

(1) Hundreds of ...

through Bamiyan. Hazara leaders condemned the decision to reroute the project as a sign of the government's discriminatory policies, and criticized President Ashraf Ghani.

Concerns that the protest could turn violent prompted the police to block off roads leading into the city's central commercial district. Stacked shipping containers prevented the marchers from reaching the presidential palace but the rally passed peacefully.

Karim Khalili, former Vice-President while speaking to the protesters said that the "people will never keep quiet when facing injustice." He called on Ghani and chief executive Abdullah Abdullah to change the decision on the power line.

Hazara lawmaker Arif Rahmani said the community wanted the power line to cross through Bamiyan, "which has seen no development in 15 years." "We are demanding justice, not charity," Rahmani said.

Daud Naji, a protester, said the Hazaras were demanding access to a planned multimillion-dollar regional electricity line.

Another demonstrator said that the rerouting is evidence of bias against the Hazara minority.

Abdul Malik, 53, a Pashtun from southern Kandahar province, said he joined the protest "to show unity for their rights as in past 15 years very little has been done for Hazaras, and people need electricity in their homes." While Addressing the nation later in the evening, President Ghani said that "I strongly appreciate the people who cooperated with us and showed patience during the protest."

"I praise the security forces for providing security for the demonstration and for foiling plots despite threats," he said.

The President further added that "government strongly believes in equal development and equal implementation of projects".

Demonstrators also seen giving flowers to security forces as gratitude for providing security to demonstrators.

The so-called TUTAP line is backed by the Asian Development Bank with the involvement of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(2) Power Line...

Laws were the right of people and the government had taken special measures for better security of rallies.

It said the government respected people's demands and suggestions and took the following decision for properly reviewing the TUTAP project route.

Salang Pass was chosen by the previous government as the default route of the project, so it does not relate the incumbent administration, which had delayed the 500Kv power project for six months in 2013 in order to supply electricity to Bamiyan. A committee was tasked during the period to provide all resources for supply of electricity to Bamiyan. The government has been discussing and listening to people's opinions for the past two weeks to find a solution to differences and prevent the project from recession as well as find a proper solution to provide electricity to Bamiyan. Therefore, the government talked to the following authorities.

The national unity leadership has discussed with leaders of different political parties, elders and protesters ways of finding a solution to the problem through talks.

The government many times tried and sent a delegation to the protesters to open a peaceful way for talks on the issue. The government sent an official letter to the protesters and invited them to the Presidential Palace for talking on the issue with government leaders. The government also contacted

political party leaders and elders involved in the protest and invited them to solve the problem through discussions. The president delayed his trip to Tajikistan only to meet the protesters.

The Presidential Palace, at least four times, announced preparations to host protesters at the Palace and hear their complaints, but the demonstrators rejected the invitation.

The government finally made a decision creating a special commission to review the route of the project. The commission was set up in consideration of protesters' views as the procurement and execution process of the project also suspended.

The commission has the authority to assess all documents of the project and the government would then embark on its implementation in consideration of the panel's suggestions regarding modifications. (Pajhwok)

(3) NATO ...

and Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani on May 19 and 20.

He said Rabbani would brief the meeting participants on the latest security and political situations of Afghanistan. The meeting will take place less than two months before the Warsaw Summit.

"We expect ministers to outline our future support for Afghanistan along three strands of activities -- our commitment to sustain the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016, to continue to support the financial sustainability of the Afghan security forces through 2020; and to develop a long-term strong political partnership and practical cooperation with Afghanistan."

The official said NATO Secretary General would hold his pre-ministerial press conference on Wednesday at NATO Headquarters. (Pajhwok)

(4) China Vows ...

issues related to China's core interests. China is willing to work with Afghanistan to deepen bilateral cooperation in politics, economy, security, and culture as well as in international and regional affairs.

Li said China is willing to help Afghanistan map out a national infrastructure construction plan and implement investment cooperation projects the two sides had agreed on.

China will also support its enterprises to cooperate with Afghanistan in industrial capacity, strengthen interconnectivity in information industry, enhance cooperation in agriculture, education and between localities, and help Afghanistan train talent for social and economic development, the premier said.

He added that China backs the Afghan government's continued efforts to advance the inclusive "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" political reconciliation process and supports the country in participating in regional cooperation. Li also called on Afghanistan to continue to take effective measures to create a secure environment for bilateral cooperation.

Abdullah said China is an important neighbor and friend, and Afghanistan attaches great importance to development of bilateral relations. He reaffirmed support to China on issues concerning its core and major interests, and thanked China for its long-term assistance to Afghanistan's national reconciliation and economic reconstruction.

Abdullah welcomed Chinese companies to increase investment in his country. He said Afghanistan is willing to further expand bilateral cooperation in areas including infrastructure construction, housing assurance, mineral resource exploitation, information and telecommunications, agriculture, education, defense, and regional interconnectivity.

He pledged to provide security assurance for bilateral economic

cooperation.

After the talks, the two sides signed deals on cooperation in economy, technology, interconnectivity and trade.

