

(1) Obama Vows...

security adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar admitted in a Senate meeting Tuesday that Daesh was a serious threat to Afghanistan's security and stability. According to Atmar, Daesh is trying to have more influence in Afghanistan in order to have access to drugs – which is considered one of the major financial sources of the Taliban. “Daesh has increased its activities in Afghanistan to have access to drugs markets and finance their operations through drugs,” Atmar said. However he assured that the government had formulated a new strategy to curb Daesh militants – an extremist group that has seized large swathes in Iraq and Syria. The president also nominated Air Force General Paul Selva as the next Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Gen. Selva currently serves as the head of U.S Transportation Command – the organization tasked with managing air, land, and sea military transportation – and is a top Air Force officer and pilot. (Tolonews)

(2) Provinces Being ..

authorised to directly spend 40 percent of the national budget, a pledge Mamondzai said the government would soon implement. He said streamlining the system of preparing and planning budget at local government level remained the unity government's top priority and practical steps in this regard would be initiated soon. Participants of the three-day conference also recommended draft reforms to the government in the financial, budget and planning sector. They believed transferring the authority of spending budget to provinces would not only strengthen local governance but would also ensure transparency in the delivery of services and increasing people's trust in the government. “Local government officials see the transfer of budget spending authority as beneficial as they believe it will ensure balanced development on local level,” the IDLG statement said. (Pajhwok)

(3) China to Back ...

Pugwash organized a two-day seminar in Qatar between Afghan officials and Taliban in Qatar which ended last Sunday. A 21-member Afghan delegation and eight members Taliban exchanged their views regarding peace and stability in Afghanistan. Gulbadin Hikmatyar led Hezb-i-Islami (HIA) also participated in the conference. China said that violence and force could not resolve disputes but table talks and negotiations were the only way out to resolve disputes. China played vital role in peace and stability in Afghanistan amid reports that Taliban delegation visited China two times last year. (Pajhwok)

(4) MPs Warn ...

at today's session, Wolesi Jirga member from western Ghor province, Syed Nadir Shah Bahar, said some ambiguities revolved around the peace process and the government should explain them. He said the government should not do something that was hidden from the people and should consult people's representatives about whatever step it took about the peace process in order to ensure the process was transparent. His colleague from northern Kunduz province, Abdul Wadood Paiman, said the peace talks were not simple and lawmakers should be present at every gathering concerning the peace process. Abbas Ibrahimzada from northern Balkh province said the ongoing war in Afghanistan was no longer tolerable for the people and the government should consider fundamental ways leading to peace. Referring to the conference in Qatar, he said: “Talks should not be held with those shedding the blood of Afghans. Mullah Omar had died in a traffic accident in Pakistan five years ago. In Qatar, a few drug smugglers have assembled, the government should not find itself deceived through such gatherings.” Rumors about Mullah Omar, the Taliban supreme leader, death had surfaced many times in the past, but the Taliban had rejected them. First deputy speaker Haji Zahir Qadir, who presided over the session, said that peace was every Afghan's wish. He said the government should hold talks with top level Taliban leaders in order to have positive results. (Pajhwok)

(5) Police Commander...

at the borders with our two neighbors in the East,” Brigadier General

Ashtari told reporters on Wednesday. Brigadier General Ashtari reiterated that instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan has resulted in the presence of outlawed and terrorist groups as well as causing damage to the country.

He said that the border guards, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and security organizations have had a good performance and they have succeeded in identifying and arresting the outlawed groups and drug gangs.

Last month, Commander of the Iranian Border Guards Brigadier General Qassem Rezaee urged Pakistan to stop terrorists' cross-border attacks from its soil and adopt practical measures in tightening their lax security control over borders with Iran.

“The border guards of this (Eastern) region are in fact in charge of security of both Iran and Pakistan borders, but unfortunately we are facing the negligence of the Pakistani side,” General Rezaee said.

He reported over 70 cases of border clashes with the terrorists and drug traffickers last year, and said, “Whenever these clashes happen Pakistan is to blame for them.”

