

(1) US Passes ...

continued financial cooperation to Afghan security forces, these are part of the benefits of the US military bases in Afghanistan," Mol sokezman Sediq Sediqqi said. "The US military bases have two benefits in Afghanistan; the first benefit goes for their own, because they realize war against Al-Qaeda and Daesh is part of their war strategy. The second benefit is for Afghanistan, because Afghan forces get air power support whenever there is need for it as we saw in Kunduz," military analyst Saleh Mohammad Registani said.

Defending Afghanistan's national sovereignty against external threats and providing support to Afghan forces was one of the items in the BSA signed between the two nations. "We hoped that with the signing of the agreement, we will be protected against invasions, but it did not happen so, we wanted our army to be a modern and professional army, but this did not happen, security continued to deteriorate and wars extended," military analyst Atiqullah Amarkhail said.

Amid a rise in violence in Afghanistan and in the wake of the death of Taliban's leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour, it appears Washington is concerned over the fragile situation in the country. (Tolonews)

(2) Rabhani Criticizes...

key issues in the political spheres and good governance in the country, but accused NUG leaders of failing to implement their commitments. "Unfortunately, the government has not been successful in some of its duties which were defined in the political agreement," Rabhani said.

"In the meeting of Jamiat leadership council, the action of Junbesh-e-Milli and supporters of Jamiat-e-Islami in some provinces were declared in the interests of enemies of the country and against the peace and stability of the country," he said, referring to a recent confrontation between the two parties in northern regions.

Rabhani also criticized the recent confrontations between Jamiat loyalists and Hizb-e-Junbesh which is led by first vice president Abdul Rashid Dostum. "We do not have any kind of opposition or problems with Jamiat-e-Islami, there are some elements outside Faryab who under the name of Jamiat want to exploit political and ethnic issues," spokesman for Junbesh-e-Milli, Bashir Ahmad Tayyanj said.

Meanwhile, Jamiat has said that it strongly supports any move that could bring peace and stability in the country.

Jamiat also welcomed the peace negotiation talks between the government and Hizb-e-Islami, however Jamiat leaders stressed that any party that enter peace process must lay down their arms. (Tolonews)

(3) US Won't...

Afghanistan and Pakistan, conspiracy rumours would circulate for some time, he added.

According to the former diplomat, the raid would force Pakistan to rethink the wisdom of providing safe heavens to terrorists. "I would hope so. I have seen some commentary from Pakistani observers that this may encourage a rethinking of the policy that the ISI has been pursuing.

"That is what is necessary. That's what we, the United States, have been arguing for years; that's what we need to find a way to accomplish. We have a core strategic objective here, which is to bring the conflict to an end.

"In order to do that we need to make clear to the Taliban leaders that they will not prevail by terror and by military means. And we, the international community, need to make clear to the ISI that we are no longer going to tolerate the kind of policy that they have been pursuing," the former top American diplomat said.

Cunningham argued that to really get to a peace discussion, the Taliban had to come to the conclusion that the option of military force and terror would not get them back to the establishment of the emirate.

The status quo needed to be disrupted and that meant finding a way to impact the safe havens in Pakistan, he argued. (Pajhwok)

(4) 25pc Hike i...

at the press conference, asked the government to resolve problems industrialists faced and reserve

the decision of increasing the cost of per unit electricity.

National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees (NU-AWE) director Mohammad Maroof Qadari said low-paid government employees could not pay the increased power price. "If the government doesn't revise its decision, workers, industrialists and all people would launch protests against the injustice," he said.

Likewise, the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI)'s first deputy head also called the government's decision as unjust, saying the government had so far done nothing to support entrepreneurship and industrialists over the past 14 years. "Taxes should be increased in accordance with the national Constitution and under parliament observation. Why decisions of increasing taxes are being taken without consulting the parliament or against the Constitution?" he asked.

"DABS could also compensate its losses through other ways. It should collect unpaid electricity bills from owners of big buildings, recreational spots and other powerful men who deny to pay arrears," he said. (Pajhwok)

(5) Militants ...

institutes, and educational centers.

The latest security alert by the US Embassy comes as the anti-government armed militant groups are looking to carry out attacks in Kabul, specifically following the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor in a US drone strike last Saturday. At least eleven people were killed and ten others were wounded in an explosion in Kabul province earlier on Wednesday.

The incident took place after a suicide bomber detonated against a shuttle bus transporting employees of the Maidan Wardak provincial court.

