

(1) Parliamentary...

difficult challenge he added – putting it down to “legacy. We don’t have electoral roles. Despite your generous expenditure of \$1 billion USD (over the past 13 years) it is not resulting in a sustainable solution”, he told the gathered delegates.

But civil society institutions have raised their concerns over the delay in starting the electoral reform special commission and said that holding of parliamentary elections before electoral reforms are tackled will be a difficult and challenging task.

“Government is less interested in reforms and a conflicting approach to reform in this sector has caused the international community to become less interested in aiding this process. We believe that in the current situation and without electoral reforms parliamentary elections are impossible,” said Naem Ayoubzada, Chairman of the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA).

“If the National Unity Government implements its commitments for bringing electoral reforms I believe that the international community will resume its assistance to the process and all troubles will be resolved,” Ayoubzada added.

Ghani ordered the establishment of the electoral reform special commission before his visit to the United States earlier this year but the CEO’s office has opposed Ghani’s appointment of Shukria Barakzai as the head. As a result, the commission has not formerly started working. Reports suggest the president and the CEO are still unable to agree over certain issues pertaining to this commission.

The International Contact Group meets periodically and is made up of representatives from a number of countries. The gathering aims to discuss all major developments with respect to Afghanistan including security, political and economic transitions in Afghanistan; electoral reforms; reconciliation process; performance of Afghan government on governance etc. (Tolonews)

(2) Whereabouts...

Zarnegar Park in protest over government’s failure to secure their release.

However, officials have said that efforts are underway for the peaceful release of the remaining abductees. Masoma, mother of the two hostages has said that one of her sons has been released but so far there is no news about her second son.

“The government promised that they will address these issues in the next two days, but now 12 days have passed and they did nothing,” she said.

This comes after a number of civil society activists said that challenges in the government have resulted in governmental officials having made less effort to secure the release of the 12 remaining hostages.

“The government should work and think about the releasing of the hostages instead of signing of agreements with Pakistan’s Intelligence Service,” a civil society activist, Baqi Samandar said.

Twenty six foreign prisoners were reportedly released in exchange for the hostages. The 19 released hostages are still being treated in hospital. (Tolonews)

(3) NSC, NDS ...

Advisor, Haneef Atmar and the National Director of Security General, Rahmatullah Nabeel,” a statement from the NSC said.

The NSA and the NDS Director General work together to preserve the high interests of the country in a very friendly manner as they have always done, in the framework defined by the national unity government decisions, it added. (Pajhwok)

(4) Ghani Names ...

nominee for the minister of defense position, Ghani said accountability and transparency were key and that now was the time for reform.

Stanezkai served as Aghan Communications Minister from 2002 to 2004 and then as former president Hamid Karzai’s security advisor. He was also the CEO of the Joint Secretariat of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program in 2009.

He was however, seriously injured in a suicide bombing attack in 2011 that killed the then High Peace Council Chairman Berhanuddin Rabbani. He has since recovered from his injuries. Stanezkai still however needs to be introduced to the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) and only if given a vote of confidence will he be appointed minister. (Tolonews)

(5) Afghanistan Still...

overshadowed most of them.

He stressed to maintain achievements and overcome challenges. “We can take strong steps towards good governance, transparency, accountability and preparing for reforms in the country.” (Pajhwok)

(6) Over 4,000 ...

visas and citizenship to those fleeing Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, Hindus from the neighbouring Islamic countries would see a sharp increase in getting Indian nationality government officials confirmed.

Almost 19,000 migrants have already been handed long-term visas after the BJP government took over in Delhi last May.

Some 11,000 persons have been granted visas, which precede citizenship, in Rajasthan, while in case of Gujarat, the figure is around 4,000, said officials familiar with the drive. The changes in the Citizenship Act that ensure faster disposal of citizenship requests have the potential to open up the floodgates, swelling the number of those eventually allowed to be permanently based in India to around 10 lakhs by December 2016. (Agencies)

(7) President Ghani...

representatives from 50 nations. “Whenever in the middle east - or other regions - a system is collapsed, stability in the region is also affected and militancy gains strength,” he added.

While acknowledging the troubling look of deteriorating security conditions in the capital and traditionally more stable northern regions of the country, Ghani stressed the readiness of his government and the Afghan forces to make any necessary sacrifices to keep the country from falling apart. “If some people expect that our big cities or government structures are going to collapse, I want to tell them that ‘no, it will not be like that, it is impossible, because we fight as we offer sacrifices,’” the president said.

The Taliban peace process, which has seen some promise since the start of the new year, was also brought up at the meeting on Thursday. The fact that bloody clashes between the Afghan security forces and Taliban militants rage on throughout parts of eastern and northern Afghanistan has raised questions about the true intentions or capacity of Taliban leaders in negotiating.

