

(1) Turkmenistan

the tools and methods of preventive diplomacy. During the meeting, Kargar expressed his confidence that the approaches proposed by the Turkmen leader to solve the Afghan problem will serve peace and stability in his country. Turkmenistan renders real assistance to Afghanistan, by supplying electric power and liquefied petroleum gas. It also constructs the industrial and social facilities, regularly sends humanitarian aid to the population of the border regions. A recreation center and a school were built in Afghanistan through the funds of the Turkmen side. The Turkmen foreign ministry together with other state agencies prepared a program. It envisages the construction of social facilities, opening of the shopping center, supply of humanitarian goods, etc. The operations are underway to begin constructing a maternity hospital for 20 people in the border village of Turgundi, Herat province as part of the program implementation upon President Berdimuhamedov's instructions. (Trend News Agency)

(2) Obama Calls

a chance to discuss not only how NATO is positioned but also making sure that we finish the job with respect to Afghanistan," he said. "And when we meet in Warsaw later this year, we'll have an opportunity to assess how we will continue to support the Afghan National Security Forces, now that we have transitioned out of our combat mission, to make sure that they can do the job, that they can secure and protect their own country." "That will require resources, training, and assistance from not only the United States but also from all NATO countries. And I'm very gratified that the General Secretary I think has made this an important focus of the work that's to be done," he said. American and NATO troops ended their combat role in Afghanistan at the end of 2014. Prior to that, there had been up to 100,000 U.S troops in Afghanistan but all that have remained are just under 10,000 which form part of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. In total, the mission has about 13,000 troops in the country - troops that are here to train and equip the Afghan national forces. In March, Obama agreed to maintain the current level of 9,800 U.S. troops until the end of 2015 - which was a turnaround in his original plan of reducing troops to only 5,500. (Tolonews)

(3) Unity Govt.

calls for the convening of a Loya Jirga within two years to consider amending the Constitution to create the position of an executive prime minister. Electoral reforms are also a major part of the agreement between then presidential candidates Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah after last year's disputed presidential election. After taking office, President Ghani issued a decree creating an electoral reforms commission, but three months on since the decree was issued, the panel is yet to officially start working. Gul Ahmad Madadzai, a member of the reforms commission, said electoral reforms were mandatory and delaying tactics in this regard would mean more troubles for the government. Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News he said: "A delay in electoral reforms is a big problem for the country because the current government has been created based on a political agreement." In order to have a lawful status, he said, the government needed to convene a Loya Jirga and conduct parliamentary and district council elections. "The elections could take place when there are reforms."

Madadzai linked the delay in starting work by the electoral commissions to wrangling between the unity government leaders. He said parliamentary elections would not take place until the government implemented electoral reforms. Javed Faisal, deputy spokesman for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), said they were waiting for the president to direct the electoral reforms commission to start work.

"If anyone wants or doesn't want, reforms will take place and unless reforms take place, there would be no elections in the country," he added. Some Wolesi Jirga members also expressed concerns over the delay in electoral reforms, urging the two leaders to set aside their differences in the larger interest of the country. Abdul Qader Zazai, a lawmaker, said one of the major differences between the government leaders could be the appointment of the reform commission's head. With a strong will, he said, the government could bring reforms immediately and announce a date for next elections. Ali Akbar Qasemi, another lawmaker, said the reforms commission's members had been named, but differences over who would head the panel remained between the two leaders. Without reforms, he said, people's trust could not be restored over the election process. MP Shukria Barakzai was first appointed as head of the reforms commission, but due to CEO's opposition, she was dropped and Jandad Spinghar was picked on her place, but he too is yet to be formally introduced. (Pajhwok)

(4) Fatemi Reiterates

came when Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai called on Special Assistant on Foreign Affairs Syed Tariq Fatemi. Fatemi expressed satisfaction that the two sides were constructively engaged in improving bilateral relations in all fields, such as political dialogue, trade, defence and security, enhanced border management, return of Afghan refugees, counter-narcotics and infrastructure and energy connectivity. He reiterated Pakistan's firm resolve to fully support Afghanistan's efforts for peace and stability, including through facilitating an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. (Monitoring Desk)