Earlier, the Afghan security forces thwarted a suicide attack plot against the Ministry of Interior compound by arresting a suicide bomber and seizing a Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED). (KP)

(6) Number of ...

Statistics show that up to 900 Afghan refugees so far have been repatriated from European countries in the first four months of the current year.

Sayed Aming is one Afghan refugee who has returned from Europe with his family.

"I returned to my country after being stuck in the bottleneck and hardships," Sayed Amin's brother said.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has called on the host nations and Afghan government to take steps and help the repatriated refugees in their home country and provide them jobs.

"With consideration of the abilities and resources of the Afghan government, our organization wants to urge upon European Union to pay special concentration on the Afghan government," IOM spokesman Nasir Haidarza said. (Tolonews)

(7) Access to ...

the 13-member commission that should oversee the law's implementation. However, no governmental budget has been assigned to it so far," he lamented.

The commission had elaborated a bylaw to strengthen its independence, he revealed, highlighting the importance of right to information in the fight against corruption and the promotion of sustainable, participatory development.

"A culture of information sharing is vital to strengthen accountability, to improve public policies and build stronger, more transparent societies," Karokhel believed.

The UNESCO official referred to the launch of a future joint project with UNESCO to raise public awareness and encourage media and civil society to play an active role in pursuing the full implementation of the law.

"People should know that they have this right to access information," said the director-general. "If they do not know their own rights, if they are not educated or encouraged, what is written in the law will never be fully implemented."

The director of the Afghanistan Journalists Safety Committee underlined the role played by media in promoting democracy in the country. "However, we are under pressure from all sides" complained Sharifi.

He also referred to the closure of many media outlets because of fi-

nanial problems. He recognised the commitment of the Afghan leadership towards media freedom, calling for more concrete action. Bokova cited the expertise of UNESCO in the context of the UN Plan for the Safety of Journalists, with judges and prosecutors receiving specific training to prosecute crimes against journalists.

With regard to the situation of female journalists, Ms Ayubi said out of estimated 10,000 reporters in the country only 2,000 women are able to work. "While women represent 50% of the Afghan population, only 30 media organisations are managed by women, against around 1800 registered." Ms Habibi and Ms Ayubi agreed that the decision making power on hiring staff is dominated by men, stressing the importance of women in leadership positions in the media. (Pajhwok)

(8) Nuristan-Kunar ...

government officials and forces. He said only 21 Taliban fighters had been killed in the entire Kunar province during the past three months and another 18 injured. During this period, he claimed hundreds of security personnel had suffered casualties and their several vehicles were destroyed. (Pajhwok)

(9) Taliban Suffer ...

commented regarding the reports so far.

The Afghan National Security and Defense Forces (ANSDF) have stepped up counter-terrorism operations across the country to suppress the insurgency activities of the militant groups.

The security officials have said they will continue to maintain pressure on the militant groups as they are attempting to step up attacks as part of their annual spring offensive. (KP)

(10) Notorious ...

Sultan Sanjar, Andkhai district chief, said the incident occurred at around 8:00am near an agriculture high school in Qorghon district. Kul Haji escaped unhurt but two of his bodyguards were wounded, he added.

Haji Kul also survived a similar explosion last year that occurred at the main square of Andkhai district. That blast killed one man and injured 13 others, including Haji Kul. (Pajhwok)

(11) Couple Shot...

the victims, who had migrated from neighbouring Nuristan province were also stabbed with knives after being shot at. No one has been detained so far in connection with the double-murder incident, for which there is no claim of responsibility yet. (Pajhwok)

(12) Haqqani ...

It also adds that the militants are looking to attacks Afghan and U.S. government facilities, foreign embassies, foreign guest houses, restaurants, hotels, airports, civilian institutes, and educational centers.

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(13) Drone Strikes ...

ISIS terrorist group from where they started their operations in the country.

The US forces stepped up airstrikes against the terror group after the Obama administration granted more authorities to the US forces in the country.

The increased airstrikes against the terror group followed amid concerns that the leaders of the group are attempting to expand foothold in the country and establish a regional operational base in Nangarhar. (KP)

(14) Balkh Court ...

attack. The 65-year-old father said his son was a special police unit officer. He said the government had provided him 100,000 afghanis in compensation money, but called the assistance as insufficient.

Abdul Manan said he headed a family including his 55-year-old wife and six grandchildren while he had no job. He said his eldest grandchild was in fourth grade who needed his support to lead a life.

