

(1) Ulema's Indonesia...

"We the Ulema, therefore appreciate and support the offer of the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as announced by President Ashraf Ghani during the Kabul Peace Process, February 2018 for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan," read the declaration.

The declaration said the religious scholars also appreciate the regional countries, Muslim nations and the international community's support to the Afghan peace process.

Religious scholars also asked all war parties to lay down their weapons and start direct peace talk.

"We take note of conducive environment for peace in Afghanistan and call upon all sides to join direct peace talks," read the declaration.

The Ulema said terrorism and extremism in all its form including violence against civilians and suicide attacks are against Islam and that name of no religion, including Islam, should not be used for justification of terror activities.

"We reaffirm that violence and terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization, or ethnic group, as violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including violence against civilians and suicide attacks, are against the holy principles of Islam," read the statement. All Muslims are brothers and they should stay united and preserve their brotherhood, the declaration said.

The religious scholars said in the declaration that the Ulema of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia can play a crucial role in promoting peace and that they support such efforts.

The Afghanistan High Peace Council (HPC) says that from Afghanistan 20 religious have attended the meeting and they hope it will have a constructive result for Afghan peace process. (Tolo news)

(2) Afghan Ministers...

Washington's military support to Kabul.

Gen. Votel said US is committed to continue supporting Afghanistan and that they will bring required pressure on the Taliban and its supporters, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement on Friday.

Defense Minister Brigadier General Tariq Shah Bahrami talked on reforms and Nusrat Operation and meanwhile highlighted problems faced by the army.

Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak said reforms have been brought to many departments of the security agency.

"We have brought reforms to Afghan police offices particularly in Kabul City. The process will also cover other departments of police," Barmak said. (Tolo news)

(3) Activists, Officials...

realities are part of the values of open governance.

"Every individual from any school of thought, left, right or middle, should have the ability to express his ideas freely and should not fear what he says or expresses, and no one should be excluded from society because of his thinking," Danish said.

Afghanistan received the Open Governance Partnership membership in 2011.

"Transparency and accountability are the main values of open governance, but serious attention has not been paid to these values," said Mohammad Naem Asghari, a civil society activist.

"Rule of law still faces many challenges in our society," said Zia Danish, a civil society activist. (Tolo news)

(4) Kabul, Islamabad...

Minister of Commerce Kamila Sidiqi, called on Secretary Com-

merce Mohammad Younus Dagha. Both two sides expressed the desire to enhance trade relations by overcoming challenges. (Pajhwok)

(5) 70 Personnel...

forces who were rescued and airlifted to safety on Thursday morning. However, he said still dozens of security forces were missing and the air forces were trying to find them.

Baghlan governor Abdul Hai Nimati confirmed the operation to regain control of the Tala wa Barfak district and said 300 commando forces had reached Doshi district and they would soon jump into the battle.

He said not only Tala wa Barfak district but Dehna Ghor district, which has been under the Taliban over the past two years, would be retaken from the insurgents.

He said so far 70 government forces and officials had been rescued and a search involving four helicopters was underway to find the remaining missing people.

The Taliban have so far said nothing in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(6) Private Company...

where the second explosion happened.

Two other attackers entered a restaurant near the company through the door. The restaurant is now in ruins.

Police said the attackers had guns, hand grenades and suicide vests. They have left shell casings, dried fruit, hats and suicide vests inside the hotel.

The two suicide attackers went to the second floor of the restaurant and fought government forces from 12:00pm to 5:00pm Kabul time. Finally, one of them was killed by security forces in a bathroom in the restaurant while the second was killed while in a hall.

Amin said the attackers wanted to enter a high-rise building and hit their targets from there - but were not successful.

"There were many national and international organizations around the building and if the attackers entered the building they would have threatened all the offices including the Asian (Development) Bank, Shahr Travel Agency and the PD10 police headquarters," Ahmadi told TOLONews.

From information released by the Ministry of Interior, at least 350 people were inside Shahr Travel Agency when the attack happened. Meanwhile, dozens of others were inside nearby buildings including the Asian Development Bank branch, a department of the Attorney General's Office, the PD10 Police Headquarters' building, the Directorate of Hajj and Religious Affairs, shops and companies. All were rescued, the ministry said.

Residents of the area and eyewitnesses said the area has been under threat since a long time ago.

