

(1) Trump ...

the brave service of Afghan security forces as they fight to secure their country," the statement read. (Sputnik)

(2) Besieged ...

and other equipment are being delivered to the police by air. The police chief also complained about meddling of lawmakers in provincial matters, saying the interference had created some problems for the police.

Border and Tribal Affairs Director Ahmad Naveed Nazari said religious leaders and tribal elders were ready to play their role in maintaining security of Helmand.

Tribal elder Haji Nazir Khan said people had always helped security forces in their mission.

He recalled six months earlier when militants tried to enter Lashkargha, they faced strong resistance from local people. (Pajhwok)

(3) Afghan...

of refugees and repatriations Dr Alima.

"We are trying our best to start the program as soon as possible and the first stage will start in Iran," said the chairman of the electronic national identity card (e-NIC) department, Humayun Muhtat.

Based on statistics from the ministry of refugees and repatriations, currently more than 2.1 million Afghans live in Iran and another two million in Pakistan. However there is no figure regarding numbers in Gulf countries. (Tolonews)

(4) Anti-Graft...

(MEC) praised the Centre's work. However, it underlined the need for concerted efforts to eliminate the scourge.

Positives:

In January alone, the ACJC processed at least 60 cases involving government officials who were accused of embezzlement, bribery, usurpation of public land and illegal mining, according to the Attorney General's Office

On January 9, the ACJC court sentenced General Abdul Wasey Raofi, head of monitoring for the Procurement Department of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, to 12 years imprisonment on charges of bribery.

The Center also convicted five Ministry of Finance employees for bribery and in March, sentenced four officials to prison for their involvement in embezzling funds in the Khawja Rawash Housing Project.

The corruption case of Kamran Alizai, Chairman of Herat Provincial Council, received much media attention. The ACJC primary court gave Alizai two years and six months jail term for misuse of authority, interference in the affairs of Herat Attorney General's Office and in the appointments of high-ranking provincial officials.

A number of other corruption-related detentions, dismissals and suspensions of high-ranking officials occurred in the first months of 2017. In January, Abdul Razaq Wahidi, the minister of communications and information technology, was suspended

Later in the month, President Ghani ordered dismissal of heads of the Procurement Department of the Ministry of Interior Affairs who had worked in that department in the past ten years and the AGO announced the opening of all MoI contract-related corruption cases for the years 2012 to 2015.

The Ministry of Defence said at the end of March that in the last six months it had dismissed about 1400 officials on corruption charges and had replaced them with young and committed individuals.

At the end of January, the AGO ordered the suspension of at least 17 officials of the Ministry of Justice's Directorate of Law (Huquq) over their misuse of authority.

Three custom officials in Herat, a District Chief in Paktika, a former shareholder of Kabul Bank and an army corps commander with the rank of Lt. General were arrested on various corruption charges.

Perhaps the most hopeful sign of Afghanistan's fight against corruption was embodied in a public rally in Herat, where demonstrators, organized by provincial civil society groups, conveyed their condemnation of corruption by burning a symbolic 'corruption dummy' in front of the governor's office.

Negatives:

While some anti-corruption announcements appeared positive, they raised concerns about appropriate and result-based follow-up action. For instance, on January 10, the High Office of Anti-Corruption Oversight announced that it would ask high-ranking government officials to register their assets.

The identification of those who fail to comply, the HOO said would be shared with the public. No progress report on the asset registration process has been made public, nor any non-compliant official named so far. A Wolesi Jirga (lower house of the parliament) member claimed on February 27 that 70 percent of appointments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the past two years were made illegally. No apparent follow-up action has so far been taken on this significant claim of corruption.

On March 25, the Ministry of Defence announced it has "swapped" posts of at least 1000 officials accused of corruption in MoD's procurement and finance departments.

While the MoD should be commended for identifying its corrupt officials, its choice of remedy is highly questionable.

