

(1) MPs Pan ...

said on Saturday. "The government must resolve this issue, and must introduce a Minister of Defense."

A number of names have been floated for the position in the media, but sources close to the issue indicate disagreements between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah are behind the delay. Meanwhile, some have suggested the government is looking to stall in order to have more to offer the Taliban in a peace deal. "If the national unity government has set the Ministry of Defense seat aside for Taliban, and are waiting for the results of peace talks, then they must make it clear to the people," Kabul MP Allah Gul Mujahid said.

Some legislators argued for the representative body to take matters into its own hands. "If the government is not introducing a Minister of Defense, we must do something ourselves and elect someone qualified and Mujahid as our defense minister," Balkh MP Rahman Rahmani said. "We will ask the people to support him so that he can serve the people." (Tolonews)

(2) NATO to...

He added Afghanistan would also benefit from Enduring Partnership beyond RS mission which would be a big achievement for the country.

"With regard to the new threats, it was decided for the first time to have NATO's presence beyond 2016 in Enduring Partnership form," said Rabbani.

Keeping in view the country and region's situation, he added, Afghanistan had specific demands in the meeting, including further training and support of Afghan air force and other forces that was accepted in principle. He said further details would come in next year's meeting.

According to Rabbani, the meeting also announced support for an Afghan-led peace process. It was also insisted that Taliban should suspend relations with international terrorism and accept Afghanistan's constitution, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(3) Foreign Affairs...

UAE, based on new regulations. "The UAE Ambassador to Kabul will be going back to the UAE to talk to officials there; we are aware of the issue and are doing our best to resolve it," Foreign Affairs Minister Salahuddin Rabbani said.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries has urged the government to do more than it already is. "The government response in addressing this problem has been weak, even though the government is obligated to support all of its businessmen and their investments outside Afghanistan," chamber of commerce deputy Khan Jan Alakozai told TOLONews on Saturday.

Fifteen days ago, the UAE government announced plans to deport some 600 Afghan businessmen. (Tolonews)

(4) MoI Insists ...

160 wounded, and 48 others have been detained by security forces, he added. The security forces, he said, also seized 61 mines, 45 different types of weapons, and 64 vehicles.

He said security forces had inflicted heavy casualties on insurgents in Charsada and Pasaband districts of Ghor province and clearing operations were still ongoing in Kunduz province. The offensives, he said, were also ongoing in Baghlan and Badakhshan provinces.

"There is no danger in these districts... no district would fall to Taliban and if they create trouble anywhere we have the capability to respond to them," Seddiqi remarked.

In today's session, some MPs expressed concerns, saying stern action was needed to overcome the situation or at least one otherwise two provinces would fall to insurgents.

"Our request from those who speak to media is that they should avoid discussing issues that would benefit enemy's propaganda," the MoI spokesman concluded. (Pajhwok)

(5) Deputy CEO ...

to take up the issue seriously in order to resolve the electoral issues.

Earlier, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani appointed MP Shukria Barezai to head the electoral reforms commission, but faced veto from CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

Later, Jandad Spinghar was appointed to head the commission but the commission still has not initiated its work. (Pajhwok)

(6) Kabul Hotel...

with four Indians, two Pakistanis, an American, an Italian and a Kazakhstani woman, questions have been raised regarding the exact number of armed attackers. Security officials who have spoken on condition of anonymity have said that in addition to the 14 victims, they found the body of at least one attacker. Bodies of other individuals - whose identities are yet to be determined - might also have been involved, said a source.

"Our investigations are ongoing. A person was killed as a result of confrontational firing with police and his body is with the police and we are trying to determine the exact number of attackers using the evidence that we have," says Faeed Afzali, Director of Criminal Investigations at Kabul Police HQ.

Many, including an eyewitness, have called the attack mysterious and have raised serious questions, including that of how an attacker or attackers gained entry without any confrontation with guards.

In an interview with TOLONews, military analyst Atiqullah Amarkhail said that on the night of the incident he was at the hotel with one of his friends.

Amarkhail said the attackers were planning to kill the Indian Ambassador to Kabul who was expected to attend a concert at the hotel that night. He said an attacker opened fire on everyone present when he heard a senior official had arrived.

Amarkhail said the attacker obviously assumed the official was the ambassador. The ambassador, however, was not at the hotel that night.