(5) Afghan Bank

worn-out bills is costly. "Because the money is printed outside Afghanistan, and it costs us, it must be used properly," Ahmad said. Meanwhile, independent analysts have placed some of the blame on the government, which they say uses low quality materials for the bank notes and does not educate the public on how to best preserve them. "The inappropriate use and low quality paper are among the main reasons for wear-out," Kabul University economics professor Taj Muhammad told TOLONews. "The government must make people aware of the correct way to use notes in order to prevent wear-out in short periods." While the Central Bank may be the source of the bank notes, everyday market actors are the ones who suffer the most for their deterioration. "When people pay fare, the money is very old and worn out, and people are not even ready to take their change back with that money," a Kabul taxi driver named Daud told TOLONews. "This is a major problem and notes must be protected." (Tolnoews)

(6) Taliban Committing

government's plans to deal with them. She also handed over a letter from British Prime Minister David Cameron to President Ashraf Ghani. In his letter, Cameron had renewed his country pledge to help the Afghan government implement reforms and combat challenges Afghanistan faced, she said. She said the Taliban and Daesh posed a threat not only to Afghanistan but to Pakistan and most people in most countries of the world were not adhered to policies, values and acts committed by the Taliban and Daesh. Pierce said the UK supported Afghan-led peace process and would consider mediation if requested by either party to the conflict. She believed regional cooperation, especially in the economic field, would help improve regional security and stability. About drug problem, she said a simple solution to deal with the phenomenon did not exist, but alternative livelihoods and trying to restore agriculture could be useful.

On international aid, she said the international community had not completely stopped financially supporting Afghanistan, but the aid had been linked to electoral reforms and would be revived once the reforms were enforced. She stressed electoral reforms and protection of human rights in Afghanistan, saying the country was making progress in the two areas.

The ambassador said the UK was expected to provide Afghanistan with 178 million pounds in aid through 2017. (Pajhwok)

(7) China will Support

development, and looked forward to continued assistance from China. Separately, spokeswoman of foreign office, Hua Chunying, said at a regularly scheduled news conference in Beijing: "I am not aware of the situation you mentioned. As a friendly neighbor of Afghanistan, China highly values developing China-Afghanistan relations and hopes that Afghanistan will achieve enduring peace, stability and development at an early date." Li Xin, the head of the Center for Russia and Central Asian Studies at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, said: "China simply provided them a place to talk, in a bid to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. It is normal, since both sides find it difficult to meet face to face in their own country. It is more convenient for them to negotiate on the territory of a third party that can mediate the disputes." Li added: "China still upholds its noninterference principle, but it intends to play a much bigger role in stabilizing its western border as the situation deteriorates. Military intervention is not an option for China, so it can only push for talks among all parties to realize regional peace." (Pajhwok)

(8) Abidy Appointed

AjmalObaidABIDY for his excellent work as my spokesperson. I wish him all the best with his new position as Deputy Head of NDS." Abidt has previously served as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Arya Television Network and was one of the senior member of the electoral team of Dr. Ghani. Abidy was also one of top advisers of President Ghani and was a key strategist during the elections period. He has also served in Presidential Palace from 2002 to 2004 and was spokesman for Dr. Ghani during the 2008 President Election. (KP)

(9) Iran, Pakistan

whose visas had expired and that the cases of Afghans in Iranian jails would be investigated by a bilateral committee. Tehran would grant health insurance to one million Afghans, he said. "Iran promised that no Afghan child either from a legal Afghan family or illegal will be deprived of education," said the minister. He said earlier Afghan children whose families lived in Iran without legal stay documents were not allowed to attend school. Currently 350000 Afghan children were enrolled in Iranian schools, he said. Balkhi said he presented a proposal at the meeting under which every returning Afghan family would be given \$3000 and in this regard, Afghanistan had sought \$166 million in aid and some donor countries had pledged assistance as well. The amount would be spent on building homes and other facilities for returning Afghan families, said the minister. Currently, the UNHCR gives \$200 to each Afghan refugee family returning Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(10) Ghani Praises

added that the Office of the President will continue initiatives to honor the services and sacrifices of the National Security Forces. Ghani said that the enemy is not able to face the Afghan forces on the battlefield, so they are now resorting to killing women, children and innocent people, and attacking civilian targets. Ghani also said that Afghanistan is "facing an enemy that spreads fear and terror among the people, but the courage of security forces has proven that the enemies of Afghanistan will fail to

satisfy their ill intentions". Sediq Sediqqi, the ministry of interior spokesman, posted a picture (as above) on his Twitter account of the special forces team that brought the Kabul attack under control. In a message below the photograph he paid tribute to the men involved and said: "These are the heroes who quelled last night attack in Kabul."