Abdul Manan said he was proud of his son's police job, but he was not happy with the government for not properly paying attention to his family after his son's death. The father accused the Balkh police of carrying out a weak and

protracted investigation into the incident that claimed his son's life and urged the government to complete the investigation soon.

Muallim Yaqub, 55, a resident of Dasht-i-Shor area, was another person killed in the attack. His son, Mohammad Haroon, 33, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had not received a single penny from the government on the account of his father's death.

He said his father had gone to the court complex with regard to a case when the attack took place and he was also killed.

He said government officials had been demanding evidence of his father's death in the attack and he had provided that proof, but still paid no assistance.

"The officials concerned were asking for 20,000 afghanis in bribe, but I refused and so far we are deprived of the aid," he said, but did not name the department.

The provincial police chief, Sher Jan Durrani, who was also injured in the attack, expressed his happiness over the assistance he was paid.

He said the government had provided him 50,000 afghanis besides free treatment at the military hospital.

Balkh provincial council member Zabihullah Kakar told Pajhwok Afghan News the investigation so far done regarding the attack and the assistance so far given to families of the victims was nothing.

"The investigation by police ends with the arrest of the security guard who was manning the court gate," the public representative said.

He said police should have investigated how the attackers were able to enter Mazar-i-Sharif and reach the court.

"I believe and I have information that the aid given to families of the victims cannot resolve their problems."

But the acting governor's spokesman, Munir Farhad, said families of the victims had been given cash assistance.

He said each family had been given 100,000 afs for the dead and 50,000 for the injured. He said the assistance was provided by the central government and the governor had also assisted the families.

The appellant court officials say the attack has extensively damaged the building and has destroyed the entire archives.

Violence against women's section head at the provincial attorney's office, Fauzia Hamidi, told Pajhwok Afghan News that one person, who was guarding the court gate, had been arrested so far in connection with the attack.

She said police investigating the incident had achieved no breakthrough. She said the attack not only led to the loss of previous lives, but also damaged the court building, disrupting their activities.

After the attack, the attorney's office's activities remained suspended for a month, she said, adding all furniture and the archives had been destroyed.

Currently the attorney's office has been shifted to the old police headquarters building.

Balkh deputy police chief Col. Abdul Razaq Qaderi said the Taliban had claimed responsibility for the attack on the judicial complex.

He said some criminals had definitely a hand in enabling the attackers to reach the attorney's office gate.

He said their investigation showed the attack had been planned outside of the country and executed by the Taliban with the help of local criminals.

"The guard who kept security at the gate has been arrested for negligence in duty," Qaderi said, adding their investigation about criminals who assisted the attackers to reach the complex was still ongoing.

He said some investigation lasted long, but did not mean the investigation into the attack would not conclude. He promised early arrest of those who assisted the attackers. (Pajhwok)

(15) Japan Shares...

and some other emerging economies that have sapped global growth at a time when Japan and European nations are struggling to keep their own recoveries on track. (AP)

(16) Brexit ...

view. "The Conservative Party is lucky to have big substantial figures within it and that is certainly the case," he told reporters.

"On this one I think he is on the wrong side ... but I am not changing anything I have said in the

past." A poll earlier this month showed Johnson was doing a better job than Cameron at convincing voters, with only 21 percent of respondents saying the prime minister was more likely to tell the truth about the EU. Forty-five percent said Johnson was more believable than Cameron. (Reuters)

(17) UN Environment ...

member states in September last year.

Delegates also discussed strategies to hasten implementation of Paris climate deal adopted in December last year. (Xinhua)

(18) Turkish Army

read. Since mid-January, IS rockets have been targeting towns and cities in southern Turkey, close to the Syrian frontier. A total of 21 people have been killed and more than 70 others wounded. (Xinhua)

(19) IS Unleashes ...

group managed to infiltrate its outskirts.

The incessant battles at Mare' killed 16 IS militants and 10 rebel fighters. The IS has been trying to storm that town for over two years in vain.

The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) unleashed a broad offensive on the IS de facto capital of al-Raqqa in northern Syria, prompting the later to strike somewhere else, possibly to release some of the pressures on al-Raqqa, where the SDF has become in control of over 10 towns and farmlands in the northern countryside of that province.

Mare' is known as the "capital of the revolution" among the opposition activists, as it was the launching pad of the armed insurgency in the countryside of Aleppo toward the city itself.