"When I talked to my friends, they said that the attacker was brought to the hotel two nights ago, and had plenty of bullets with him. I don't know why these things happen? Did this man drop down from the sky or did he make his own way to the hotel. I believe that these men were brought to the hotel by specific people," says Amarkhail.

Meanwhile, some of the injured told TOLONews that the person who shot them did not look local. One hotel staff member confirmed this and said: "I went to the corridor, this man was sitting near the counter, and shot us," says Muhammaduddin.

"I only saw one attacker, but I don't know if there was attackers outside," says Zabihullah, another wounded survivor. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi spoke to Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani on Friday and offered his condolences on the loss of lives due to the attack.

"We are one when it comes to fighting terror. President Ashraf Ghani expressed sadness on the unfortunate demise of Indian citizens in the attack in Kabul", the Prime Minister said. (Tolonews)

(7) Iran May ...

According to Atmar, the ISIS group is led by a Pakistani militant and the group recognizes no boundaries since they have already declared the regional countries in their map as Khurasan province.

He insisted that all force must be used to fight the terror group and said the government of Afghanistan prepared a strategy two months ago where the group's local commander was killed following an operation in Helmand province. This also comes as President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani acknowledged for the first time last month that the terrorist group was gaining influence in the country.

Speaking during a press briefing ahead of his visit to United States, President Ghani said "Daesh's characteristic is that it is man-eating. It swallows its competitors."

"Here, it is not physical presence of people from Syria or Iraq. It is the network effect," President Ghani added. (KP)

(8) President Wants ...

A statement from the Presiden-

tial Palace said Energy and Water Minister Eng. Ali Ahmad Osmani and his team attended the meeting.

Implementation of systematic approach, elimination of corruption, improvement in services, encouragement of accountability, feasibility and study of energy projects were discussed during the meeting, the statement added.

"More focus should be given to build capacity," the president said.

The president underlined the need for a study and research in order to have a full picture of water and energy situation in the country. "With this, we can have a clear picture of our water and energy situation. We should conduct our research based on Afghanistan's five river zones." (Pajhwok)

(9) Nawa District...

Rahmani told TOLONews. "The Governor of Ghazni and security officials must be held responsible for deceiving people," he added. Meanwhile, MoI officials have scoffed at the Taliban's claims and maintained that there remains a strong troop presence in the embattled district. "Nawa district is in the control of the security forces, and the statements of Taliban are not correct," MoI spokesman Sediq Sediqi said.

"We have enough forces to defend the district in order to prevent it from facing security threats." (Tolonews)

(10) 56 Zabul Areas ...

several villages. Waqif Shah said 113 militants including 60 Pakistani fighters were killed and as many wounded during the operation.

He said that noose had been tightened around terrorists and large swathes of territory had been cleared of militants and destroyed their hideouts. Security forces remained unhurt in the operation, he noted.

Mohammad Dawood Gulzar, provincial council member, said security forces carried out a commendable job after clearing Surkhgan area of militants.

But Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, Taliban spokesman, rejected government's claims and said that Taliban had active presence in all areas, with heavy losses inflicted on security personnel. (Pajhwok)

(11) Govt. to ...

The statement added the information and culture minister Abdul Bari Jahani presented his ministry's plans with regards to development of art and culture, museums, historical relics, national archives, films, public libraries, music, tourism and other areas of the ministry's concern.

The president reiterated support to freedom of expression and access to information. He specifically insisted on promotion of tourism industry in the country. "More needs to be done to improve our tourism sector."

He also directed the ministry's officials to initiate plans on preserving historical monuments, the statement added. (Pajhwok)

(12) Ministry of ...

education, said students of intermediate and high schools were facing with acute shortage of books.

He said publication of seven millions required books would cost \$12 million. Also the education minister proposed the appointment of 13,000 teachers.

The contract for publishing the books, corruption in the education sector, reforms in curriculum, enrollment of students, infrastructure, quality of education and other issues were also discussed in the meeting, the statement said. The president suggested more effective implementation of the 100-day plan and ordered the education minister to share the plan with other ministries. (Pajhwok)

(13) 100 Inmates ...

in the Jail for theft case and he would now live a peaceful life with his family.

Naeem shared his miserable life in the prison and recalled it was a congested place and most of the prisoners would fall ill most of the time.

The deputy governor pledged to reform prisons in the province. He informed that a request had been sent to central government for building new jail in Kandahar. (Pajhwok)

(14) "Kill Mullah ...

separatist movement in Balochistan and also conducting various terrorist attacks in Pakistan from Afghan soil.

