

(1) Kabul Suicide...

good photographer - the best - but he was also a very good man."

Among a litany of setbacks since the Taliban were ousted in 2001 and tens of thousands of deaths, Afghanistan's lively and independent media sector has stood out as a success but it has suffered heavy losses.

According to the Afghanistan Journalists Safety Committee, at least 80 journalists and media workers have been killed working in the country since 2001.

But there had never been a day when so many were killed in the same attack. As well as AFP and Radio Azadi, which lost two employees in the attack, local stations Tolo News, 1TV and Mashal TV also lost staff.

Shah Marai's career stretched back to the days of the Taliban when he joined AFP as a driver before becoming a full time photographer in 2002, chronicling Afghanistan's long and uncertain struggle to find peace.

By contrast, Maharam Durani's career was just beginning. A final year student who had joined Radio Azadi as a producer on a women's program just a week earlier, she had stopped off at the site on her way to work in case she could help, said Hameed Momand, head of Radio Azadi in Kabul.

It was the worst attack on journalists since 2016, when seven Tolo TV employees were killed by a Taliban suicide attacker who rammed a car bomb into a bus driving them home from the station. The Taliban had warned earlier that they considered journalists legitimate targets.

Globally, it was the worst attack on journalists in a single incident since 31 reporters and photographers were killed in a massacre in the southern Philippines in 2009. (Reuters)

(2) Police Official...

to security sources.

A spokesman for the provincial governor AttaullahKhoghyani has confirmed the explosion and said that "four people including three policemen were wounded in the blast."

However, he did not provide further details.

The police have started investigations into the incident, said officials.

No group including the Taliban has claimed responsibility for the blast. (Tolo news)

(3) Afghan Media...

wounded in the incident. We ask government to help the families of the victims.

April 30 will be remembered as the deadliest day in Afghan media history and the industry will mark the day in future in honor of its fallen colleagues, read the statement.

Nine journalists and cameramen, including TOLONews cameraman Yar Mohammad Tokhi, were killed and wounded in Monday's bombing, which happened after first responders and journalists arrived at the scene of an earlier explosion. Journalists killed in the explosion are as follows:

1. MahramDurani - Azadi Radio
2. EbadullahHananzai - Azadi Radio
3. Yar Mohammad Tokhi - TOLONews Cameraman
4. Ghazi Rasooli - 1TV Journalist
5. Nowroz Ali Rajabi- 1TV Cameraman
6. Shah Marai - AFP Photographer
7. SaleemTalash - Mashal TV
8. Ali Saleemi - Mashal TV
9. SabawoonKakar - Azadi Radio (Tolo news)

(4) Elections on...

and youths would continue.

A number of ministers and some other senior government officials, political parties' representatives and ambassadors were also present at the meeting. (Pajhwok)

(5) Daesh Operating...

ground for fair and free process.

He warned insecurity could harm the electoral process in districts and security organs should take serious measures in this regard.

Tribal elder Mohammad AlamKhoghyani said people were being kidnapped on a daily basis and it was hard travel from one district to another even in the presence of security forces.

But AttaullahKhoghyani, the governor's spokesman, termed Hazrat Ali's the claims as groundless and said no Daesh center existed in Jalalabad.

He confirmed security incidents used to happen and security threats also existed in the province but denied the presence of a Daesh center in Jalalabad. (Pajhwok)

(6) Access to Basic...

in 2003 compared to 660 deaths in 2017 and 390 so far this year.

He added 70 children under five years of age among 100,000 children lost their lives to curable diseases in 2016 and the death had now reduced 67.

But Sayedzai said communicable, breathing, heart, high blood pressure diseases and injuries in the war and traffic accidents had increased.

Polluted water and air, poverty, unhealthy food and the ongoing war were main factors behind the increased health problems, he said. Dr. NasrinOryakhel, head of Medical Council of MoPH, talking in the conference, said that poor quality of health services was another major problem in the country.

She said the Afghans spent \$350 million on medical treatment in India alone due to poor quality of health services inside the country.

"If the quality of health services is improved, people would no longer need to travel abroad for treatment", she added.

For finding solutions to these problems needed researches and the two-day conference would also discuss these issues, Oryakhel said.