Abdullah is paying his first official visit to China from May 15 to 18 since taking office. (Xinhua)

(5) MPs Want ...

from western Herat province, also asked the house administrative board to summon officials who could not use their development budgets properly.

Wolesi Jirga speaker Abdul Rauf Ibarhimi said: "The development budget is for improving livelihood of the nation, so it should be utilized in a timely manner. The documents we received show that most of government departments have used less than 10 percent of their budget."

He said lawmakers should discharge their responsibility because they had the right to evaluate the performance of the government.

Ibrahimi asked the house commissions to professionally evaluate utilization of development budget of government departments and summon those having committed negligence in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(6) Noor Says ...

along with their weapons in the operation.

Meanwhile, the arrested fighters said they were deceived by the Taliban's propaganda and that they came to the district from Sar-e-Pul, Samangan and Balkh provinces.

"I was deceived from a lack of information and education. We joined the Taliban with the mindset that we are mujahideen now. It was our worst fate that we joined the militants and now we have been arrested," said Khair Mohammad, one prisoner.

Another prisoner, Mohibullah, said: "It is one month since I joined the Taliban, by propaganda from Mullah Ghufuran, who is a member of Mullah Bari's group."

According to local security officials, at least 10 security force members were killed and 10 others wounded in the operation, where they cleared 10 areas of Taliban.

A number of residents in Kushinda district meanwhile welcomed the military operation by the security forces and said there were no civilian casualties.

"We are happy. The poor people here are now free. They will get back to their daily activities," said SherMohamamd, a resident of the area.

Noor said he will never let insurgents infiltrate Balkh and that he is committed to ensuring security in his province. (Tolnews)

(7) Pro-Rassoul ...

and the ISI until they are completely defeated.

"We raise this flag on behalf of you and announce our allegiance and full support to Mullah Abdul Rassoul, the leader of the Taliban movement. We cut the hands of ISI in Afghanistan as we did the Russians. We will use all energy to defeat ISI," said pro-Rassoul commander Mullah Ghafar, who also serves as Taliban commander in Badghis.

Also in Badghis, reports have emerged of a major confrontation between the two rival factions in BalaMurghab district of the province.

Infighting between the two factions was also reported in Qadis Jawnd district of Badghis

"We announce our support to Mullah Abdul Rassoul and declare war against the enemies of Afghanistan," pro-Rassoul commander in Ghor, Maulavi Abdul Hamid said.

In yet another development on Monday, fighting was also reported in Qadis and Jaon districts of Badghis between the two groups.

A few months ago, similar encounters between the two rival

factions were reported in Herat's Shindand district, which apparently resulted in the deaths of at least 100 fighters on both sides. (Tolnews)

(8) Baghlan's ...

members praised the security forces' move and said that night operations should be increased.

"Night operations are very effective to eliminate insurgents. We call on security forces to increase the operations," said BismillahAtash, a member of Baghlan provincial council.

During the past week, extraction activities at the coalmine were stopped but local officials said they will resume work within the next few days. (Tolnews)

(9) Concerns ...

along the highway so people can travel safely," said Khal Mohammad, one driver who travels the route regularly.

"War on the highway has created lots of problems for us, we cannot travel safely," said Hamidullah, another driver.

"Nowadays there are always clashes in the ChashmeShir area and people are traveling less and we want the government to ensure security of the highways," said Mohammad Ewaz, a traveler.

A tanker driver who was shot on Monday said thousands of dollars' worth of damage was sustained to the truck he was driving after it rolled.

"Early today our vehicle was going from Hairatan (a border town and a port in the north of Balkh province) to Kabul and a bullet hit our vehicle, the driver was wounded and the vehicle rolled. Many other drivers have been wounded and we sustained nearly \$50,000 USD in losses," said Alhamuddin, the owner of the tanker.

However, security officials in Baghlan province said that soon militants will be pushed back from the areas along the highways.

"Taliban, with attacks on security checkpoints, have created insecurity on the highway and they took control of the highway in ChashmeShir area for several hours but now they have fled the area and we assure the people that the security is restored on the highway," said a Baghlan military official. (Tolnews)

(10) Govt. Used...

move created enormous problems for workers trying to get in to the city.

Thousands of people walked for hours in a bid to find a way to breach the container ring - but mostly without success.

Tempers eventually started to run high by about 7.30am local time when business people realized they would not be able to get to work.

"I walked about 15 to 16 km around the city [trying to get in]," Wahid Ahmad Rahimi, a resident of Kabul, said.

Faiz Ahmad Sediqqi, another resident said: "Wherever you went they [security forces] were saying go to another street but all streets were closed."

"All the routes to the presidential palace were closed," Zahra Karimi, another resident said.

Mostly all key government organizations are located inside the area that was closed off - as are many embassies and businesses. But political analysts and residents have raised concerns that this move could be repeated by government in the near future.