"They (militants) threatened to attack this area and now they have," said Samiullah, an eyewitness.

"The area has been under threat during the past two months," said Atiqullah, an eyewitness.

Kabul witnessed coordinated attacks on Wednesday. Daesh and Taliban militants claimed responsibility for separate attacks.

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) said in a statement that Haqqani network had plotted Wednesday's suicide bombings in Kabul with the help of Lashkar-e-Taiba. (Tolo news)

(7) Kabul, Dushanbe...

said, who suggested strengthening of cooperation on the issue.

He urged regional countries to support Afghan security forces, saying some terrorist groups were infiltrated into Afghanistan to disrupt its security and peace in the region.

At the meeting, an upcoming visit of senior Afghan officials to Tajikistan for talks on agreements of cooperation in various fields was also discussed. (Pajhwok)

(8) IEC Criticized...

Election Commission about stamping of hard copies of identity cards. Four member of the election commission have signed a statement and have said stamping copies of identity cards is against election transparency. But the Presidential Palace has issued a statement, and based on my accurate information, this statement is issued to impose the decision on Independent Election Commission and interfere affairs of the institution," Ashna added.

The move was criticized by monitoring organizations and political parties.

One member of Jamiat-e-Islami Party said the decision will provide the ground for major election fraud.

"This is a direct interference, especially when the president asks those who are against it to resign.

It questions the independency of the Independent Election Commission. It is a direct interference of President (Ashraf Ghani) in IEC affairs and we are worried about it," Noor Mohammad Akhlaqi, member of Jamiat's leadership, told TOLONews.

TOLONews could not get comments of IEC despite repeated attempts.

Article 19 of the Independent Election Commission Law says that only IEC has the authority to create and prepare alternative executive approaches if the previous one does not work.

"No doubt, we are going to face such challenges as the election commission cannot define its decisions and cannot make its decisions independently" said Yusuf Rasheed, CEO of Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan.

Stamping the copy of ID cards has turned into a tough issue among the social media users as well.

Former head of the National Directorate of Security Amrullah Saleh has said that the move will provide the ground for fraud in the upcoming elections.

"Fraud again. Print Ashraf Ghani has exempted his so called constituency (places he got more real & fraudulent vote) from scrutiny and burdensome procedures that rest of the citizens have to undergo to register as voters. This is institutionalization of fraud in the name of security," Saleh tweeted on Thursday. (Tolo news)

(9) China Vows to...

campaign in coordination with the US, Russia, India and Pakistan.

Beijing was also cooperating with Afghan security forces in different areas. He spurned the rumours his country was setting a military forces within the framework of Afghan security institutions.

It was the prerogative of the Afghan government to establish a military unit anywhere in the country, he remarked, explaining setting up a military base abroad was in conflict with Chinese foreign policy.

During his visit to China last month, National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar had proposed the creation of a joint mountain brigade in Badakhshan province.

Lei said the proposed brigade was being established by Afghanistan, which sought cooperation from China in this regards.

He pledged continued Chinese assistance to Afghanistan's media outlets, saying they would facilitate visits by Afghan journalists in the future as well.

In this way, the diplomat argued, Afghan journalists would be able to closely watch China's progress in different spheres and return home with a positive message.

Kakar thanked China for its aid to different sectors of Afghanistan. He hailed China as the only country that continually helped the war-torn country but never interfered in its affairs.

Hamid Hamdard, a representative of Spogmai Radio and Heart

of Asia newspaper, demanded an increase in Chinese scholarships for Afghan students.

He said news organisations played the role of a bridge between the two countries and the exchange of visits had helped strengthen Sino-Afghan relations. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban Kill...

south, has been a key battleground for the insurgents for months, with heavy fighting in Balabuluk district.

The region covers major smuggling routes into Iran from Helmand, source of much of Afghanistan's opium crop.

Afghan special forces, backed by air support, have been heavily involved in the fighting but have been unable to prevent repeated attacks by the insurgents. (Reuters)

(11) NAI Says Threats...

responsible for protection of journalists. Threats in Kandahar had a negative impact on journalists in other provinces as well and the government should take serious steps in this regard.

"It is a matter of concern that all those journalists who are critical of the government face challenges," he said.