The bordering areas between Iran and Pakistan have witnessed some insecurities in recent years.

Also in October, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri urged Pakistan to stop terrorists' cross-border attacks from its soil, warning that the Iranian military would take action to crush such terrorist groups if Islamabad continues its present heedless attitude.

“We hope to be able to prevent terrorist actions with the help of the regional governments, specially the Pakistani government and army,” General Jazayeri told reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony held in Tehran to commemorate the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) martyred commanders.

“Naturally, Iran will not bear such conditions for a long time and if the Islamic Republic feels necessary, it will adopt deterrent measures in this regard,” he stressed with a warning tone. (FNA)

(6) HPC in Talks

“Afghans are capable to resolve their problems themselves through dialogue and negotiations”, the statement added.

It said issues raised by Taliban at the Doha conference were the same the HPC had been trying to solve for the last few years. “We should not only confine our efforts to meetings and dialogues, but we should take practical steps for peace and stability in Afghanistan”.

“There may be hurdles and issues in dialogue but these hurdles should not halt the peace process,” the statement said. “We should reach a solution in the larger interest of Afghanistan.”

“Afghans from both the sides die in the conflict since most of foreign troops have left Afghanistan. Illegal armed groups are fueling the conflict to prolong it and kill Afghans, loot their belongings, kidnap them and derail the peace process”, the statement said.

The High Peace Council said it had started negotiations with a UN delegation on dropping the names of some key Taliban leaders from the blacklist. The council wanted every party to be involved in the peace process since every individual had the constitutional right to live a peaceful life in Afghanistan.

The council stressed unity among Afghans against threats to peace and stability in Afghanistan. It said there were no such issues which could not be resolved through dialogue. (Pajhwok)

(7) Farkhunda ...

eight guilty of violence against women are Gheyasuddin, Sifulrahman, Habibullah, Akramduddin, Ghulam Mohammad, Abdul Fatah, Mohammad Imran and Mohmand. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has welcomed the action taken to stop violence against women.

“The UN in Afghanistan promptly condemned the terrible murder that took place in Kabul (in March),” a UNAMA spokesperson said Wednesday.

“The UN acknowledges that Afghan authorities have responded quickly to the murder and welcomes action demonstrating a commitment towards ensuring accountability for eliminating violence against women.”

according to UNAMA: “It is essential that all steps taken in this case are in conformity with Afghan law, and UNAMA urges Afghan authorities to ensure legal processes are respect-

ed.” But the Human Rights Watch (HRW), as reported by AFP, seemed “very concerned” over the court verdict, calling it a “swift trial.” “To reach a verdict against 30 defendants on such serious charges in... days, on its face raises serious due process concerns,” a senior HRW researcher Heather Barr was quoted by AFP as saying.

“This trial leaves the impression that the Afghan government wants a quick and dirty process to get this case out of the headlines and move on – rather than real justice and a real examination of how such a terrible attack could have happened,” she added.

Meanwhile, the 18 suspects who had charges against them withdrawn, based on a lack of evidence against them, are Mohammad Hakim, Mahmmod, Mohammad Zahir, Shirzai, Kiramuddin, Hiuzbullah, Shifiq Ahmad, Ashaq, Rabiullah, Abdul Baqi, Jan Agha, Hamid, Jan Aziz, Jawad, Zahid Ahmad, Rayes Khodaidad, Ajmal and Ziyat Gul.

However, Mujadidi said three key suspects were still on the run. He said security forces have been ordered to track them down and arrest them.

The wanted suspects are Pahlawan, Pachah and Mohammad Hassan.

The much anticipated trial started Saturday and a number of people were summoned to appear over the past few days including Kabul Police Chief, Abdul Rahman Rahimi; Head of Criminal Investigation Department, Gen. Zahir Zahir and other security officials.

A total of 49 suspects appeared – of which 19 are police officers. These officers have been charged with dereliction of duty after failing to stop the public lynching.