“We are seeking a lasting peace; peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan and peace among the Afghan government and armed opponents,” Ghani said. “There is an unexpected hostility between us, an issue which our friends in Pakistan have also accepted, but in reaching to a prosperous future, we need new efforts and joint cooperation, because militancy threats Afghanistan, Pakistan and the whole region.”

Also at the gathering on Thursday, Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani discussed the dynamic between Afghanistan’s economic development and national security.

“Afghanistan has had major achievements over the past decade, from health to education, human rights, women’s empowerment and good governance,” Rabbani noted. “However, security issues remain.”

“The regional geography doesn’t change. Therefore Afghanistan should resolve its problems with neighbours and keep good ties with them.”

To a question from Pajhwok Afghan News if NATO’s new mission after the current training operation would need a new agreement with Afghanistan, the ambassador said: “No, the new mission will be started in light of the SOFA (status of forces agreement) which was signed last year between Afghanistan and NATO.”

At the Turkey summit last week, the western military alliance had announced keeping a presence in Afghanistan after the end of the current Resolute Support mission to train, advice and assist Afghan security forces on December 31, 2016. The new mission would be civilian-led, but will have some troops.

(8) No Intelligence...

proceed with the agreement. He said if political leaders endorsed the draft agreement, it would be sent to Pakistan and leaders of the premier spy agencies of Afghanistan and Pakistan would sign it into a legal document.

The official said nothing had been mentioned in the draft about separatists, the Durand Line, Afghanistan’s territorial integrity, Pakistan’s interferences in Afghanistan’s affairs,

Afghan-Indo relations, Kabul’s ties with other countries or foreign intelligence agencies.

Manali said it had been said in the agreement that no separatist could use or benefit from one country’s soil against the other.

He said the main objective of the accord was to strengthen intelligence cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, criticising politicians for not letting the accord normally complete the legal stages.

Reportssay the spy agencies of the two countries would share intelligence against terrorists on their respective sides of the border under the MoU.

A spokesman for the NDS had said the basic aim of the MoU was to share information in technical areas and that such agreements had reached between the two agencies in the past.

A day earlier, former president Hamid Karzai urged his successor Ashraf Ghani to scrap the deal with Pakistan as it was against Afghanistan’s national interest.

Lawmakers of both houses of parliament also expressed their concerns over the accord, summoning top security officials to explain their position. (Pajhwok)

(9) Nangarhar ...

numbers of supporters from among the local communities. He went on to say that large numbers of Pakistani Taliban have moved into Afghanistan and have joined forces with Daesh and together they are fighting Afghan Taliban.

Izmari meanwhile said that Bakhtyar, an Afghan Taliban commander, who was imprisoned by the US in Bagram and freed after a few years – is now a Daesh leader in Nangarhar. He also said that another Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Khaliq lowered the Taliban flag in favor of Daesh’s black flag. He is now actively operating as a Daesh member.

Izmari blasted government for not taking the problem seriously. He said out of 22 districts, only five or six are still in the hands of the government. The rest have fallen to Daesh.

According to Zwak, at least 80 percent of Nangarhar is now controlled by Daesh. He said Afghan Taliban are also increasingly coming under pressure to join Daesh. He said they are doing so as Daesh is better equipped.

Azad meanwhile said that various stakeholders in the province have raised the issue of Daesh with national government on numerous occasions but have until now been ignored.

Shinwari said a worrying factor was that Daesh was also now largely made up of local people. He said the issue of security has deteriorated to such an extent for one reason only – bad governance. (Tolonews)

(10) Afghanistan...

should benefit from that.

The US envoy said the international community would continue financially supporting Afghan security forces until the end of 2017 and a decision about further assistance beyond that period would be made at next year’s meeting of the heads of NATO member states in Warsaw, the capital of Poland.

However, he stressed the Afghan government should ensure good governance, improve relations with neighbouring countries and meet promises it had held out to the international community.

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Plans for the new mission are expected to be discussed next month when defence ministers from NATO countries will be meeting. Lute said if Afghanistan’s future defence minister was endorsed by the Afghan parliament before the defence ministerial meeting, he would also be invited to the upcoming summit.

President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday confirmed Masoom Stanikzai as

his nominee for the defence minister. (Pajhwok)

(11) US Not Losing ...

But the rout in Ramadi has called into question US strategy and the credibility of Iraq’s central government.

Obama blamed it on a lack of training and reinforcement of Iraq’s own security forces.

“They have been there essentially for a year without sufficient reinforcements,” he said.

“But it is indicative that the training of Iraqi security forces, the fortifications, the command-and-control systems are not happening fast enough in Anbar, in the Sunni parts of the country.”

Ramadi is in Iraq’s minority Sunni heartland, a short drive from the capital Baghdad.