Tuesday night's attack was launched against the Heetal Guest House - home to mostly Australian expats - in an up-market part of the city that also houses embassies. The first sign of trouble was shortly after 23:00 (local time) when Kabul was rocked by the first explosion, followed by a volley of gunfire. Over the next six hours explosions were heard on a regular basis, as was sporadic bursts of gunfire. Hotel security, along with special forces managed to prevent the insurgents from storming the hotel - despite one attacker detonating his suicide vest in order for them to gain entry.

The Crisis Response Unit (CRU) was also brought in to help bring the situation under control. According to a senior police source the CRU was armed with heavy artillery and high-powered night vision equipment to flush out the insurgents that at one stage were believed to have been hiding among trees in a park behind the guest house. The Kabul Police Chief, Abdul Rahman Rahimi confirmed that there were no security forces casualties in the attack and no civilians were injured. He said that "in this attack we used new tactics to kill the insurgents." There had however been four attackers - all of whom died. He said police had started investigations into the attack. Bejhan Kohestani, the Heetal hotel manager, told TOLONews during the siege that his security staff had successfully helped hold off the insurgents for a number of hours. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack. (Tolonews)

(11) Private Sector

sector discouraged foreign investment. He told Pajhwok Afghan News owners of private factories had invested \$10,000 and more than 100 people used to work in but now everyone was jobless and there were no activities. Officials of Bamyani Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI) said around 10 factories that produced food items, soap, and garments were active in the past, but now majority of these factories were closed due to non availability of electricity and industrial area. Masuma Ibrahim, head of the businesswomen union, the authorities concerned did not support handicraft production, adding Bamyani women made tangible progress in the industrial sector. (Pajhwok)

(12) New Governor

it would be difficult for him to advance the affairs. Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) spokesman Tawab Ghorzang told Pajhwok Afghan News the ceremony was attended by IDLG deputy head for policy and technical affairs, Farid Mamondzai, who read out Kalimzai's appointment order. In his address, Mamondzai praised former governor Jalala's contributions and said the IDLG would support the provincial departments in meeting their priorities and implementing positive activities. (Pajhwok)

(13) 400 Nangarha

their wages." Ahmad Ali said lack of qualified teachers in some areas was a major challenge, suggesting that short-term courses and seminars be held for them to upgrade their knowledge. He urged the residents also to send their children especially girls to school. There are reportedly around 897 schools in the province. Kabir Haqmal, an official at the Ministry of Education, told Pajhwok Afghan News the process of construction buildings for schools has started across the country. "The ministry has paid attention to this issue." (Pajhwok)

(14) 1,200 Syrian,

Greek authorities are reportedly

threatening to deport at least 10,000 people being held in detention centers over a number of fears, including the European Union dangling austerity measures over the country, fears that accepting the migrants will encourage a mass exodus to the rest of the EU, and links to terrorism.

Already, a Libyan official told BBC earlier this month that ISIS jihadists were actively infiltrating Europe by being smuggled across the Mediterranean Sea as "migrants" or "refugees" seeking asylum.

Italy, in particular, insisted as far back as February that ISIS was slowly invading on small boats. (Reuters)

(15) Hashemi Appointed

was appointed as deputy presidential spokesman following a decree by President Ghani. Hashemi has previously served as TV presenter, reporter and editor in Voice of America in Washington. He has also served as head of public relations in "stability" programme in the Ministry of Interior before he left for Washington. According to President, Hashemi has been graduated from John Hopkins University by obtaining Masters degree in the field of public administration and completed his bachelors degree in the field of political science from the University of Maryland. (KP)

(16) Lack of

About the fresh bout of violence in Helmand, Mohammad Karim Atal, the provincial council chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News the government and security officials seemed to be busy in personal matters more as nobody was concerned about the deteriorating security situation of the province. Personal differences and political wrangling among local officials and security organs were main factors behind growing insecurity, Atal said.

