

### (1) Militants Attack...

Last month, two explosions in Kabul killed at least 26 people, including nine journalists who had arrived to report on an initial blast and were targeted by a suicide bomber which was claimed by the Islamic State fighters.

A week before that, 60 people were killed and more than 100 wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a voter registration centre in the city.

The attacks underline a worsening security situation ahead of parliamentary and district council elections scheduled for Oct. 20. The Taliban have threatened to attack voter registration centres.

Security in and around Kabul has been on high alert in recent days with more checkpoints and patrols as the government warned of "complex attacks" by the Taliban on the government or foreign installations in coming weeks.

Provincial cities have also been hit as the Taliban, seeking to reimpose hardline Islamic rule, have stepped up fighting across the country since they announced the beginning of their annual spring offensive in April. (Reuters)

### (2) Ghani Commends...

and blood for the defense of the country.

"I have no words to appreciate your spirit and courage. At the same time, you are a bitter memory of the war. Your families and I cannot tolerate your disabilities," the president remarked.

The president ordered officials of ministries of interior, defense and labor and social affairs and martyrs to task three representatives each with meeting the disabled soldiers and finding solutions to their problems.

"Respecting and supporting you is everyone's responsibility, including myself," Ghani remarked while speaking to the soldiers.

Ghani also ordered other relevant organs to prevent land-grab incidents, particularly the land belonging to the disabled people. The government planned distribution of residential buildings to families of the disabled and martyred soldiers, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Afghan Shias...

such as Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians have also faced threats.

According to the report, there are no reliable estimates of the size of Afghanistan's Christian and Baha'i populations; however, based on reports from refugees in Europe, these populations likely have diminished significantly since the Taliban's resurgence in 2015. The one known Christian church in the country continues to operate on the grounds of the Italian Embassy. Baha'is continue to live covertly due to the 2007 fatwa.

"For example, in June 2016, in Sar-e-Pul Province, the Taliban abducted 17 Hazara Shia Muslims; it later released them, reportedly only after their community leaders paid a ransom. Allegedly, they were kidnapped in retaliation for the Afghan government's detention of a local Taliban leader the day before. In July, two ISIS suicide bombers struck a peaceful protest by Hazara Shia Muslims in Kabul, killing at least 80 people and injuring more than 400," says the report.

"Between October 11 and 12, two separate ISIS-claimed attacks targeted the Shia community during Ashura celebrations. During the October 11 attack on the Karte Shrine in Kabul, at least 19 people were killed and dozens injured. On October 12, a bomb detonated at a mosque in Khoja Gholak, Balkh Province, resulting in 14 deaths and 30 injuries; most of the victims were children. Also in October, ISIS abducted and killed 30 civilians from the predominately Shia area of Ghor Province. In November, an ISIS suicide bomber in Kabul killed at least 32 worshippers and injured 50 more as the Shia community observed the religious ceremony of Arba'een," noted the report.

"Religious freedom is in the American

bloodstream. It's what brought the pilgrims here from England. Our founders understood it as our first freedom. That is why they articulated it so clearly in the First Amendment. As James Madison wrote years before he was president or secretary of state, quote, "conscience is the most sacred of all property," end of quote. Religious freedom was vital to America's beginning. Defending it is critical to our future. Religious freedom is not only ours. It is a right belonging to every individual on the globe. President (Donald) Trump stands with those who yearn for religious liberty. Our Vice President stands with them, and so do I," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. Over 150 Afghan Shias were killed and two hundred others were wounded as a result of attacks by Daesh in 2017. (Tolo news)

### (4) NATO Allies...

Dr. Colin F. Jackson attended the meeting.

Maj. Gen. Robin L. Fontes, commander of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and Barbara Pesce-Monteiro, director of the UNDP Office in Brussels were also in attendance.

"In the framework of the Chicago Summit in 2012, the international community committed to supporting the Afghan security forces beyond the end of 2014 transition period and pledged funding for 2015 to 2017," the NATO chief recalled.

At the Warsaw Summit in 2016, Jens Stoltenberg added, nations agreed to continue their financial support for the sustainment of the Afghan security forces until 2020.

He said: "The Afghan National Army Trust Fund has played an essential role in boosting Afghan security by connecting donations with worthwhile projects.

"The upcoming Brussels Summit in July offers an opportunity to highlight donors' continued commitment to the financial sustainment of the Afghan security forces," he pointed out.

As of May 28, total contributions to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund amount to more than 2.3 billion US dollars.

The NATO-run Afghan National Army Trust Fund is one of three funding streams used by the international community to channel financial support to Afghanistan's security forces and institutions.

The other two are the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), administered by the United Nations Development Programme, and the United States Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF).

