

(1) Unity Govt....

of restoring the confidence of the people in the justice system. It has also reviewed the qualification of the people in the justice system, and immediately reviewed of all those in detention.

Responding to questions later, Rula Ghani said she never expected to be the First Lady. "When my husband was elected, I had no agenda," she said adding that it took her some time to adjust with the new system.

A few weeks later she opened the doors of the palace for the common man, she noted. "The flow of people continues," she added. Currently on a visit to the United States, the First Lady emphasised on women empowerment and their education. Observing that she did not have any power, she said she was doing her best to help the women of the country. Responding to a question, the First Lady said she saw her role to encourage people to achieve what they are best capable of.

Critical of the mainstream American media, she said the situation in Kabul were not that bad. "Yes it is a difficult situation, but it was predicted. NATO just withdrew. Yes, security is not as good as before, but the Afghan Army is performing very well despite their limitations.

"Unfortunately now the Taliban is not just the Taliban. It has people from all over the world. Right now these are just mercenaries. They are not fighting for a cause, but because they are getting a salary," she said. (Pajhwok)

(2) President Ghani...

in increasing the number of mentors.

The Sandhurst academy is training Afghan officers in technical sphere. It dispatches expert instructors to Afghanistan to improve Afghan security force's skills and capacity. (Pajhwok)

(3) Standard Tax ...

the system's transparency. The ministry had said the tax collecting system is transparent and accurate.

MCIT Minister Abdul Razaq Wahidi told a meeting in Kabul on Saturday said budget for creating a standard tax collecting system was yet to be provided to them. He said the ministry would immediately start work on creating a standard system upon receiving the required budget.

Wahidi did not provide information about tax collected so far from phone users, but said: "All the tax is directly transferred to the Ministry of Finance."

About unregistered SIM cards used to harass people, the minister said SIM cards would be registered based on a biometric process to prevent their illegal use.

"We have shared our plan for registering SIM cards based on biometric data with the Cabinet, implementing this plan is in our high priority," Wahidi added.

He said 25 million SIM cards were registered and 15 million of them were active now.

MCIT has repeatedly promised to prevent illegally selling of SIM cards, but has failed to do so as the illegal SIMs continue to be openly sold everywhere in the country. (Pajhwok)

(4) IMF Mulls ...

growth and employment, and recently contributed to increased emigration," the fund said.

Afghanistan continues to be in political, economic and social turmoil as several militant groups have taken advantage of the instability that has persisted in the country since the 2001 US-led invasion.

The US-led NATO combat force withdrew from Afghanistan in December 2014. However, more than 10,000 US military personnel remain in the country as part of the Resolute Support mission. (Sputnik)

(5) Experts Stress...

an army soldier in Helmand. The areas previously cleared have been done so at a great cost - in both resources and lives.

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) said that the military operations are aimed at eliminating militants. The ministry said that the cleared areas will be protected. "Our main goal is to inflict losses

on the enemy, wherever they are. We want their leadership and resources to be destroyed and our operation should expand. To protect areas, we need to adopt other strategies, such as deploying local police, supporting public uprisings," said Sediq Sediqi, spokesman for the MoI.

Afghanistan currently has a reported 352,000 troops. However, the existing number is not enough to tackle insecurity. (Tolnews)

(6) Adela Raz ...

development of international trade organizations.

Ms Raz also thanked the government leadership and Minister of Foreign Affairs for their support trust, saying her main objective would be to serve for the development of the nation. (KP)

(7) Peace Deal ...

after his return.

Negotiations began in July 2014, Karim said, when Hekmatyar received a letter from Ghani, then campaigning to become president, noting that one of Hekmatyar's key conditions for peace - the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan - was about to be met.

"That was the beginning," Karim said.

Progress stalled after President Barack Obama decided to leave a 10,000-strong force in the country through to the end of 2016 until Hekmatyar dropped the condition and renamed it "a goal" earlier this year.

Karim and a number of Afghan officials have said that a peace agreement with Hekmatyar's group could encourage Taliban fighters to end their participation in the war, and eventually lead to a full-blown peace. Others, however, regard Hekmatyar as politically irrelevant and lacking any real influence.

Spokesmen for the Taliban were not immediately available for comment.