She said the Medical Council was ready to pave the ground for scientific research in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education. (Pajhwok)

(7) Capital Bombings...

a cowardly act.

"We offer our sincere condolences to the families of those killed and wounded and we stand with our Afghan partners in defeating those who would threaten the people of Afghanistan."

NATO's Senior Civilian Representative Ambassador Cornelius Zimmermann mourned those who lost their lives and wished a fast recovery to the wounded.

Meanwhile, the Indian embassy conveyed its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.

Pakistan also strongly condemns the twin suicide attacks, killing and injuring scores of innocent people in Kabul, this morning.

Separately, President Ashraf Ghani also slammed the assaults as an unpardonable terrorist act against innocent civilians and journalists.

In a statement from his office, Ghani said attacks on civilians, journalists and places of worship were a brazen violation of Islamic teachings and human rights.

Voicing his grief over the killings, the president underlined the im-

portance of the freedom of speech. He cowed to stoutly defend the freedom of expression.

He ordered the authorities concerned to reach out to families of the victims and ensure timely treatment of the injured, the statement added.

His Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah condemned the back-to-back suicide bombings as brutal attacks and contrary to all moral, human and Islamic principles.

Afghan citizens had been attacked by certain countries and their mercenaries in an imposed war over the years, the CEO alleged.

He assailed the terrorists for targeting civilians, journalists and aid workers. "The terrorists have targeted the freedom of expression, democracy and free and neutral media.

"Freedom of expression is the most important achievement of the past 17 years and we consider it our duty to protect it," he added.

The security organs and medical facilities have been directed to use all their resources to treat the wounded and reach out to the victims' families.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) strongly condemned today's deadliest attacks. (Pajhwok)

(8) Pushtkoh Police...

also grumbled about the Pushtkoh police brutalities.

Esmatullah, a resident of Farah City, said: "On Saturday last, my brother and I were travelling to the Sheikh Abu Nasr Farahi Port. When we arrived to the district center, police beat up both of us without reason."

"An elderly man asked the policemen why they were beating us. In response, police fired bullets at him and he was almost hit. But, fortunately, he escaped unhurt," he continued.

Esmatullah said police also trimmed his beard after beating him.

During a protest four days ago, residents and traders of Pushtkoh had asked the government to replace the police chief and his assistants immediately.

Abdul Karim, Mohammad Halim, Mujtaba and some other residents of the district corroborated the claims of Esmatullah and Pazhman.

They accused police of robberies, as well as insulting local elders, youth, shopkeepers and school-girls. They said police were extorting money from truckers and snatching items from shopkeepers.

DadullahQane, a provincial council member, also acknowledged that some elders and traders had complained about police brutality and arbitrary actions.

The police chief, Haji Ghulam, and his personnel forcibly take away goods from shops, he alleged, saying the issue had been shared with the governor, who promised action.

The police officer could not be reached for comments. When contacted, the deputy chief for Farah, AbdurRazaqSherzad, retorted: "I don't have time for talking on this issue." (Pajhwok)

(9) Afghan Farmers...

The last few years have seen abundant poppy harvests, with Afghan farmers cultivating more than the global demand.

The illicit economy also discourages private and public investment by fuelling insecurity, violence and insurgency, and creates costs associated with the consumption of opiates for individual drug users and their families.

Agriculture has historically been the backbone of the country-Af-

ghanistan has plenty of fertile land and produces delicious apricots, pomegranates, raisins and pistachios to name a few - but the rural infrastructure has been destroyed over three decades. (ATN)

(10) US Supports...

have a cocktail of poverty, climate change and violent extremism, it really tests the resilience of the people and I hesitate to use the word resilience, because if there are people who are resilient, we are guests in your country today," said Lanzer

"Your continued aid over the past seventeen years reflects your generous cooperation," said CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

"We have 2.4 million returnees from different countries including 3.5 million internally displaced persons, this has been unprecedented in the past three decades," said the minister of refugees and repatriations SayedHussainAlimiBalkhi.

Today's US humanitarian aid brings the total US contribution to the Afghan humanitarian response to nearly \$276 million USD since last year. (Tolo news)

(11) Lawmakers...