Farkhunda's murder made headlines around the world in March and prompted outrage and condemnation from leaders across Afghanistan and the international community. Many have said the incident was an embarrassment for those in Afghanistan who have tried to champion social progress made in the country since the fall of the Taliban regime.

Questions have been raised about both the continued prevalence of violence against women around the country, as well as the justice system's tendency to punish street-level offenders while steering clear of influential officials.

Before this, the Kabul Police have been heavily criticized for failing to take any action to stop the brutal mob attack on Farkhunda that occurred almost two months ago.

After being falsely accused of burning the Quran, Farkhunda was savagely beaten to death, set on fire and then thrown in the Kabul River, all in broad daylight and in a central part of the capital.

In addition, police officials were accused of trying to cover up the truth of the attack, after it was exposed that police claims that Farkhunda suffered from psychological issues were falsified. (Tolonews)

(8) Large Amounts...

fantasy,” he said. Sorting fact from fantasy in Afghanistan can be a challenge, Sopko said.

“But just as doctors must be willing to face the truth about whether a treatment is working, we in the United States must be willing to face the truth, and acknowledge the uncertainties, about our programs and policies if we want reconstruction to succeed. And it's important that we do succeed,” he added.

Sopko said for both humanitarian and national-security reasons, the US mission to reconstruct Afghanistan is critical. “And with \$15 billion currently awaiting disbursement, with billions more to follow, there is both need to improve the effectiveness of the effort, and time to make a difference in the outcome,” he said. (Pajhwok)

(9) Zardari Due...

discussed at length. Zardari— chairman of the largest Pakistan People's Party (PPP)— travelled before to Afghanistan as president. (Pajhwok)

(10) Security Men ...

The governor said around 10,000 families had been displaced and evacuated to safer places. The families were advised to leave the area to avoid civilian casualties.

He said operation in Imam Sahib had been completed with the area had been purged of militants.

But Taliban claimed inflicting heavy casualties on security forces.

Matiullah, the resident of Gortapa locality said, security forces did not move ahead, however, the number of Taliban fighters had reduced.

He demanded the government to ensure law and order in the areas

cleared of insurgents. (Pajhwok)

(11) MPs Come to ...

panel's meeting without such a decision from the upper house.

Zabuli replied: “I am the head of the complaints commission and have the authority to call anyone. It called Jehni as per the commission's decision.” Then Seddiqi entered the chamber of Zabuli and physically clashed with him, with the second deputy chairman receiving minor bruises to his face.

Pajhwok tried to contact the two lawmakers, but failed. However, Senator Abdullah Qarraq said the two did not clash physically, but exchanged harsh words. (Pajhwok)

(12) Ulomi Thanks...

insurgent attacks – particularly in the northern provinces – following the official launch of the Taliban's spring offensive at the end of last month.

In his address Wednesday he said the enemy is challenging the lives of all Afghans and that they have no mercy on civilians – including women and children.

But he said: “Our security forces have the backing of the people.”

He pointed out that the insurgents were not strong enough in numbers nor in arms to beat the national security forces. He also emphasized the fact that “Daesh has no place in Afghanistan”.

He said that because of the national security forces, Daesh has not been able to forge a strong foothold in the country. “Security forces will do everything needed to prevent them winning,” he said.

According to him, one of the primary goals of security forces was to ensure that no harm came to civilians, and as such security forces “will do what they have to, to protect civilians”.

Ulomi reiterated recent concerns that although the national army was well equipped, the same did not apply to the police force. This was something that needed to be addressed, he said. Ending off his speech to security force members, Ulomi again praised them for their dedication and hard work and said that everyone from himself through to the lowest ranking staff member was behind them.

Ulomi has recently taken on a very hands on approach to dealing with security forces and the issues of national security. Just last week he visited Kunduz, the scene of fierce battles between security force members and Taliban insurgents recently.

Immediately after security forces restored calm to the city, Ulomi paid a visit where he took to the streets and spoke to residents and business people and assured them that everything was being done to oust insurgents from their province.