The agreement covers a wide range of points, including a guarantee of equality between men and women and respect for the Afghan constitution, both points of contention with the Taliban, whose 1996-2001 rule of Afghanistan was characterized by extremist attitudes that cloistered women in their houses and mandated strict religious education, to the exclusion of almost all else, for boys.

Brokered under the auspices of the High Peace Council - a government body charged with negotiating an end to almost 40 years of war - the agreement allows Hezb-i-Islami to operate as a bona fide political party and participate in elections at every level. It gives legal immunity for "all past political and military proceedings" by Hezb-i-Islami members and mandates the release of all prisoners within three months. Karim said there are about 2,000 Hezb-i-Islami prisoners in jails across Afghanistan.

The Afghan government undertakes to provide housing and security for Hekmatyar at two or three residences in places of his choosing.

One point that could attract opposition from sections of society that fear Ghani's government is prepared to cede ground to the Taliban in return for peace - including any rollback in rights for women - is a clause that gives Hekmatyar a "consultant" role on "important political and national decisions" facing the government. For its part, Hezb-i-Islami pledges to end the war, dissolve all its military organizations and function as an "active political party." (AP)

(8) 30 MPs ...

house sessions until the fate of the project became clear.

However, a number of other Wolesi Jirga members said TUT-AP project should not be turned into a tribal issue.

Haji Mohammad Almas Zahid from central Parwan province stressed national unity and said it was a conspiracy of some foreign countries to fuel tribal differences in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(9) 34 Suicide ...

self-immolation scars. According to him, the lack of de-

cent housing, pressure from militants, domestic violence, poverty and financial hardship are among the main reasons for the suicide attempts.

"Insecurity and poverty joined together and created a motivation for suicide attempts," he said.

Meanwhile, one of the victims who attempted suicide in Darz Aab, Fazila, 27, said after a verbal clash with her husband she committed self-immolation and now she cannot breathe well due to damage sustained to her throat.

"My husband beats me by making several excuses and I had to end my life in order to get rid of his violence," she said.

Moreover, it is said that forced and early marriages are also among the reasons that push young girls to attempt suicide in Jawzjan.

Commenting on this, Human Rights Commission's provincial chairperson, Maghferat Samimi, said: "Domestic violence, early and forced marriages are among the main reasons behind an increase in violence against women."

A number of religious scholars meanwhile said that committing suicide - no matter what the excuse - is considered a huge sin in Islam and is forbidden.

Mohammad Rassoul Akhundzada, a religious scholar in Jawzjan, said life is a gift of Allah and committing suicide is a type of conflict against the Creator.

"Committing suicide is forbidden according to Islam. No one has the right to do this," he said. But despite that, Darz Aab district chief said they have decided in collaboration with religious scholars and tribal elders to overcome the problem through launching public awareness programs in the district. (Tolnews)

(10) 15 Militants...

MoD further added that 8 militants were killed and 15 others were wounded during the air raid in Arghandab district of Kandahar.

The anti-government armed militant groups including the Taliban insurgents have not commented regarding the reports so far. The Afghan security forces have stepped up counter-terrorism operations as the terror groups attempt to increase insurgency activities by launching their spring offensive.

The Afghan forces have started the new fighting season with increased capabilities, specifically with improved air power by receiving more equipment and aircraft from allies.

The Afghan Air Force A-29 Super Tucano pilots have alone flown more than 260 sorties since January when they received the first batch of the light attack aircraft from the United States.

Meanwhile, the Afghan defense officials said last month that the Afghan Air Force carried out the most missions in mid-April by flying 83 missions over a period of 24 hours. (KP)

(11) US Disappointed ...

"Many are continuing to face threats to themselves, to their families, to their livelihoods. These Afghan civilians have been essential to accomplishing our mission in Afghanistan," Kirby said. (Pajhwok)

(12) Pakistan, ...

Times blamed Pakistan for the mess in Afghanistan. Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Jalil Abbas Jilani in a rejoinder rejected the editorial saying that the collective failure of the international community was to be held responsible. (APP)

(13) ANSF Kill ...

at toppling down the insurgents and protecting people's lives and financial affairs... which saw 30 terrorists killed, 30 wounded and three others arrested," the statement reads.

Security in Afghanistan has drastically deteriorated in recent months as both Taliban insurgents and Daesh group, outlawed in Russia, the United States and several other countries, have expanded their activities in the south of the country. (Sputnik)

(14) ALP Commander...

in Ziaratgah locality and killed four of them, including his own son.

