

## (1) Washington...

any changes made to the scheduling, that would entirely be a decision on the part of Afghanistan, one in which we would not interfere."

In reference to the US Special Envoy for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad's visit to the region, Nauert stated that Khalilzad's trip, the second since last month, shows the US' "commitment to a lasting peace agreement." She said Washington was hoping to "facilitate the Afghans and the Taliban coming to some sort of lasting peace agreement. Our officials have long said, including the DOD, that we don't see a military solution to this outcome - to this in Afghanistan. "Ambassador Khalilzad has been hard at work. I think he's spent more time on an airplane or traveling overseas than he has back in Washington in the past month and a half or so since he's taken on these duties.

"I can tell you that our support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process is our policy. In terms of elections and if they were to make any changes, that would entirely be up to the government of Afghanistan and not the United States government," she said.

On the issue of last week's meeting in Moscow on peace in Afghanistan, Nauert said: "With regard to the Moscow meetings, we see Russia, the Russian Government doing this, where they will hold meetings related to hot topics around the world. That is certainly their right to do so. The United States government sent a representative simply at the working level, not to participate but just to observe in those discussions."

Nauert's comments not only come on the heels of the Moscow summit and during Khalilzad's latest trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan the UAE and Qatar - but the comments also come amid rumblings of a possible political shakeup in Afghanistan. The Wall Street Journal on Monday morning reported that the US was pushing for the Afghan government to postpone next year's elections. This appears to be hinged on Khalilzad's apparent six month deadline to broker peace with the Taliban.

However, the Afghan government immediately rejected the allegations and President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman was quick to say that government was committed to holding presidential elections as per the Afghan constitution and the date determined by the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

Ghani's spokesman, Haroon Chakhansuri, tweeted that "Continuity in a democratic process is a must and any other proposal than the will of Afghans which is outlined in our constitution is simply not acceptable."

Fazel Fazly, a presidential adviser, also immediately took to twitter and said the Afghan government's commitments to holding the 2019 presidential vote was unwavering, as dictated by the country's constitution. "We will stick to the election date announced by the IEC and follow the timeline once determined."

However, not all politicians necessarily want elections to be held. Some have said a postponement, in favor of peace, would be a welcome move.

The coalition of political parties said polls should be held off and an interim government should be established - especially as the current National Unity Government's tenure ends in just a few months - and that a Loya Jirga should then be convened.

The Wall Street Journal on Monday stated that in order to make progress in the peace process, US is assessing an option like the Bonn conference, but one which the Taliban attends.

"If an interim administration or postponing the elections can help a comprehensive peace process, then it (delaying elections) will not be a problem. But people in some parts of the country should not be subjected to mass killings and displacement because of peace," Mohammad Natiqi, the head of the political committee of the political parties said on Monday.

Shahzada Massoud, who is close to former president Hamid Karzai, also said holding presidential elections at this time was not recommended and an interim government should be established.

"In five months this government's term will finish and after that it is better that an interim administration should be established which should be acceptable for both sides and they should be able to pave the way for an inclusive and transparent election," said Massoud.

In a meeting with the US ambassador to Afghanistan John R. Bass on Tuesday night, the CEO Abdullah Abdullah discussed some of these issues with him. However, after the meeting Abdullah tweeted that the scheduled elections would go ahead as planned.

Bass in turn responded and said: "We remain committed to helping the electoral commissions and the Afghan government prepare for presidential elections in April 2019. Timing of Afghan elections is for Afghans to decide." However, the High Peace Council (HPC) also weighed in on

Tuesday and said under the current circumstances the peace process is more important than other issues.

"As we get closer to peace, it will be good for the nation and it should be put first. By having peace, we then will have good elections," Azizullah Din Mohammad, HPC deputy head said.

Despite government's rejection of such claims, the former chief of the Independent Election Commission Fazl Ahmad Manavi has said Afghan and foreign politicians have started discussions about postponing the presidential elections and establishing an interim administration and that the US Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad has shared his views on this with President Ashraf Ghani.

"We knew that the elections will not be held. And today (Tuesday) when the issue was mentioned by the Americans, it is natural that no place will remain for questions and the elections will be postponed," said Manavi.

The Presidential Palace however rejected claims of a possible delay and said the presidential elections will go ahead in April 2019.

"Afghan government is completely committed to holding 2019 elections based on the law and the schedule announced by the election commission," President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman, Haroon Chakhansuri said.

This comes after a report Tuesday morning in the Wall Street Journal stated the United States is considering pushing the Afghan government to postpone the April 2019 presidential election while it tries to reach a peace deal with the Taliban to end the 17-year war.

The issue of presidential elections has however gathered a sense of momentum in the past two days especially as reports increase about possibilities being considered on how the country will move forward.

