saved Yemen from sliding into the abyss.

The Houthi movement, which originated in the north of Yemen and follows a strain of Shiite Islam, has seized control of the country's capital, Sana, and other large cities in part by allying itself with military and security forces still loyal to Yemen's former strongman, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Mr. Saleh was removed in 2012, after an Arab Spring uprising, in a transitional deal brokered by Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. While the Houthis have received financial support from Tehran, the Iranians do not seem to exert a strong influence over the group as they do with, say, Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Houthis have previously fought as many as a half-dozen different civil conflicts against Yemen's central government. None of the previous battles have succeeded in eliminating or fully disarming the movement. (Monitoring Desk)

(19) China's Futures

growth rate of combined futures transactions surpassed 50 percent over the past five years.

However, following a phase of chaotic development during the 1990s, the futures market remained closed to international involvement over fears of financial risks given the immaturity of operational mechanisms and lack of supervision at the time.

As a major producer, consumer and trader of commodities, isolation from global investors has deprived China of pricing power in strategic commodities. As the world's fourth largest crude oil producer and second largest crude oil consumer and importer, China only accounted

for about 7 percent of the global crude oil pricing.

Yang Majiun, director of the Shanghai Futures Exchange, which operates the INE, said that the INE would facilitate Renminbi-denominated pricing of commodities and be fully open to overseas investors.

Following the trial of crude oil futures, more products like non-ferrous metals, precious metal and natural rubber could follow, Yang said.

Yuan Guming, president of Jiansu Dayuanyingtai Mercantile Exchange, said that finding a balance between market supervision and opening-up remains an obstacle to globalizing the futures market.

The CSRC is set to reveal provisional administrative regulations on foreign investors and brokers. Futures legislation has also accelerated as the second draft of the futures law is tabled.

All this will pave the way for the futures market to be more open to global traders, Yuan said. (Xinhua)

(20) Ex-German Leader

to Schroeder, Berlin should have prevented the European Commission (EC) from "holding talks on Ukraine's association with the EU solely with Kiev without involvement of Moscow."

A political crisis erupted in Ukraine in November 2013 when the country's then president, Viktor Yanukovich, refrained from signing an Association Agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Moscow.

The move sparked pro-EU protests, with its center in Kiev's Maidan Square, and in February 2014, Yanukovich was ousted by Western-backed groups. The ouster triggered in its turn pro-Russian protests in the country's southern and eastern regions.

This file photo shows Kiev's Maidan Square destroyed by violence during pro-EU protests in February 2014.

In a bid to crush the pro-Russian protests, Kiev launched military operation in mid-April last year, causing deadly clashes in the country's two mainly Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine.

Violence intensified last May after the two flashpoint regions held local referendums in which their residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence from Ukraine. The votes came just two months after the country's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea voted in a referendum to breakaway and rejoin the Russian Federation. On February 15, Ukrainian forces and pro-Russia fighters began a ceasefire in a bid to end the bloody conflict in eastern Ukraine, however both sides have been accused of violating the truce.

The fighting has taken a heavy toll on thousands of people. More than 6,000 people have died in the conflict, the United Nations says. Around 1.5 million people have also been forced from their homes. (Press TV)

(21) Israel Premier

it to build an atomic bomb. Iran says its nuclear research is for peaceful purposes. Netanyahu depicted Israel and Middle Eastern countries as unified in their view of Iran's involvement in the Yemen unrest as "a strategic move to dominate the region." He criticized continued negotiations with Iran at a time when "Iran is rampaging through Yemen," saying that "talks continue as usual and go on, on a deal that from everything that we hear paves Iran's way to the bomb." Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon said Iran was responsible for the fall of the pro-Western government in Yemen, and "instead of punishing it for that, Iran is getting a prize" with the negotiations. "The West is allowing Iran through the front door of the family of nations," Yaalon said. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, heading a delegation of U.S. senators visiting Israel, said the delegation supported legislation to require Congress to approve any agreement on Iran's nuclear program, or to increase sanctions on Iran if no agreement is reached. (AP)