This came after insurgent attacks in parts of Kunduz, including the capital, escalated to the point where reinforcement troops had to be sent in and with the support of airstrikes were finally able to oust the insurgents after a six-day battle. (Tolonews)

(13) Drone Strikes ...

far more effective than ground attacks as it lowers the risk of civilian and security force member casualties. A serious obstacle for ground forces is that often enemy-held territory and areas harboring insurgents are heavily mined.

“Whenever security forces are going for an operation to an area the area can be embedded by enemy mines and this creates challenges for troops. As a result, drone strikes are very effective.”

“We hope that our air force will be equipped with drones in future as we have been promised,” said Mohammad Zaman commander of 201st Se-lab Corps.

Meanwhile, Nangarhar provincial police chief Fazl Ahmad Shirzad, said that in the past week two drone attacks took place in the area – killing at least 30 Taliban.

“Our air strikes which are organizing by foreign forces are effective and eliminate the enemy. This also saves civilians and security force members as casualties are much lower,” said Shirzad.

“We have had two separate drone attacks this month. In the first one two armed insurgents were killed and four were wounded. In a separate attack in Sarkano district a number of insurgent casualties were recorded,” said Kunar province police chief Abdul Haseeb Sayedkhaili. (Tolonews)

(14) Afghanistan to ...

growth has been projected to increase to 4.9 percent in 2016, the IMF said in its latest report, according to which Pakistan's growth rate in the same year has been projected to be 4.7 percent. (Pajhwok)

(15) Herat to Get...

Similarly, Herat provincial council

criticized over low quality projects implemented last year and underlined efforts to thoroughly monitor the new projects.

Based on report, the National Solidarity program (NSP) has kicked off projects worth 15 million afis funded by rehabilitation and rural development ministry in western Ghor province.

Eng. Taj Muhammad Zala, director of Ghor rehabilitation and rural development, said building was being constructed in three storey, 12 rooms in next nine months.

Expressing satisfaction over construction of the building, Deputy Governor Muhammad Amin said it would help resolve most of the problems. (Pajhwok)

(16) Kandahar Ulama ...

security forces for maintaining law and order. He insisted it was important to have strong intelligence also since neighboring intelligence networks had hands in the ongoing conflict in the country.

Haji Agha Lalai Dastgiri, called on insurgents to end fighting since peace and tranquility was every persons hope in the country.

He also urged government to deliver on its promises to ensure peace and development in the country. (Pajhwok)

(17) Rampant Corruption...

Civil society organizations said corruption often took place in the public health department and the officials refused to give explanation about their performance to journalists.

They also accused public health director for corruption in major contracts bidding of the department by saying that Haidari awarded the medicine contract to a particular company and in return he was awarded with Kabul-Bamyan air tickets.

The activists said 14 employees have been getting salaries at the Mother and Infant Centre on paper while only two persons discharge their duties.

Mohammad Amin Ibtihaj told reporters there were dozens of similar incidents of corruptions happening in the public health department which needed to be addressed. (Pajhwok)

(18) EUPOL Closes...

She added: “The fact that we are able to celebrate the closure of our field office in Herat underlines the fact that there are dedicated Afghan partners left who can continue the development towards a civilian police service that will be professional, accountable and effective and has strong links to the judiciary.”

Since its establishment in 2007 EUPOL Afghanistan has supported the Afghan government in building a civilian police service that operates within an improved rule of law framework and in respect of human rights, the mission said in a statement. (Pajhwok)

(19) 35 Insurgents ...

Attallah Khogyani said the detained individuals had placed mines in a Mosque in Saydabad district, adding that the individuals were held in a clearing operation in the area. (Pajhwok)

(20) 2 Dead, 4 Wounded...

He confirmed casualties suffered by civilians. The injured, he said were instantly shifted to hospital for treatment.

Toolwak blamed militants for planting roadside bombs. However, Taliban have not yet commented on the incident. (Pajhwok)

(21) Armed Insurgents ...

and defused a roadside bomb placed by enemies of Afghanistan for destructive activity in the Adraskan district of Herat province.