LOTFA is used to pay the salaries of police and correction personnel and to build the capacity of the Afghan Ministry of the Interior and the police. The ASFF is subject to a US-Afghan bilateral agreement and pays for equipping and running Afghanistan's security forces. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Atmar Meets I...

plan for peace and for reducing the scale of threats.

High level security officials from Afghanistan and Pakistan held a meeting in Islamabad and agreed to resume efforts for peace negotiations and to speed up the process of implementing the joint action plan for peace, officials said on Monday.

"High level meetings were held with Pakistan's national security advisor, army chief, the leadership of Pakistan security institutions, deputy minister of foreign affairs, head of operations, the economic advisor of Pakistan's prime minister and other high level officials, the meetings were held in a cordial and conducive atmosphere," the NSC said in a statement on Monday.

The Pakistan army also said in a statement that military officials from the two countries had agreed to the resumption of peace talks.

"Pakistan and Afghanistan have expressed the resolve to work together to strengthen bilateral relations and improve the security situation in the region. This understanding was reached during a

meeting between a high-level Afghan delegation and National Security Advisor Nasser Khan Janjua," the Pakistani government said in a statement following the meeting.

Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to draw up a plan in April following Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi's trip to Kabul where he held talks with Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani.

According to office of the national security advisor, both parties had unanimous views regarding the importance of peace for both countries.

The two sides also agreed to take joint action against the elements who continue to defy peace.

The office of national security advisor added that Pakistan's army chief general Qamar Jawed Bajwa would pay an official visit to Kabul in the next few days at the invitation of President Ashraf Ghani.

Afghan officials have constantly accused Pakistan of harboring Taliban leaders providing sanctuaries to them to operate against Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

### (6) Fifty Afghan...

commanders from a number of Afghan provinces, including neighbouring Farah, where Taliban fighters this month briefly threatened to overrun the provincial capital.

"We think the meeting was to plan next steps," said Lt. Col. Martin O'Donnell, spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan. While the strike by an artillery rocket system would disrupt Taliban operations, it would not necessarily mean any interruption to the fighting, he said.

However, the attack in one of the heartlands of the Taliban insurgency was a significant blow to the insurgents, he said.

"It's certainly a notable strike," he said, adding that several other senior and lower level commanders had been killed during operations over a 10-day period this month.

The Taliban dismissed the report as "propaganda" and said the attack had hit two civilian houses in Musa Qala, killing five civilians and wounding three.

"This was a civilian residential area, which had no connection with the Taliban," spokesman Qari Yousaf Ahmadi said in a statement.

In the northern province of Takhar, Taliban fighters in the Dasht-e Qala district centre captured the governor's compound and police headquarters on Wednesday but heavy fighting was continuing, police spokesman Khalil Aseer said.

In Loghar, the Taliban claimed an attack on a police station in the provincial capital, Pul-e Alam, which killed three police and wounded 12, among them four police and eight civilians.

Shahpoor Ahmadzai, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said three attackers who sought to enter the police station in the early morning hours triggered a three-hour gunbattle that ended when all three were killed.

Elsewhere, three civilians were killed and 13 wounded by an explosion in the southern city of Kandahar that appeared to have targeted a mechanics' workshop repairing Afghan army vehicles, a spokesman for the provincial governor said. (Reuters)

### (7) Pakistan, Germany...

countries.

He insisted Pakistan has a keen interest in promoting regional stability and was making consistent efforts to achieve peace and economic stability.

On stability in Afghanistan, the speaker said Islamabad desired wanted to strengthen relations with Kabul and work together for peace and prosperity in the region.

"Pakistan and Afghanistan are victims of terrorism and both have suffered a lot due to the menace of extremism. Joint strategy and closer cooperation to address the root causes of terrorism is needed," Sadiq said.

He also recalled the visit of a Pakistani parliamentary delegation

to Afghanistan and shared with his interlocutors details of the meetings with Afghan leadership.

He also referred to objectives of the First Speakers' Conference held in December 2017 among Russia, Turkey, Iran, China and Afghanistan. The speakers had discussed ways of tackling terrorism in the region as well connecting with each other for shared prosperity and development. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Afghanistan...

continues to affect the lives of millions of people," said USAID Mission Director Herbert Smith. "It is important to focus on the rights and needs of victims in the fight against trafficking in persons."

During a regional NGO forum in Dushanbe, Tajikistan in June 2017, Afghan NGOs working to prevent trafficking in persons and assist victims agreed to coordinate and consolidate efforts in the fight against trafficking. The forum initiated the process of setting up a national network. The network will share information and collaborate with countries bordering Afghanistan to eliminate trafficking across international borders.