The report further added that Pakistani Authorities also informed Afghan government of the involvement of India's primary intelligence agency RAW in backing Mullah Fazal Ullah to destabilize Pakistan, using Afghan soil.

Pakistan has officially handed over the evident proofs regarding the meetings between RAW agents and Fazal Ullah, the report said, adding that the Banned outfits like Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front and Balochistan Republican Army are also being supported and directly financed by India's RAW to inflame the liberation movements in the province.

The Pakistani authorities have claimed that there are multiple training camps of RAW to provide military training to the Baloch separatists in Kabul, Kandahar and Nimruz- the confirmed intel reports of which have been given to the Afghan agencies. The Afghan government officials have not commented regarding the report so far. (KP)

(15) US Needs to...

airspace management contract last year had delayed any handover but now was time to ensure there was a transition to local teams.

Sopko, a former prosecutor who took on the mafia in the United States, has earned notoriety in Kabul and Washington for denouncing how much of the \$107 billion the United States has spent rebuilding Afghanistan since 2001 has been frittered away.

In his report he recommended the U.S. Secretary of State tries to ensure the Afghan government awards a new airspace management services contract before the current interim contract with the U.S. Department of Defense expires this September.

"If Afghanistan is able to pay for the full cost of a future contract for airspace management services, it would demonstrate an increased capacity, at least in this area, to take responsibility for its own affairs," Sopko said in the report.

Sopko has previously said the U.S. government needs to change the way it operates and must set more strict conditions on its help and keep a much closer eye on the money.

The U.S. congress set up SIGAR in 2008 to provide independent oversight of U.S. funds in Afghanistan.

The U.S. ended combat operations in Afghanistan last year and under an agreement last September, Afghanistan authorities were to be responsible for the airports by the end of 2014 but this has not yet happened. (Reuters)

(16) Sharp Rise...

of addicted teachers, questioning how teachers could teach when they fell asleep in the classroom. He added this was one of the reasons that not a single student passed Kankur exams from eight schools in the district. He urged the education officials to pay utmost heed to tackle the problem.

There are more than 640 schools in Badakhshan where 328,000 students are studying under the guidance of 10,000 teachers. But more than 50 per cent of the teachers are non-professionals or religious teachers who teach mathematics and science.

Local officials say more than 160 teachers are addicted in districts bordering neighboring Tajikistan. These teachers are mostly addicted to heroin and opium.

Mohammad Akram, an experienced teacher in the province, said one of the rules of becoming a teacher was that the individuals should not be addicted to any drugs because it would affect students and their performance. (Pajhwok)

(17) MSF Treats...

them injured by gunshots or bomb blasts. Of these patients, 51 of them were women and children.

"The proportion of war-wounded patients in the center has more than doubled compared to the same period last year, from 6 percent to 14 percent," says Laurent Gabriel, MSF coordinator at the trauma center.

"The surgeons are dealing with severe abdominal and chest injuries, with many patients requiring a series of complex surgical interventions, Gabriel added."

The situation is volatile and the flow of wounded arriving to the emergency room is sporadic, ranging from five in one day to as many as 35 on another.

This is a reflection of the unpredictability of the conflict, as well as the difficulties that people in outlying districts have in accessing the hospital in the city, the statement added.

It is difficult to have a clear view of what is happening in the districts outside the city, where fighting is ongoing," says Gabriel. "We are very concerned that people living in these areas are not able to make it to the trauma center for treatment in time, due to the continued fighting, and the fact that they have to face numerous checkpoints to get into the city. (Pajhwok)

(18) Taliban Seize...

"We asked time and again to authorities to deploy more forces and supply weapons to the province in thwart the looming Taliban's attacks. Militants sway in the area pose serious threat to Baghlan-Mazar-i-Sharif Highway," Aymaq said.

But Deputy Governor Abdul Qadem Niazi said the base had been evacuated tactically aimed at preventing security forces and civilians casualties. He said that chiefs of different security institutions held a meeting earlier in the day and agreed to retreat from the police training centre.

The official said security forces on the ground could not progress without air support and the issue had been discussed with the Ministry of Defence.

Mohammad Zakria, a resident of the locality, said security officials and militants exchanged heavy fire and nobody could come out of their houses. He added the situations were under control but residents still afraid to come outside.

Taliban on their website claimed killing five security officials, wounding eight others and capturing the police training centre. (Pajhwok)

(19) Over 100 Insurgents

insurgents in any way. Our message to them is to hand over weapons and join the peace process otherwise they will be killed," Gen. Mahauddin Ghor, commander in chief of 207 Zafar military corps said.