Officials at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology said in March from the 10 percent levy on top-up telecom cards, but the method of tax collection remains to be vulnerable to embezzlement. While identifying the problem is a positive step at MoCIT, taking corrective action is still not in sight.

A number of reports published last quarter highlighted the continued gravity of corruption in Afghanistan. The Afghan Anti-Corruption Network's March report reveals increased corruption in the mining sector. The report states that at least 217 mining contracts will be given to powerful figures and those connected to MPs and government officials in exchange for bribes of at least USD 100,000 for each contract.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan's biennial National Corruption Survey, released at the end of 2016, reflects an increased perception of corruption among the public, with 71 percent of those surveyed saying that corruption has worsened in the past two years.

IWA estimates that Afghans paid USD2.9 billion in bribes in 2016, an increase from USD1.9 billion estimated by the organization for 2014.

A report released in mid-March by Construction Sector Transparency Initiative Afghanistan (CSTIA) revealed over the past 15 years, billions of dollars had been embezzled in infrastructure projects due to lack of transparency.

According to this report, awarding contracts based on favoritism has greatly contributed to the problems that plague implementation of construction projects.

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Sopko bluntly stated in March: "Without question, the top two challenges in Afghanistan are corruption and the lack of capacity in Afghan security forces."

Meanwhile, the European Union took on the slow pace of reform in the Afghan justice sector. "Today the judiciary is too often a tool for the powerful and rich and it is not serving ordinary citizens who suffer from injustice fed by corruption," stated EU ambassador Franz-Michael Mellbin on March 26.

In March, on the occasion of the 2nd anniversary of Farkhunda Malikzada's mob lynching in Kabul, the Center for Investigative Journalism published a report detailing the failure of the system in bringing the culprits to justice.

The report claims that despite the findings of the Independent Association of Defence Lawyers, corruption in its various forms and in all relevant state institutions has prevented the Supreme Court to finalise this case.

NATO Resolute Support Mission Commander Gen. Nicholson also said the biggest challenges facing Afghanistan this year was leadership and corruption in the Afghan military. (Pajhwok)

(5) Watchdog ...

institutions, such as the administrative office of the president, the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC), Lower House of Parliament and the Independent Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) have failed to implement this Act.

OCAI chief Sayed Ekram Afzali said that by establishing the commission, government tried to mislead the people.

He said that nothing has changed on the ground and the commission is merely symbolic.

He said that government has tried to portray the establishment of the commission as beneficial.

Based on the report, many government institutions are violating the Act and try to keep information secret, critics claim.

According to the report, the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW), Ministry of Mines and Petroleum

(MoMP), Ministry of Commerce (MoC), Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MoCN), Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) are accused of not cooperating in terms of releasing information.

"If government creates the commission only to mislead the public and only claims that we have access to information and talks about it in meetings, then it is not acceptable for us," said Afzali.

He blasted the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) for not cooperating with journalists in disseminating information.

"We should remove the world 'information' from this institution (MoIC) and instead name it the ministry of prevention of information. This ministry has been one of the biggest problems for us. It never cooperated with us, but always tried to make problems. Even this ministry itself has not created an information facilitated organization," added Afzali.

The MoIC has however confirmed its shortcomings and said it is reviewing the problem.

"We will share the results of our assessments once we completed our investigations and assessments," said the deputy minister of information and culture for publications Sayed Fazel Sancharaki.

Journalists on the other hand spoke out and slammed these institutions.

"When they see that I am a journalist and want information, they start mistreating us as journalists, secondly they avoid giving us the information," said local journalist Rabia Sadat.

"Whenever we consult an institution, they ask us to consult another institution while the first institution has the responsibility to provide us with the information. When we consult the other institution, they say that that the matter belongs to the referring institution," said journalist Nazifa Rahmati.

However, the president's office said all institutions are obliged to give out information except that which is classified.