He lamented security officials did not come forward to help one another during hard times, adding that they don't reach to assist each others during gun battles. Atal criticized the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for not paying adequate attention to the health issues of policemen, adding half of the police officials on every check posts had different health issues. He said the provincial security officials should clearly convey the status of law and order to the central government with facts and figures so that the administration in the centre would take concrete measures to improve law and order in Helmand.

The Police Chief Maj. Gen. Nabi Jan Makhel when contacted to remark over these statements, rejected these allegations and said that police and other security officials were in close contact with each other. He said Taliban's spring offensive was underway and overall security of the country was being threatened by the rebels. (Pajhwok)

(17) Kandahar Offensive

Durani added. Security situation is currently stable in the district, he said. However, Taliban did not comment on the casualties yet. Shorawak is located 200 kilometers southeast of Kandahar City sharing 110 kilometers border with Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(18) Sadiq Al-Abbadi

al-Qaeda affiliated battalions against US troops stationed in Iraq.

In early 2008, al-Abbadi traveled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan in order to fight for al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, federal prosecutors said. While in the FATA, al-Abbadi - who had longstanding ties to senior members of al-Qaeda's Yemen-based affiliate known as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) - engaged directly with senior al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, including Sheikh Saeed al-Masri, the then-third ranking member of al-Qaeda, it said. (Pajhwok)

(19) Vital Bridge

of the Department of Rural and Rehabilitation, Sayed Ibrar Hashimi, Khulm District Governor, Gholam Rabani Dastagir, Deputy Head of the Department

of Economy in Balkh and Saleh Mohammad Moradi, Member of Balkh Provincial Council. Florian Smitmans, BMZ Development Commissioner in Balkh, represented Afghan-German Cooperation. As part of Germany's cooperation with Afghanistan, the Regional Capacity Development (RCD) programme is financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. In six provinces in northern Afghanistan, RCD supports its partners' development priorities in the provinces and districts, while at the same time providing training and coaching programmes for civil servants. (Pajhwok)

(20) US, S.Korea

defend itself. Hwang said the North's test of its submarine-launched ballistic missile system was clearly a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said last week that Washington and Beijing were discussing imposing further sanctions on North Korea, which he said was "not even close" to taking necessary steps to end its nuclear program. (Reuters)

(21) IS Suicide

and the Euphrates River where army forces have been deployed for the Anbar offensive, he said. Ibrahim added that the Islamic State extremists used a sandstorm that engulfed most of Iraq on Tuesday night to launch the deadly wave of bombings. He said it was not clear how many suicide attackers were involved in the bombings but they hit the military from multiple directions. (AP)

(22) Yemen Faces

ports and the distribution system for fuel must function, Schweizer told Reuters. Fuel is vital to run hospital generators and water pumping stations in the country of 26 million. Only 5-10 percent of usual imports has entered Yemen over the past two months of the conflict, which has killed more than 2,000 people, he said. Food prices have soared. "If there is no fuel there will be no water very soon, and if this is the case we have thousands of people, if not millions, at risk because there is no access to water," Schweizer said. (Reuters)

(23) Hezbollah Says

ernment forces in the region to dislodge Sunni extremists entrenched there. Al-Manar said the group had been planning to carry out a terrorist operation inside Lebanon. It added that the drone pinpointed the location of the group who were then ambushed by Hezbollah. The operation comes a day after a high-ranking Hezbollah field commander, Ghassan Faqih, was killed along with several other fighters in clashes in the area. (AP)

(24) U.S. Praises

Middle East. "Today's step taken by Saudi Arabia reflects the close counter-terrorism and information sharing cooperation we enjoy and look forward to extending further," said Adam Szubin, U.S. Treasury acting undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence. (Reuters)

(25) Iranian FM

of Iran's foreign policy." Without a United Nations mandate, Saudi Arabia started taking Yemen under military offensives on March 26 in order to undermine the nation's Houthis Ansarullah movement, which currently controls Sana'a and other major provinces, and restore power to fugitive former Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, who is a staunch ally of Riyadh. (Agencies)

(26) Budget must

The government has set an export target of around \$25 billion for the next financial year. Commerce Minister Khurram Dastgir, who will be the one looking to achieve this target, was asked by the PM, more than once if he was comfortable with the figure. "This target is meant to be practically achieved, not just presented to the general public," the prime minister was quoted as saying to Mr Dastgir. (Agencies)