"Our role is to advocate to [the] Afghan government the importance and urgent need to implement the new law to prevent trafficking, to protect the victims and to prosecute the traffickers," said Mohammad Shoaib Nasiri, National Coordinator of ANCTIP.

At the launching event Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah said, "The Afghan government is committed to counter human trafficking; there is still much to be done. It is crucial now more than ever to cooperate, coordinate, and share responsibility in the fight against human trafficking." He emphasized the need for all stakeholders responding to human trafficking in Afghanistan to work together to build and sustain the referral network. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Construction...

Thus, it is a very good move," said Naderi.

"In the first phase, we have included four sectors: financial sector, mixed sector, service sector and development sector," Ahmad Shekib, the project manager said.

Kabul governor Yaqub Haidari meanwhile criticized the urban development ministry over projects that have not been completed.

Haidari said the ministry should strengthen monitoring systems and ensure that all projects finish on time and in accordance with the relevant contracts.

"Work on the administrative complex has started and three contracts have been signed. We laid the cornerstone, but when I went there, the cornerstone had been removed. The contractor should do its work correctly," said Haidari.

Urban development minister said the second phase of government departments complex that includes establishing buildings for 16 government departments will start soon. The second phase will finish in seven years. (Tolo news)

### (10) Third Phase of...

is good, and we can predict that the company will finish the project before the final deadline," said Ghafouri.

A number of economic analysts meanwhile said Kamal Khan Dam and other dams in the west and south-west parts of the country will play a greater role in people's lives as drought takes their toll.

The analysts also said insecurity has affected lots of development projects in the country and they urged government to ensure security around Kamal Khan Dam is maintained.

"Internal disagreements is one of the reasons that most of the projects are delayed or remain unimplemented. We hope that the leaders and officials do not sacrifice dam projects (for their own interests)," Abdul Wasi Haidari, an economic analyst said.

The third phase of Kamal Khan

Dam is being built by an Afghan-Turkish company and will cost an estimated 78\$ million USD.

After the construction of the dam, it will generate nine megawatts of electricity. Also, the dam will store over 50 million cubic meters of water and will irrigate 150,000 acres of land in Nimroz province. (Tolo news)

### (11) Secretary of...

They are now on their third tour of duty in Afghanistan..."

Currently 260 members of the Welsh Guards battle group are in Kabul as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission. He visited the Regiment's base camp and learned about their support for the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Afghan Hindus...

Iraq to justify its attacks. The terrorist outfit targeted security and military personnel worshipping in Shia mosques.

During the year, media reported at least 13 attacks on Shia places of worship or communities, resulting in more than 500 casualties.

The Taliban continued to kill or threaten Sunni clerics for preaching messages contrary to their interpretation of Islam. Taliban gunmen killed imams and other religious leaders.

Officials from the President's Office and the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs (MOHRA) estimated the killings of the religious officials in 2016 at more than 150.

Christian groups reported public opinion remained hostile towards converts, according to the report, which said Christians and Ahmadis worshipped privately to avoid societal discrimination and persecution.

Women of several different faiths reported continued harassment from local Muslim religious leaders over their attire. As a result, almost all women wore some form of head covering. (Pajhwok)

### (13) Afghanistan's...

responsibility," said Simintov.

Thirty years ago there was a thriving Jewish community in Afghanistan, and the then new synagogue in Kabul was a busy center. Today, its closed up and volumes of the Torah, including Persian translations, are locked away in cupboards.

Born in Herat, fifty-six years ago, he has four brothers and two sisters – but after they fled 20 years ago, he has lived alone in Kabul.

Simintov says that five hundred Jewish families once lived in Herat province and that they all had businesses but insecurity forced them to move to Kabul and later to leave the country.

His two daughters, bothers, sisters and other relatives now live in Israel or in the US or Europe. (Tolo news)

### (14) Security Leaders...

the letter stated, as read out by the second secretary of Parliament Irfanullah Iran.

MPs said government is deliberately trying to sideline Parliament.

"Their absence has no legal justification," said one MP Arif Rahmani.

"We can no longer tolerate the collapse of our areas, the Taliban are torching schools and hospitals; who do we speak to about this?" questioned one MP Bashir Ahmad Tayanj.

Another MP Ghulam Hussain Naseri said: "We represent the nation here and not the government, therefore, who respond about the torching of houses of poor people in Faryab."

But, government says that it has the highest respect for Parliament.

"Cabinet ministers have appeared before Parliament over 5,000 times for different issues and members of the national assembly have consulted the office of cabinet ministers more than 17,000 times and this shows inclusive cooperation of government with the assembly," President Ashraf Ghani's deputy spokesman Shahhussain Murtazawi said. (Tolo news)