Khelwatgar accused the government of not sharing information with journalists and said: "A government which is sensitive to critics is not different from the one in North Korea and Iran."

Pointing to attacks on two police districts in Kabul on Wednesday, he said: "The information we obtained shows six people were killed in a single incident in one province yesterday, but the government intentionally did not want to share that information with media."

The attacks in Kabul caused 33 casualties to civilians and security forces.

Khelwatgar asked the government to remain loyal to the law and its duties. (Pajhwok)

(12) Govt Asked...

security situation has worsened as much as people cannot feel safe," said Afzal Ziar, a resident of Gardez.

"Security in Gardez City is worrying. No one is sure about their safety," said Ihsanullah Ihsan, a resident of the city.

Members of Paktia Provincial Council said corruption is a main reason behind insecurity in the city.

"There is corruption in recruitments in police and this affects security in the city," said Taj Mohammad Mangal, member of Paktia Provincial Council.

"There is no coordination among security organizations. They have started a business here instead of doing their duties," said Mohammad Rahman Qaderi, a member of the council.

Paktia police said they are firm in their combat against corruption.

"Appointments and changes are a principle. Those who are appointed here are sincere and are serving the people," said Gul Aqal Rohani, acting head of 303 Spinghar Police Zone in Paktia.

Gardez has five police districts but according to residents only two police headquarters are operative therefore government forces cannot ensure the safety of the people properly. (Tolo news)

(13) Afghan Diplomat...

Barakzai said in the last three months 27,000 Afghan migrants have crossed into Turkey from Iran border, according to the official numbers.

"Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran must cooperate in combatting human trafficking. Iran has an exceptional importance because it is located between the two countries," he added.

Noting that they received the deportation documents of 1,500 Afghan refugees in the last three weeks, Barakzai said: "The human traffickers are deceiving the youth

by using the country's war, unemployment [...] as tools. My advice to my people is to not believe the human traffickers."

The civil society organizations are jointly working with Turkey and Afghanistan in transferring humanitarian aid to the migrants returning back to their countries, he said.

"Our Consulate-General in coordination with the Afghanistan Migration Ministry and Turkey's Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) are working together in supplying airplane ticket for the returnees, as well as monetary and clothing aid for the migrants."

He also criticized the United Nations for "acting slowly" in combating refugee crisis. "I hope the UN takes immediate steps for the Afghans who want to return to their countries from Turkey." (AA)

(14) U.N. Says Scores...

The deadliest attack on the election took place last month, when a suicide bomber blew himself up near a crowd lined up outside a voter registration center in Kabul, killing 60 people.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack on a project of key importance to the credibility of President Ashraf Ghani's government, which has been under international pressure to ensure the parliamentary polls take place this year.

The Taliban, who have also launched their annual spring offensive, have already made it clear that they will target the election. The UN report said fighters had threatened to kill election staff or cut off their fingers if they continue their work on the vote. Teachers have been warned that their schools will be targeted if they are used for voter registration.

Some Afghans have expressed concern that biometric stickers fixed into identity cards when people register could be used by the Taliban in remote areas to target those intending to vote.

The election commission is under pressure to register and issue millions of new identity cards by the autumn to ensure credible participation levels in the polls. Afghan security forces have launched operations to drive the Taliban back and promise people will be able to vote in safety. (Reuters)

(15) Naeemi Touts...

afghans had been allocated for Kunduz's agriculture and various projects. "With this fund, large cold storages, water heads, saffron cultivation and other projects will be executed."

Naeemi also met President Ashraf Ghani who promised help in resolving certain issues. (Pajhwok)

Private Sky, State Gold: Uzbekistan Privatizing National Aviation Company

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan is ready to privatize its state airline but intends keep full control of its gold mines and oil firm, Reuters reported citing one of the country's top officials.

Deputy Prime Minister Sukhrob-Kholmuradov said on Wednesday that the country is soon going to announce a deal with the World Bank to help it with a broader strategy, while the head of its investment department outlined some privatization plans.

"What we see as a key sector which we believe we have to keep (in state control) is mainly gold mining and our main oil company," SandorSagdullayev stated on the sidelines of the EBRD's annual meeting on the coast of the Dead Sea.

He said the country was however ready to open up its aviation sector having been reluctant to do so when privatization lists were last drawn up under Karimov. (Trend)