In Tuesday's report in the Wall Street Journal, the newspaper stated that that holding off on elections is one of several options being considered by US officials, and that there is a sign of the urgency in terms of brokering a political breakthrough in the conflict.

Sources told the WSJ that a suspension of the April election is on the table - an idea reportedly raised by Khalilzad. However, this would be a contentious move after the US has long promoted democracy in Afghanistan.

The WSJ report stated that the idea of a postponement has received a frosty reception in Kabul and many Afghan officials have expressed opposition to any suspension, but the plan has the quiet backing from some in President Ashraf Ghani's government along with other political figures and influential individuals.

The WSJ reported that another alternative being discussed would allow the election to go forward with the understanding that the new government would serve on an interim basis while the warring parties try to create a governing coalition that would include the Taliban.

A third approach, reported the WSJ, was that of a special assembly of Afghanistan leaders that would choose a new interim government to run the country while the warring parties work on a plan to end the war.

Afghan power brokers, including former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, have been pressing for such an assembly, known as a Loya Jirga. (Tolo news)

## (2) UN Paints Grim...

OCHA said the tension was initially centered on the villages of Hussaini, Karez and Kondala, but that then the fighting spread to the districts of Jaghori and Malistan in neighboring Ghazni province.

Clashes have escalated since Saturday, November 10, after reinforcement troops and air support were sent in.

OCHA reports that the affected districts are chaotic and that families have been moving repeatedly in search of safety. The organization reports that displaced people are fleeing to Bamian and Maidan Wardak provinces and to Kabul.

According to their report, civilian casualty numbers cannot yet be determined accurately but local sources have told them at least 15 civilians were killed in Malistan alone on Sunday, November 11.

OCHA said: "The total number of civilian casualties is likely to be higher."

The organization also said reports have been received of violations of the International Humanitarian Law, with private houses burnt and civilian vehicles stolen or confiscated.

They said roads connecting Jaghori and Malistan to Ghazni city have reportedly been blocked, which is "preventing safe passage for civilians attempting to leave the area, and leaving people in siege-like conditions with no access to health facilities and limited availability to food, fuel, and medicine."

"Families abandoning their homes are exposed to harsh winter conditions and in need of shelter and warmth," they said.

In Ghazni City, Afghanistan National Dis-

aster Management Authority and the department of refugees and returnees registered 1,000 internally displaced families on 11 and 12 November.

The IDPs are living in schools, mosques and homes of local families, OCHA reported.

In Bamian Center, officials report that 400 displaced families have arrived but that there are reportedly up to 4,000 families headed towards Ghazni City and Kabul.

OCHA states however that no humanitarian response has been carried out in Jaghori and Malistan as partner organizations have not been able to access the affected population due to the fighting.

They also stated that in Ghazni city, provincial disaster management officials met on Monday and together with NGOs are now leading efforts to assess the situation and identify the needs of the displaced people.

In Bamian, organizations have already started to provide non-food items, including warm clothing, to displaced families. Task Team Established To Probe Uruzgan Situation

On November 4, the Presidential Palace (ARG) said a team had been appointed to visit and review the Uruzgan problem - a week after clashes broke out in Khas Uruzgan.

Since then however, conflicting reports have continued to emerge about who is involved in the fighting.

At the time local media published documents in which the Presidential Palace stated the clashes were being carried out between ethnic groups.

But at the same time, the interior ministry said Uruzgan clashes were Taliban related and had been brought under control.

The ministry's deputy spokesman, Nur-At Rahimi, was quoted at the time as saying: "Police forces carried out operations in Malistan district (in Ghazni) and killed eight Taliban. The war in Khas Uruzgan district has been stopped."

But then already MPs from Uruzgan said the clashes were not ethnic related.

"Taliban somehow have control over Khas Uruzgan and some other districts and for a few years they have been trying to create chaos in those areas," Ali Alizada, an MP said.

A Meshrano Jirga (Upper House of Parliament) member Amanullah Azimi meanwhile warned at the time of a possible ethnic-related problem arising.

"I am afraid that a problem may be on the rise there between the Hazara and Pashuns," Azimi said.

Prior to this Second Vice President Sarwar Danish had criticized security departments for not doing anything about the clashes in Khas Uruzgan district.

Danish in turn asked the people to stand up against the insurgents and defend their lives and areas.

This past weekend, things took a turn for the worse as heavy clashes broke out in Malistan and Jaghori. The ongoing situation also led to Monday's mass demonstration in Kabul city which saw hundreds of residents march to the Presidential Palace in protest against the crisis.

Protesters only called off their demonstration once Ghani gave assurances that troops and air support would be sent in to tackle the problem.