Even with sustained US airpower, many observers are skeptical the Iraqi army can win the war against the well trained and highly motivated Daesh group.

Both Washington and Baghdad have reluctantly begun to advocate the use of ethnic and religious paramilitaries to bolster the fight.

The United States has pushed Iraq’s central government to enlist Sunni tribesmen in Ramadi’s Anbar province, something the Shiite-led government has been reluctant to do.

“There’s no doubt that in the Sunni area we’re going to have to ramp up not just training, but also commitment, and we better get Sunni tribes more activated than they currently have been.” (AFP)

(12) Steps Being ...

no stone unturned to further improve order in the province.

A number of other provincial council members and tribal elders pledged they would unconditionally back the government to counter nefarious designs of anti-state elements. Mohammad Ullah, a resident of Khost, told Pajhwok Afghan News though security had been considerably improved but bomb blasts sometime that were taking place creating chaos among people.

He urged police to expedite efforts and work out a strategy to defuse the planted landmines, which was posing threat to lives of the people. (Pajhwok)

(13) 20-Km Road...

were in dire need of a road to transport goods and their patients. “We appreciate the government for road construction. Most of the patients had to die because of unavailability of the road.” (Pajhwok)

(14) Afghans Want ...

The announcement comes at a time when security situation of Imam-Sahab, Char-Dara, Dasht-e-Archi, and Gor-Tapa districts of Kunduz have witnessed intermittent skirmishes between security forces and insurgents, forcing thousands of families to leave their homes.

Maulvi Rahmatullah, another scholar, said the government also needed to materially support security forces for their sacrifices. (Pajhwok)

(15) ISI, NDS Agreement ..

could not yield positive results as areas of cooperation between the two spy networks remained ambiguous in the earlier agreement.

Ahmad Zaki, member of the Civil Movement for Social Justice, told reporters that before inking MoU the government should have taken masses into confidence.

He said the MoU should have signed after Pakistan’s adopted practical measures to improve security and economy.

On Wednesday some Wolesi Jirga members considered signing MoU between the mainstream intelligence agencies of Pakistan and Afghanistan against “national interest and asked the president to revoke the deal.” (Pajhwok)

(16) Armed Insurgents...

in Uruzgan said.

There is no report yet on casualties. The central government has yet to comment about the clash and the collapse of the outposts. (Tolonews)

(17) Time is Ripe ...

US-led NATO forces, he said, situation had completely changed in the region and it was time for both the countries to increase their efforts for restoring peace in the region.

“We don’t want to have relations with one group in Afghanistan. We want relationship with all people of Afghanistan,” he added. “The people from both sides should strengthen their relationship. The stronger and peaceful Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan,” he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(18) Wary Analysts, ...

security conditions are rapidly deteriorating.

Khalilzad emphasized that President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah should move forward carefully as to not destabilize the country further. “Leaders of national unity government must move responsibly regarding the agreement, and ensure there is an environment where the MoU does not support the enemies of Afghanistan,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Second Deputy of Chief Executive Abdullah on Thursday suggested at mild reservations about the MoU as he attempted to portray it as merely a small step in a more lengthy and uncertain process that could end up in no agreement at all.

“We do not think the agreement is finalized, it is only a draft, as our discussions have not been concluded and it needs more deliberation,” Abdullah’s Second Deputy Mohammad Mohaqeq said. “It should be assessed in a manner where there is no harm done to our national security, dignity and our credibility,” he added.

Further exposing his own reticence about the NDS-ISIS cooperation strategy, Mohaqeq voiced frustration with Pakistan’s lack of action to back up its verbal commitments to the Taliban peace process. “Pakistan has not met its commitments with respect to the restoration of peace in Afghanistan,” he said. “The Quetta Shura {Quetta Council} is still active; Haqqani Network bases are active in Pakistan; Mullah Zakir Qayoum commands the war; and attacks are still going on in Afghanistan.” (Tolonews)

(19) Osama ...

about the differences within the jihadist movement in Pakistan. Apparently, Bin Laden was responding to a letter Mehsud had sent to him earlier, listing a set of measures that the TTP leader believed could help organise the movement.

“We looked at the movement list you sent us, asking us for our opinion. We have previously written to brother Qari (Husayn)... and had asked him to inform you of the matter, but I do not know if he did or not.”

Bin Laden advises Mehsud not to try to “control the movement”, telling him that his experience showed that such moves have a negative impact and would produce results “different to what we need”.

“It will become a reason for the flare-up of many problems that you do not need now,” says the Al Qaeda leader to his TTP counterpart, promising to send him a detailed response later.

In a letter sent earlier, Qari Husayn informs Bin Laden that there were groups and individuals within the jihadist movement who were causing differences and infighting. Mehsud and Qari Husayn had serious differences and their groups often attacked each other. The documents indicate that the Al Qaeda leader was playing a reconciliatory role between the two TTP leaders.