Kabul, condemned the attack and said, "Those (journalists) who always sacrificed their lives in the service of public are martyred today, this incident is a crime against humanity and those behind it should be chased and brought to justice."

The Wolesi Jirga in its today's session also offered prayers for the departed souls.

After the fateha, lawmaker Mohammad Daud Kalakani form Kabul said: "These issues cannot be resolved with praying, we mourn deaths every day and pray only for the victims and do nothing else."

"For how long our people would suffer and lose lives, this issue should be added to the house agenda and we should reach a solution to stop losing our journalists, security forces, women and children," he said.

FarhadAzimi, a lawmaker from northern Balkh province, also said the problem could not be resolved by praying and the Parliament should work on a plan which could help stop more such attacks. Wolesi Jirga speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said today's attack in Kabul was painful and crime against humanity.

He extended his condolences to the bereaved families and asked the government to work on a plan to prevent repetition of such attacks in future. (Pajhwok)

(12) No Sugar Beet...

should assist farmers in growing sugar beet on their lands.

He added he never hoped the government would take steps to rehabilitate the sugar factory the way it was functional in the past.

ArbabFaramoz, a resident of Baghlan-i-Markazi district, said: "In the past, the government would provide seeds and urea to farmers to encourage them to grow the sugar beet.

Now the agriculture ministry has stopped supporting farmers who lost interest and did not want to grow sugar beet in their farms.

The Baghlan sugar factory was established by Germany and was normally functional until 1978.

As a result of the Soviet Union military invasion of Afghanistan and the civil war the factory was unable to function, but in 2015 it was again made functional after receiving 3,700 tons of sugar beet. (Pajhwok)

(13) In Badakhshan...

being taught under 12 tents, two of them provided by the education

department and another 10 assisted by a donor agency.

"We have many problems; if they were not addressed it's likely that a lot of students will become ill during the heat season," she added.

Farzana, who stood first in the eleventh grade, sounded her concern at the situation her school is in. "I call on the education department to address the problems of our school.

"If the present situation persists, students run the risk of being taken sick this summer. We don't have desks and chairs and study sitting on the ground," she complained. (Pajhwok)

Thousands in Moscow slam Kremlin's Telegram attack

MOSCOW - Thousands rallied in Moscow on Monday in support of internet freedom after Russian authorities tried to block access to the popular messaging app Telegram in the latest onslaught against dissent under Vladimir Putin.

In an unusually strong turnout, around 10,000 people including top opposition leader Alexei Navalny turned up in the centre of the Russian capital, many holding placards and shooting paper airplanes, the Telegram symbol. Many called for Putin's resignation.

A volunteer movement that counts attendees at opposition rallies said more than 10,000 people turned up. Police said 7,500 attended.

"Big moron is not blocking you", read one sign making light of the botched effort by authorities to block the Telegram messaging service in Russia.

Some in the mostly young crowd chanted "Don't stay silent" and "Putin is a thief."

Protesters said they did not want the state to tell them what to read online.

"Everyone needs to have a choice," Tatyana Filatova, a retiree, told AFP.

"When we live in accordance with a strict set of rules, life becomes boring and the sky grey."

Navalny addressed the huge crowd from the stage, urging it to resist the authorities he called "swindlers and thieves".

"I will not put up with this silently," he bellowed into the microphone.

"Will you put up with this?" he asked the demonstrators.

"No," they roared back, chanting "Down with the tsar!"

Under Putin, who was re-elected for a fourth Kremlin term last month, top television channels and most newspapers have been muzzled, with internet remaining the only public venue for free self-expression.

But over the past months the authorities have moved in on the Russian internet, with the telecoms watchdog saying Facebook could also be blocked if it did not comply with local legislation.

Navalny has called on Russians to stage a major rally on Moscow's main avenue on Saturday, two days before Putin's swearing-in ceremony.

The authorities warned Navalny against staging the unpermitted rally in the heart of Moscow.

Earlier this month a court ruled to block Telegram in Russia after it refused to give state security services access to private conversations that are normally encrypted.

But in seeking to deny access to Telegram, the state telecoms regulator blocked millions of IP addresses, disrupting the work of many businesses including car manufacturer Volvo. (AFP)