Basir said his son had links with Taliban over the past few years and he transferred weapons and ammunitions to the insurgents. His slain son and another brother formally joined the Taliban in November last year.

"My sons served under Taliban commander Mullah Hafizullah and they had threatened me several times with death for being an ALP commander and serving the government," he said.

The ALP commander said his son was wounded when he and other officials sprayed them with bullets and he later dies of his serious wounds. (Pajhwok)

(15) Bomber Among...

and besieged the house last night. The bomber blew himself up when he tried to escape on a motorcycle and police attempted to stop him.

Separately, three Taliban, including two Pakistanis, and two policemen were killed during a clash in Khashrud district, said Jelani.

A Taliban's spokesman, Qari Yusuf Ahmadi, confirmed the clash, and said four police including a commander were killed and 13 weapons seized by the fighters. (Pajhwok)

(16) Obama Toasts...

to make for as exciting a multilateral meeting as I sometimes participate in," Obama said.

More than 300 guests including rapper Common, comedian Will Farrell and actress Tracee Ellis Ross mingled with diplomats, tech and Fortune 500 CEOs, White House officials, and political donors in a glass-ceiling tent built around a tree on the South Lawn.

Hand-rolled beeswax candles and strings of lights reflected off ten-foot pillars of ice, an homage to the northern lights.

Pop star Demi Lovato, known for her support of liberal causes, was set to perform after a Nordic-inspired meal of ahi tuna, tomato tartare and red wine-braised beef short ribs. (Reuters)

(17) Germany...

some Germans who believe that migrants are getting preferential treatment. A nationalist party, Alternative for Germany, has surged in recent polls and the number of attacks against refugee shelters has increased sharply over the past year.

Almost 1.1 million asylum-seekers entered Germany last year, although the government has stressed that the figure doesn't account for those who move on to other countries or return home. (AP)

(18) 1,000 Migrants...

well as people from other nationalities.

UNHCR staff will be present and will be giving information and assistance to the persons rescued in the operations, which were coordinated by Frontex, UN officials noted.

So far this year, 187,920 refugees and migrants have arrived in Europe by sea, during which 1,361 have either died or been reported missing. Of those making the journey, 155,765 have reached Greece and 31,252 have reached Italy. (Xinhua)

(19) Ukraine Interior...

have any contact with the self-appointed occupying authorities -- impossible and immoral", Avakov wrote on his Facebook page. "This is your choice to cooperate with occupying authorities... Don't hide it", he added, addressing journalists.

Since the information was revealed the only Ukrainian official to support the journalists has been deputy minister of information policy Tetiana Popova, who said that she does not understand why it was necessary. (AFP)

(20) UNSC Alarmed...

urged member states participating in the joint force to counter Boko Haram to enhance regional military cooperation to deny safe haven to the group and allow humanitarian access. (Xinhua)

(21) Iraqi Troops ...

vehicles were destroyed over-

night when they approached the defensive lines of the security forces near Allas oilfield in east of the provincial capital city of Tikrit, some 170 km north of Baghdad, leaving at least two IS militants killed, a provincial security source said.

Meanwhile, a group of IS militants attacked the positions of the security forces in Fat'ha area, some 50 km north of Tikrit, sparking heavy clashes overnight with the troops, the source said. (Xinhua)

(22) Russia Says ...

from the South Korean port of Pusan to Vladivostok after an international yachts race.

So far, there is no comment from DPRK on the issue. (Xinhua)

(23) Arab States ...

is that China and Arab countries support each other on the issues of common concern," Gong said. At the meeting under the theme of "Working together on the Belt and Road Initiative and deepening China-Arab strategic cooperation," around 200 representatives from 22 Arab countries discussed the future development of China-Arab relations with the Chinese delegation led by Wang. (Xinhua)

Car Bomb Goes Off in Syria's Deir Al-Zour

DAMASCUS - A car bomb went off in Syria's eastern province of Deir al-Zour on Saturday, leaving unknown losses, pro-government Sham FM radio reported.

The car exploded near the Furat al-Sham Hotel in the city of Deir al-Zour, said the report, providing no further details.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said intense battles raged on Saturday between the Syrian army and the Islamic State (IS) militants.