"All government institutions are obliged to provide the information except classified (information). A good example is the office of the presidential spokesman which always participates in debates and responds to questions and organizes press briefings," said deputy presidential spokesman Najibullah Azad. The OCAI meanwhile was formed two years ago but has constantly faced budget issues.

According to Afzali, recently 12 million AFs was allocated as budget, but the commission has so far not been able to access the money. (Tolonews)

(6) Atmar off ...

The participants may agree on forming an effective joint strategy to fight terrorism and coordinate regional effort in this fight.

On the sideline of the conference, Atmar may meet his Chinese, Iranian, Uzbek, Kazak and Tajik counterparts. (Pajhwok)

(7) 30,000 ...

last year's price of \$980 USD per person.

Sixty five guides and religious instructors will meanwhile attend at no charge.

According to the ministry 30,000 pilgrims are expected to attend - an increase of 6,000 against last year.

The ministry said in addition to the sponsorship of the guides and religious instructors, the survivors of 1,000 martyrs will attend Hajj free of charge.

"Last year Ariana Airlines played a vital role in the Hajj process and had direct flights to Mecca and Medina. Our pilgrims flew to Mecca and back home without any problems and had been satisfied with the process. We have signed the contract with the airline on the basis of their achievements last year and because the airline is giving us an almost \$1 million USD discount against last year. We hope that this year the Hajj process will also be successful," said the deputy MoHIA minister Dae-ul-Haq Abed.Ariana Airlines meanwhile said that the airline will use two Airbus A310 planes for the duration of the pilgrimage and will charter another plane for pilgrims.

The airline said a plan to buy new aircraft for the company has been already been sent to government.

"We will use our two Airbus A310 planes for Hajj but two planes are not enough so we will charter another plane for the process," said Mohammad Nader Omar Chief of Ariana Airlines.

According to the ministry, the price for each ticket this year is \$950 dollars, a \$30 USD discount against last

year. The ministry said compared to last year, this year 6,000 extra pilgrims will go to Hajj. However, 180,000 have been nominated but are on the waiting list. (Tolonews)

(8) Elders Vow...

of Peace, Media and Good Governance'.

Ahmad Kamil, the department head, said they wanted to narrow the gap between the government and the people through organizing such big gatherings.

He said the ongoing conflict was more dangerous than a civil war, asking the government and the National Security Council to approve a draft strategy submitted by the Peace Institute.

Solidarity among Tribes Council head, Lal Agha Kakar, said the conflict had intensified in the country, especially in the east and a large number of youth and even children were ready to fight against the government.

He hoped the gathering participants would campaign for peace as well as protection of the country's borders.

The gathering issued a 20-article resolution letter that called for unity among tribes, extension of the jirga to other zones and a campaign against extremism.

The governors of the four eastern provinces had been invited to the gathering but only the governor of Nangarhar turned up.

Nangarhar governor Gulab Mangal said only unity could help achieve peace, saying the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) had preferred peace over war. (Pajhwok)

(9) DABS ...

also claimed DABS overcharged consumers and violated the law by collecting payments after two months.

A number of other legislators held similar views and said the company was disobeying the lower house's directives.

The Wolesi Jirga on January 6, 2016 approved a presidential decree on the management of electricity services and payment of power bills on a monthly basis.

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said DABS was violating the law and continued to collect electricity dues once in two months.

He said DABS had failed to resolve people's problems despite complaining everyday about overcharged bills.

He once again tasked the house communications commission to assess violations committed by the power utility and share its report with the house's general session for a decision.

However, DABS spokesman Wahidullah Tawhidi said work on collecting bills on monthly basis was underway. He said the plan would be completed over the next four months.

For implementation of the plan, he said, DABS needed more officers and some codes also needed to be changed, he said.

About corruption in the company, he said, he could not completely deny corruption in his office, but the company's leadership was committed to fighting the phenomenon. (Pajhwok)

(10) Kabul Police ...

incident to find out the motive behind it.