Afghan National Police encourages all citizens to report suspicious activities and criminal acts. The number to call is 119. (Tolonews)

(22) Security Forces Kill...

that had helped push back the Taliban. He said at least 14 insurgents had been killed.

The Taliban has yet to comment. No civilian casualties reported as yet. (Tolonews)

(23) Obama Expected...

ally Saudi Arabia, worry that Iran will not be deterred from a nuclear bomb and will be flush with cash from unfrozen assets to fund proxies and expand its influence in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. (Reuters)

(24) Netanyahu's...

making the addition of Jewish Home's eight legislators crucial for a majority.

Such a narrow government would make Netanyahu vulnerable to pol-

icy demands from even his most junior coalition partners, continuing a long tradition of unstable politics. Jewish Home is certain to push for the expansion of Jewish settlement in occupied territory, a policy that could deepen Israel's rift over the issue with its main ally, the United States, and the European Union. (Reuters)

(25) Over 120...

began operations in March. The conflict has disrupted imports to Yemen, where about 20 million people or 80 percent of the population are estimated to be going hungry, a statement by the United Nations and the Yemen International NGO Forum said.

A shortage of fuel has crippled hospitals and food supplies in recent weeks, and the U.N.'s World Food Programme has said its monthly fuel needs have leapt from 40,000 liters a month to 1 million liters.

“Millions of lives are at risk, in particular children, and soon we will not be able to respond,” Edward Santiago, country director for Save the Children, said in the statement.

The statement also dismissed an announcement by the Saudi-led Arab alliance about a possible truce in some areas to allow for humanitarian supplies, saying a permanent end to hostilities was needed. (Reuters)

(26) U.S. Aims ...

The “snapback” is one of the most important issues for Western governments who fear that, once any U.N. sanctions on Iran are suspended, it could be hard to restore them because Russia and China would veto any such attempt.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power made it clear that Washington did not want Russia's and China's recent slew of vetoes on resolutions related to Syria to be repeated with an Iran nuclear agreement.

“We're going to do so in a manner that doesn't require Russian and Chinese support or a vote for snapback ... because we are in a different world in 2015 than we were when the sanctions architecture was put in place,” Power said in an interview with Charlie Rose on Bloomberg television. (Reuters)

(27) Germany's ...

that both leaders wanted an end to violence.

Twenty-seven heads of state or government will attend the military parade and Putin has talks scheduled with many of them, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Cuban leader Raul Castro, he said. Ushakov gave few details of the planned talks but said China may provide around 300 billion rubles (\$6 billion) in financing for a railway link between Moscow and the Russian city of Kazan. (Reuters)

(28) U.S. to Discuss ..

spared in the fighting. He announced \$68 million in new aid for relief agencies working in Yemen as humanitarian groups warned fuel shortages could affect their efforts to tackle the crisis. A shortage of fuel has crippled hospitals and food supplies in the past weeks, and the U.N.'s World Food Programme has said its monthly fuel needs have leapt from 40,000 liters a month to 1 million liters. A Saudi-led Arab coalition began air strikes in Yemen on March 26 against Iran-allied Houthi fighters, backed by forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who seized control of parts of the country, including the capital Sanaa. The Saudi-led alliance has said it is considering a truce in some areas to allow for humanitarian supplies. “We will be discussing the nature of the pause and how it might be implemented. I am convinced of their desire to implement the pause,” Kerry said. He said he had discussed the idea with other countries, which suggested Houthi fighters “might also be willing to engage in a pause.” (Reuters)

(29) Hezbollah Fighters...

local media and the Syria opposition speculated could start in the Qalamoun area.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Wednesday's attack took place in that area. The Lebanese Shi'ite fighters clashed with gunmen from Nusra Front in a different border zone on Tuesday. Lebanese officials have warned Hezbollah against launching a cross-border attack, which they say would drag Lebanon, which suffered a civil war in 1975-90, further into the Syrian conflict. (Reuters)