The town has a strategic location near the Turkish borders and the IS control over it could cut off the rebel supply lines in northern Aleppo. (Xinhua)

(20) Argentine FM ...

and Europe have all held the post. Some in eastern Europe, including Russia, argue that their region has never had one of their own as secretary-general and it is their turn. (AP)

(21) Syria Rebels ..

have been trapped by the fighting, which also forced the evacuation of one of the few remaining hospitals in the area, run by the international medical organization Doctors Without Borders.

On Saturday, IS fighters staged two suicide bombings targeting "opposition forces" near Mare'a, IS said via its news agency, Aamaq.

Following the suicide bombings, IS militants entered Mare'a and fighting began inside the town, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based opposition media outfit that tracks Syria's civil war.

The IS territorial gains around the rebel strongholds of Mare'a and Azaz, north of the city of Aleppo, are a blow to the Turkey- and Saudi-backed rebels fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army, who have been struggling to retain a foothold in the region while being squeezed by opponents from all sides. They also demonstrated the Islamic State group's ability to stage major offensives and capture new areas, despite a string of recent losses in Syria and Iraq. (AP)

(22) French Fuel...

the crisis is over," Vidalies said. Vidalies added that action to clear the blockades at fuel depots could be continued if necessary.

In an interview with French daily newspaper Le Parisien, Valls said he was determined to pass labor reforms and he felt the protests would not further escalate.

"When a text (of reform) has been discussed, when it has prompted a compromise with unions, when it has been adopted in the National Assembly, I consider it my responsibility to see this through," Valls said in an interview published on Saturday. (Reuters)

UAE Improves Global Image in Business and Diplomacy: Official

ABU DHABI - The United Arab Emirates' diplomacy at regional and international levels as well as its active participation in international efforts to fight terrorism has enabled it to acquire an outstanding international image, a UAE minister said on Saturday.

The Gulf state UAE strives "to build a regional and international environment based on peace, sta-

bility and mutual trust,"

Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, was quoted as saying by Emirates state news agency WAM.

He added the country offers development and humanitarian aid, as well as active contributions to peacekeeping operations to protect the civilian population and takes part in the rebuilding of the affected areas.

Dubai and the UAE's capital Abu Dhabi host a number of major regional congresses such as the Middle East's first conference for the hospitality industry, the annual Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, or the biennial defense fair and exhibition IDEX in Abu Dhabi. (Xinhua)

German Opposition Leader Attacked with Cake over Migrants

BERLIN - A German opposition leader has had a cake shoved in her face at a party meeting - an apparent protest against her position that not all refugees can come to Germany.

An activist threw the cake Saturday at Left Party parliamentary co-leader Sahra Wagenknecht in Magdeburg, the dpa news agency reported. A group calling itself "Anti-Fascist Initiative 'Cake for Misanthropists'" distributed flyers pointing to Wagenknecht's refugee comments as the motive.

Wagenknecht has highlighted limits to Germany's ability to take in migrants, saying that "not all refugees can come to Germany." That has put her at odds with others in her party.

The Left Party is the biggest opposition group in the German Parliament but has seen its support slip as the nationalist Alternative for Germany party wooes protest voters. (AP)

NATO in Parliamentary Session in Albania on Its Challenges

TIRANA - NATO's Parliamentary Assembly has opened a meeting in Tirana, Albania, to discuss the alliance's response to a variety of challenges ahead of a summit in July.

Some 250 parliamentarians from 28 NATO-member countries and partners gathered Saturday downtown Tirana under high security measures from the local authorities, involving about 600 police and security forces.

Assembly President Michael R. Turner said Russia's aggressive attitude, terrorism and mass migration would be debated at length during the session.

The Assembly is expected to endorse a declaration urging alliance leaders to strengthen collective defense and deterrence, develop a comprehensive strategy for promoting stability in North Africa and the Middle East, ensure that all allies meet military spending targets and boost cooperation with the European Union, according to a draft seen by The Associated Press. (AP)

Germany Should Avoid Another 'Grand Coalition': Merkel Ally

BERLIN - A senior ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel says Germany should avoid another "grand coalition" of its biggest parties after next year's election, pointing to fatigue among voters in neighboring Austria with constant such alliances. Merkel's conservative Union bloc formed a coalition with the center-left Social Democrats in 2013. It's the third time in post-World War II Germany that the rivals have governed together. In Austria, "grand coalitions" have been a regular feature of post-war politics. In Austria's recent presidential election, both parties' candidates were eliminated in the first round. Volker Kauder, the Union's parliamentary caucus leader, told the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung Saturday that "constant 'grand coalitions' have wearied people in Austria. We must avoid that in Germany." Next year's election will determine whether an alternative coalition would be possible. (AP)