"There is a possibility that the Taliban plotted the attack, but why would they (Taliban) resort to such actions, it is clear whenever they suffer major casualties or their commanders and high profile officials are arrested, then the Taliban resort to such action. They resort to kidnapping of individuals so as to swap them as we witnessed in the past," said Frogg.

The women had been working for a Swedish NGO Operation Mercy - an organization that has been in Afghanistan since 2006.

According to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Operation Mercy spent more than \$800,000 USD in the country between 2011 and 2013 to help with basic health training in Afghanistan. But, the public health ministry investigators say that Operation Mercy never reported on their classes to Afghan officials. "The kidnapping and murders of foreign nationals have political aspects instead of criminal aspects," said Abdul Khaliq Zazai Watandost, a member of the Kabul provincial council. However, the Taliban has not claimed responsibility for the attack nor has it commented on it. (Tolonews)

(11) Karzai ...

terrorist groups, including America and the European countries but the deadliest toll has been exacted on the innocent people of Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern nations.

Trump further added that said "Muslim nations must be willing to take on the burden, if we are going to defeat terrorism and send its wicked ideology into oblivion."

He said "The first task in this joint effort is for your nations to deny all territory to the foot soldiers of evil. Every country in the region has an absolute duty to ensure that terrorists find no sanctuary on their soil."

He also emphasized that there is still much work to do and said "That means honestly confronting the crisis of Islamist extremism and the Islamist terror groups it inspires. And it means standing together against the murder of innocent Muslims, the oppression of women, the persecution of Jews, and the slaughter of Christians."

"Religious leaders must make this absolutely clear: Barbarism will deliver you no glory - piety to evil will bring you no dignity. If you choose the path of terror, your life will be empty, your life will be brief, and YOUR SOUL WILL BE CONDEMNED," he added. (KP)

(12) Contracts ...

by Farshad Sayedkheli Construction Company during one year.

The road connects Aqa Sarai and Mashwani villages of Kalakan and Kabul-Charikar highway and would benefit more than 15,700 people of 12 villages in the area, according to Haidari.

The contract for construction of a bridge over Panjsher River in Kapisa province was also signed, he said.

The 99-meter long and 11-meter wide bridge would be constructed on the Bagram road to Mahmood Raqi, the capital of Kapisa, at a cost of 98.6 million afghanis in 17 months. Haidari said another bridge would be constructed on the Rubat-Fariang road in Khost district of Baghlan province.

The bridge would be 30 meters long and 7.9 meters wide and would cost 20 million afghanis.

The bridges would resolve people's economic, social and security problems, said the deputy minister, who put at nearly 1.5 million the number of people who would directly or indirectly benefit from the projects. (Pajhwok)

(13) Iran Continues ...

refugees home.

The swelling numbers of deportees from Iran and high unemployment in Afghanistan lead to concerns that some of young returnees may join the Taliban or other militant groups.

The large influx may also fuel a rising crime rate in a country already shaky from terror attacks and a high death rate among the security forces. More than two million Afghans live in Iran, according to Afghan government estimates. Most settled there after fleeing war and conflict in their homeland. About 950,000 are classified as refugees.

Involuntary deportation "Of the 440,000 Afghan refugees who returned to Afghanistan from Iran last year, over 157,000 were deported, the majority of whom were young individuals who were residing illegally in Iran," Miakhel told VOA. "The involuntary deportation is a clear violation of bilateral and trilateral agreements."

According to Miakhel, Iran has closed the main Islam Qala border crossing for the past few months for unspecified reasons, and refugees are returning through alternative border crossings, which lack facilities to accommodate high numbers. As a result, more than 2,000 people crowd each day through Nimroz's Malik border crossing, "which cannot accommodate more than 1,000 people a day," Miakhel said.

In November 2012, Iran issued regulations allowing police and custom authorities to expel about 1.6 million undocumented foreigners by the end of 2015. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Afghans have returned or deported from Iran. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said the number of undocumented returnees from Iran since New Year's Day was 127,935 through May 13.