Qari Husayn was the organiser of TTP’s suicide bombing squads. He was killed on Oct 7, 2010, apparently by a US drone.

(20) Military ...

“Negotiations have been underway to select people on merit. But we can say that the president and the CEO have agreed on the two nominees.” A source close to the CEO told TOLONews that the CEO’s choice for chief of army staff is General Qadam Shah Shahim, Commander of Unit 111 of Army Corps. However, no announcement to this effect has yet been made.

Another military analyst Attiquallah Amarkhail said they (the leaders) do not have the right to claim a post as their own to fill. (Tolonews)

(21) Taliban ...

youth but all the population remained deprived of education.

“The economic situation of our people is not good. Residents cannot send their children to the provincial capital or Pakistan and Iran for education. We will welcome if the government reopens schools here.” He said the Taliban had long been opposing reopening of schools, but now they had agreed to their reopening.

The Taliban have said nothing about their willingness to allow schools in Bakwah to be reopened, but they have ordered schools shut in most of areas they control.

Abdul Zahir, the district reconstruction head, confirmed Bakwahi statement, saying local elders had negotiated the issue with the Taliban’s local commander about two months ago.

He said the Taliban had allowed reopening of schools in the town by the government under the condition that religious seminaries equaling the number of schools should be set up. (Pajhwok)

(22) 19 Rebels ...

series of attacks staged by insurgents on police check-posts in the Mianshin district of southern Kandahar province.

Clashes in the district erupted after insurgents consolidated their position in the neighboring Uruzgan and began sending fighters to Kandahar. The governor spokesman Samim Khapalwak confirmed militants’ attacks. He said security forces have repulsed the attacks efficiently. (Pajhwok)

(23) NDS Arrests...

Noorani a resident of Nangarhar province.

The statement states that Sayed Rahman had hand in several terrorist attacks including one in Shin Kandaw area of Hesarak District.

In other operation, Inayatullah S/O Naqibullah who is an original resident of Kapisa province has been arrested with the propaganda leaflets of Haqqani terrorist network on Kabul-Jalalabad highway.

A corolla vehicle is also seized by the NDS personnel in which Inayatullah was carrying the leaflets.

NDS statements usually do not contain information about the exact date of the achievements but they come after recent activities. (KP)

(24) Gunmen Kidnap...

The governor’s spokesman Attaullah Khogyani confirmed Hikmatullah had been kidnapped by Taliban and local elders were tasked to mediate for his release.

But a student wishing anonymity said: “Two masked men came and they brought Hikmatullah with them.” However, no group so far claimed credit for his abduction. (Pajhwok)

(25) Prices of Fuel...

Abdul Hadi, director of a petrol station in Wazirabad, told Pajhwok Afghan News the rate of one litre of petrol up from 44 to 45afs and the same quantity of diesel increased from 41 to 42afs

A gas seller in Taimani area, Mohammad Sharif, sold one kilogram of liquefied gas for 30afs –same as last week, but in some parts the city it has been sold on 35 afghanis.

Mohammad Fawad, a jeweler in the Taimur Shahi square, said due to decline in the value of Afghani currency, the price of one gram Arabic gold soared from 2,000 to 2100afs and the price of one gram Russian gold from 1,600 to 1,700 afs. (Pajhwok)

(26) Russian...

chief executive Yan Novikov said in a statement. “The EU has not presented any supporting evidence of our involvement in destabilizing the situation in Ukraine.”

Almaz-Antey produces anti-aircraft missile systems including the model of BUK rocket launcher suspected by the Dutch lead investigators of being used to shoot down Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 over east Ukraine in July last year. (Reuters)

(27) 6 Killed...

Ahsa Governorate. Saudi authorities arrested six suspects in connection with November’s attack. Most of Saudi Arabia’s minority Shiites live in the eastern region, where they have long protested against marginalisation in the Sunni-dominated kingdom.

Saudi security authorities have been involved in a war against internal terror and extremism. Terror cells linked to the IS have been recently dismantled. (Xinhua)

(28) IS Militants...

Syrian forces have lost all of its border crossings with Iraq, as the terror group had captured the Bukamal crossing in Syria’s eastern province of Deir al-Zour and Kurdish militants captured the al-Yarubiyeh crossings in the northeastern province of Hasakah. (Xinhua)

(29) Syrian ...

Syria’s second largest city and once an economic hub, has been carved out between the rebels in the eastern part of the city and the Syrian government forces in the western part. (Xinhua)

(30) U.S. Sending...

as well as Kurdish and Sunni fighters, according to Warren. The U.S. has insisted that its strategy of bolstering a strong central government in Iraq, rather than sending arms directly to the Kurds and Sunnis, is the best course of action against IS. (Xinhua)