The UK-based watchdog said 26 Syrian soldiers were killed when the IS militants infiltrated the areas southwest of Deir al-Zour, after which the militants captured a hospital.

The Syrian army has besieged the hospital amid ongoing clashes.

A military source said that the Syrian warplanes have struck the positions of IS in the vicinity of the Deir al-Zour airbase, which has also been a target of the recent IS attacks. (Xinhua)

Venezuela President Declares Emergency, Cites U.S., Domestic 'Threats'

CARACAS - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro declared a 60-day state of emergency on Friday due to what he called plots from within the OPEC country and the United States to topple his leftist government.

Maduro did not provide details of the measure. A previous state of emergency, implemented in states near the Colombian border last year, suspended constitutional guarantees in those areas, except for guarantees relating to human rights.

Earlier on Friday, U.S. intelligence officials told reporters they were increasingly worried about the potential for an economic and political meltdown in Venezuela and predicted Maduro was not likely to complete his term.

Venezuela's opposition is seeking to recall the unpopular leader, 53, amid a worsening crisis that includes food and medicine shortages, frequent power cuts, sporadic looting and galloping inflation.

But the former union leader and bus driver has vowed to stick out his term, and accuses the United States of fomenting an undercover coup against him. He pointed to this week's impeachment of fellow leftist Dilma Rousseff in Brazil as a sign that he is next.

"Washington is activating measures at the request of Venezuela's fascist right, who are emboldened by the coup in Brazil," Maduro said during a Friday night broadcast on state television.

Washington has had an acrimonious relationship with Caracas

for years, especially following U.S. support for a short-lived 2002 coup against late leader Hugo Chavez. (Reuters)

Greek, Turkish Cypriots Pull off Unique Restoration Project

NICOSIA - Christian Greek Cypriots and Muslim Turkish Cypriots are about to complete a joint restoration project which could be considered as a unique one in more ways than one.

The project was aimed at restoring and preserving a historic Christian monastery which is respected by both Christians and Muslims of the eastern Mediterranean island.

The Apostolos Andreas (Saint Andrew) monastery, on the most north-eastern tip of the island, is to be reopened to the public in August at the latest after restoration work which will have last more than 18 months, a member of the team overseeing the project said on Friday.

"It can be said that the two communities are writing history right now," Takis Hadjidemetriou, the co-chairman of a bi-communal committee in charge of the project told Xinhua during an on-site visit.

"This is a unique venture. At a time of religious conflict and violence two religions are giving an example of cooperation that could become a model," Hadjidemetriou added.

The monastery is a Christian pilgrimage site but is also being revered and visited by many Muslim Turkish Cypriots who either offer their respects by lighting a candle or by making offerings.

Legend has it that the monastery was built on the site where Apostol Andreas, one of the founders of Christianity, while sailing to Rome, set foot in search of fresh water. (Xinhua)

Preparations for Slovakia's EU Presidency Get into Final Phase: FM

BRATISLAVA - Preparations for Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the EU are progressing as planned, announced Slovak Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajcak after a meeting with the European Commission (EC) top representatives in Bratislava on Friday.

"Preparations are entering their final phase," added Lajcak.

Slovakia's chief of diplomacy stressed that during the presidency in the second half of 2016, Slovakia will focus on activities that could bring Europe closer together.

"The presidency program as well as our priorities will be ambitious, yet realistic. They will be aimed at achieving concrete results in order to make our presidency successful not only for Slovakia but also for the whole European project," stressed Lajcak.

The EC is among the three most important EU institutions and is responsible for proposing legislation and implementing decisions of the EU. (Xinhua)

Al-Shabaab Militants Flee As Military Onslaught Intensifies in S. Somalia

MOGADISHU - Fighters from Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab terrorist network on Friday fled from their strongholds in the middle Shabelle region of Southern Somalia following a fierce military onslaught from Somali forces and the African Union troops.

Dahir Mohamed, a senior commander in Somali national army, told Xinhua the Al-Shabaab fighters were overpowered by the military operation and retreated to avoid casualties.

"The Al-Shabaab militants fled from towns in middle Shabelle region once they learnt that the military onslaught was so severe," said Mohamed

Eye witnesses also revealed that Xinhua the militants fled from their camps following the military assault.

Several towns in southern Somalia have been liberated from Al-Shabaab this year. (Xinhua)