Rights violations charged

While many Afghans have been allowed to go to Iran for jobs that Iranians don't want, pressure has been rising for most to be sent home. While there, they lack basic rights and access to economic opportunities. Rights groups have accused the Iranian government of mistreating them. The violations, according to Human Rights Watch, include "physical abuse, detention in unsanitary and inhumane conditions, forced payment for transportation and accommodation in deportation camps, forced labor, and forced separation of families."

The rights group says Iranian authorities deport Afghan refugees

"summarily, without allowing them the opportunity to prove they have a right to remain in Iran, or to lodge an asylum application." (VoA)

(14) Turkey's ...

common accumulated knowledge and the values of humanity in line with its founding principles as well as provide scholarships to students, open facilities such as schools and dorms, and train lecturers who may be employed by such facilities," he added.

An estimated 8,000 boys and girls are enrolled at the schools located in major urban centers such as the capital Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazare-Sharif, Jalalabad, and Sheberghan. Along with improving the quality of the existing schools in line with international standards and high technology, the Maarif Foundation seeks to increase the number of the schools all around Afghanistan, and focus on improving the quality of education here.

Syed Mohammad Hashim, a member of the Wolesi Jirga (lower house), is studying the issue for the government, and told Anadolu Agency the findings would be shared with President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. He added that the Turkish government has promised to invest up to \$20 million to improve the quality of these schools. (AA)

(15) AUB Official...

him. "I have never committed embezzlement", he said.

After hearing arguments from both the sides, Judge Sher Aqa Munib sentenced Asadullah to 15 years and three months in jail over fraud and fake documentation.

The judge elaborated the decision was not final and the convict could move the higher court. (Pajhwok)

(16) '6 Taliban's ...

leaders for terrorist and destructive activities.

They received military and terrorist training in Ishaqabad locality of Quetta city and had a direct role in several terror attacks in certain areas of Kandahar province, the statement claimed.

There has been no word from the Taliban about the arrests so far. (Pajhwok)

(17) Security ...

said Brig. Gen. Syed Qurban Mosvi, the 20th Pamiir division chief of staff. Two military vehicles, three motorcycles and a Saracha type vehicle was destroyed during the operation, he said.

Taliban have not yet spoken about the fresh development. (Pajhwok)

(18) Primary School ...

of the school were broken. Alam Khan, a resident of the area, said they heard a heavy explosion at about 1am. "When we woke up in the morning, we found the school damaged. Those involved in the incident have committed a great injustice."

Militants have not yet commented on the incident so far. The Taliban previously told Pajhwok that they do not create problems for schools. (Pajhwok)

(19) Annual Poetry ...

important for enlightening people's minds, particularly youths' way of thinking," Afghans have suffered a lot of pain but we are trying to save our future generations such anguish and enable them to live peacefully in an educated society," he added.

Several poets presented their works, encouraging people to forge unity and work for peace and amity. Music was part of the event, with local singer Najibullah Sharif singing lively songs and poems. (Pajhwok)

(20) Enough Sleep ...

of work and they may face serious mental problems if they do not sleep. The medical world, inspired by the Islamic principles, has also discovered that human health and strength mostly flows from enough snooze. Additionally, psychological studies show all creatures need rest. However, it is more vital for humans to stay healthy and fresh.

Dr. Syed Najibullah Javed, a mental health specialist at the Kabul Psychiatric Hospital, said that sleeping meant living and life was not possible without sleep. (Pajhwok)

(21) JIA Key ...

south of the capital Maimana. Its roads, mostly impassable, are under the Taliban control from the past one year, causing food items' prices soar quadruple. Sadat was one of a key member of JIA party who had several times complained to Pajhwok about negligence of local officials. He had said to fight against the militants until his last gun bullet.

Taliban militants did not comment on the incident yet. (Pajhwok)