This comes after Taliban insurgents attacked and took control of the district almost a week ago. But after heavy fighting troops regained control. It was reported earlier that police and troops had been surrounded by insurgents but once airstrikes were launched the situation was brought under control.

According to officials, this was the bloodiest attack in Ghor in the past thirteen years.

Rahmati said that the Taliban also robbed a civilian's home and killed a civilian.

Fazul Haq Ehsan, the provincial council head, said that the number of security forces in the province is not enough compared to other provinces.

"If they don't address this issue this will happen again especially as the Taliban has not been completely destroyed," he said.

Despite security forces having regained control of the district, heavy clashes reportedly still continue in certain parts of the district, say officials. (Tolonews)

(20) 9 Rebels Dead...

Separately, four Taliban rebels were killed when their car hit a roadside bomb, Durrani said.

Meanwhile, police repulsed Taliban's attack when they attacked a police check post, Durrani said, adding that police defused 10 land mines. Militants have not commented on the accidents. Taliban announced spring offensive in southern Kandahar and the ensuing clashes and landmines left several security personnel and civilians dead.

Five civilians were killed in mine blast in Maroof district on Friday while seven civilians died in fighting between sec. (Pajhwok)

(21) Drone Strikes...

in Chahrda district while five insurgents killed in Dur Baba district.

Two of the insurgents were dreaded Taliban commanders, he added.

Maj. Hazrat Hussain Mashriqiwal, provincial police chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News the slain Taliban's shadowy chief for Achin district was involved in several anti-state activities.

Ulfatullah, a resident of the locality, said the unmanned aircraft left several rebels dead in Mor-day locality last night.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, said only five of the group's fighters, including a shadowy chief of Nazyan district, were killed in drone attacks in Bati Kot and Nazyan districts. It merits mention that drone strikes have witnessed surge in recent past targeting Moman-dara, Nazyan and Achin districts of the province. (Pajhwok)

(22) Taliban Release...

and started searching for passengers.

He added militants' operation lasted several hours and the passengers were forced out from at least 30 vehicles and were taken to undisclosed location.

security forces, he said did not take immediate action and the area was tense after the kidnapping of civilians.

Zalmai Oryakhail, provincial police chief, confirmed Taliban have made the passengers hostage. He said security operations were ongoing in the area but he had no more details to share.

Rahim Gul, a resident of the area, said hundreds of Taliban fighters were on the roads searching passengers' vehicles. Hours later, he said, security forces arrived in the area.

It is said some of the passengers were released. (Pajhwok)

(23) US House...

other programs.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, accused Democrats of "letting politics come before national security." "With all the threats our troops face and the sacrifices they make," he said, "Democrats' opposition to this defense bill is in fact indefensible." (AP)

(24) U.N. Seeks...

ship, no longer reaching the country," he said, calling for inspections to be sped up so humanitarian goods, including "food and other life-sustaining necessities can resume".

"At the moment, the pause is globally holding, though I have to say every day we see skirmishes, localized and of short duration, but we still see that there is military activity," van der Klaauw said, citing clashes in Aden and Taiz. (Reuters)

(25) Russia Ready...

weapons," Chizhov said. "It raises the issue of its reliability as a partner."

The contract for the Mistral-class helicopter carrier was supposed to be the biggest arms sale ever by a NATO country to Russia. (AP)

(26) IS Seizes...

Biden on Friday pledged to expedite supplies to Iraqi forces in a phone conversation with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. The IS gains in Iraq came as rights groups reported the group had massacred 23 people as it advanced on Palmyra, and it now held positions within one kilometre (less than a mile) of the UNESCO world heritage site. (AFP)

(27) Iran Nuclear...

denuclearization for weaponization, even as you can have a peaceful nuclear power program."

"Hopefully that can be a message, but whether or not DPRK is capable of internalizing that kind of message or not, that's still to be proved," he said, referring to North Korea by the acronym of its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. (AP)

(28) China Infrast...

concerns, saying: "The AIIB is a multilateral institution, so naturally its operation will observe international rules."

"The AIIB is also ready to carry out cooperation with other multilateral institutions, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank," he added.

Under President Xi Jinping, China is pushing to build on the ancient Silk Road trade routes on land and sea, through its "One Belt, One Road" initiative expected to be partly funded by the AIIB. (AFP)