Officials did however go on record on Monday afternoon apologizing for the move but said it had been necessary so as to ensure security in the city and ensure the safety of the protesters.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Kabul city on Monday morning in protest against the planned rerouting of the 500kV power line project to Kabul from Turkmenistan. Unable to march to the presidential palace, demonstrators then

marched to the DehMazang area of Kabul city. After being addressed by government officials and protest organizers the demonstrators dispersed. (Tolnews)

(11) Left-out ...

in five districts, however the left out children will be given polio drops this time in cooperation with tribal elders and religious scholars."

Seven positive polio cases had surfaced in the Shinwari zone last year, when about 60,000 children were missed. However, no polio case was detected this year.

"In the entire eastern zone, only three cases are registered in Kunar province and we are trying to prevent the transfer of the poliovirus through the polio vaccination campaign," Dr. Kamalwal said.

He said one million children would be covered during the four-day anti-polio campaign in the eastern zone.

Religious scholar MaulanaFazl Rahim urged families to administer polio drops to their children. "There are children who are paralyzed because they were denied polio drops. The vaccine has no problem from Islamic point of view."

A resident of Achin district, NavidShinwari, said there were some areas in the district which had been missed during immunization campaigns over the past many years.

"We are aware the government has launched efforts in coordination with tribal elders to implement polio campaign in insecure areas. We hope the process will be intensified."

He said the Shinwar zone was located near some areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province across the Durand Line, where positive polio cases had increased.

Earlier, health officials in Nangarhar had said the poliovirus is transferred from Pakistan into Nangarhar.

They had said teams have been tasked with administering polio drops to children crossing the border into Nangarhar from Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(12) Taliban Bar ...

officials had been barred from performing duty after they refused to meet some demands of the movement.

"One of our demands is that two religious scholars should be appointed as teachers in each school and secondly all teachers should come to schools in-time."

He said they would not allow the education officials to attend their office until their demands were met. He said the education officials could hold direct talks with the Taliban in this regard.

Syed Ajab, who lives in the district bazaar, confirmed the district education office had been shut since yesterday.

Charkh is located 30 kilometres south of Pul-i-Alam, the provincial capital, and is one of the insecure towns. (Pajhwok)

(13) Death Toll...

at DurinSirugun village, said Darwin Surbakti, secretary of disaster agency at Deli Serdang district.

"Suddenly flash floods hit the location and swept away all of them," he told Xinhua by phone. Heavy downpours at the mountainous areas near the location had sent a huge amount of water to the resort, he said.

No damage of properties was reported after the natural disaster, the official said.

The search and rescue operation involved soldiers, police, rescuers from local search and rescue office, according to him. (Xinhua)

(14) Major Powers ...

threat of the IS establishing a bigger foothold.

Monday's conference is expected to "discuss international support for the new Government of National Accord, with a focus on security," said earlier John Kirby,

spokesman for U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who chairs the ministerial meeting with his Italian counterpart Paolo Gentiloni.

In addition, the flow of migrants from Libya across the Mediterranean to Europe is also a topic for discussions in Vienna. (Xinhua)

(15) Trump Says ...

relationship, who knows?" Trump told Britain's ITV television station in an interview aired on Monday when asked how ties would fare if he won the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8.

"Well number one, I'm not stupid, okay. I can tell you that right now. Just the opposite. Number Two, in terms of divisive: I don't think I'm a divisive person. I'm a unifier, unlike our president right now," Trump said, referring to Barack Obama.

Cameron's spokesman said the prime minister stood by his original comments.

The United States is Britain's closest ally. U.S. companies are the biggest foreign direct investors in Britain and the so-called 'special relationship' with Washington has been the cornerstone of British diplomacy since World War Two. (Reuters)

(16) Jolie ...

with countries competing to be the toughest," she said at a migration event sponsored by the BBC in London.

She said nations need to pull together to deal with the world's 60 million displaced people by rebuilding a coordinated and orderly system for dealing with refugees and migrants.

"I have been very, very disheartened by my own country's response to the situation," Jolie said.

She referred to Republican presidential contender Donald Trump, who suggested a temporary ban on all Muslims entering the U.S. in the wake of attacks by extremists. (AP)

Climate Change Threatens East Africa's Tea Production, UN Warns

NAIROBI - The UN food agency said on Monday that tea production in East Africa is under growing threat of climate change.

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (-FAO) Kenya Country Representative Robert Allport told an agricultural forum in Nairobi that higher maximum and lower minimum temperatures is affecting tea production.

"Some estimates indicate that due to the impact of climate change, East Africa could lose 55 percent of its tea production by the year 2050," Allport said.

Experts have noted that climate change has increased the frequency as well as period of drought in Kenya

"At the moment during drought years, Kenya loses between 20 to 30 percent of its tea yield," Allport added.

The country representative said that climate change also affects the quality of tea produced in East Africa.

Allport added that FAO is working closely with East African governments to help mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

"FAO is concerned about the issue of price equity in the tea value chain. Our role is to support regulations that will enable consistent and equitable price," Allport said.

According to him, global demand for tea will remain stable in the foreseeable future as population grows, noting that despite tea being a multi-billion dollar industry, tea farmers receive little compensation.

"What remains for Kenya is for those involved in the tea sector to harness demand to ensure that tea revenue are equitably distributed across all players in the value chain," the country representative said. (Xinhua)