High ranking security officials, including the Army Chief of Staff Sharif Yaftali also deployed to the area to help launch an operation to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile the ministries of defense and interior said on Wednesday that the threat level continues to remain very high in these areas but rejected claims that the conflict could be ethnic related. (Tolo news)

## (3) US Lauds...

headed by HE al-Attiyah, offered the US Defence Secretary a plan to expand the US airbase in Qatar. "The US side would review the details of the offer and talks between the two parties could result into agreement on the issue," she said. (Agencies)

## (4) Turkey Ready to Help...

Moscow hosted a conference on Afghanistan last week, bringing together the Taliban and government for direct talks for the first time at a high level.

Participants at the meeting focused on launching direct inter-Afghan dialogue aiming at stabilization of the country and "agreed to continue consultations within the framework of this mechanism," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a final communique following the meeting.

Stating that Turkey would continue its cooperation with Afghanistan in every field, Ertugrul said, "As Turkey, we are also strengthening our economic cooperation with Afghanistan."

"In this regard, an air corridor was opened between Turkey and Afghanistan. Turkish companies have started investing in Afghanistan."

Landlocked Afghanistan has established air corridors for trade with Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, India and Saudi Arabia in the past two years. Fresh fruit, dry fruit, medicinal herbs, carpets, gemstones, and asafetida have been the main exports on these routes.

TIKA projects Ertugrul also hailed projects of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency

(TIKA) carried out in the country.

"Turkey has realized hundreds of projects in Afghanistan through TIKA - a majority of them being education projects. It has built more than 100 schools and thousands of students have been studying at these schools."

The military relations between the two countries have also been very good from the past to this day, Ertugrul stated.

"Right now Turkey is training Afghan police and soldiers. Turkish soldiers are also providing the security of Kabul International Airport," he said.

FETO-linked schools

The ambassador recalled that Turkey's Maarif Foundation officially took control of two high schools linked to the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) in Sheberghan and one in Herat province.

Turkey increases the quality of education at the schools it controls and modernizes them under an education deal made with Afghanistan, he noted.

Turkey established the Maarif Foundation in 2016, following a coup attempt, to take over the administration of overseas schools linked to FETO. The foundation also establishes schools and education centers abroad. FETO and its U.S.-based leader Fetullah Gulen orchestrated the defeated coup of July 15, 2016, which left 251 people martyred and nearly 2,200 injured.

Ankara also accuses FETO of being behind a long-running campaign to overthrow the state through the infiltration of Turkish institutions, particularly the military, police, and judiciary. (AA)

## (5) USAID Helps...

creditworthy SMEs.

While Afghan regulators may require at least 120 percent collateral compared to the loan amount, due to market volatility, financial institutions often require collateral as high as 400 percent.

This comes after the USAID's recent Passage to Prosperity: India-Afghanistan International Trade and Investment Show in Mumbai, India.

The aim of this was to advance regional integration by strengthening economic ties with a partnership between Afghanistan and India. The event built off the success of last year's event in New Delhi, showcased Afghan companies and Indian innovation, and launched a forthcoming single-sector event series.

The hope is for ongoing engagement in the region to spark increased Indian investment in Afghanistan and expanded Afghan commercial ties with India. (Tolo news)

## (6) Kabul, Islamabad...

said the peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan shared deep cultural and religious bonds and there was the need for adopting the policy of understanding instead of confrontation. He stressed joint efforts in the war against terrorism and bringing peace and stability to the region.

Wardak said: "Our long-term target is regional stability, development and prosperity among nations for which different channels are worked but the most effective channel is parliamentary diplomacy and in the past few years parliamentary delegations from two countries shared their views and took practical steps."

The Pakistani parliamentary affairs minister supported arguments of Wardak and said he would share the views with his leadership and the Pakistani parliament.

Wardak extended formal invitation to the Pakistani minister to visit Kabul for further strengthening relationship between the two countries. (Pajhwok)

## (7) US, Russia Must...

president of Kazakhstan to play his role in making reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan a success.

He thanked Kazakhstan for its assistance with Afghanistan and awarding scholarships for Afghan students and hoped the assistance would continue in the future. Karzai also held one on one meeting with the president of Kazakhstan. (Pajhwok)

## (8) Airstrike Hits...

Khalil Aseer. However, said the assault was repulsed soon.

In northern Kunduz province, six militants and one ANA soldier were killed during clashes in Aqtaba area of Qala-i-Zal district on Tuesday night, said Ghulam Hazrat Karimi, spokesman for 20th military division.

The Taliban confirmed clashes in Ghazni, Kunduz and Takhar provinces. The group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed 55 security personnel had been killed and scores of others wounded. Several weapons and ammunition were also seized during the clashes, he added. (Pajhwok)

## (9) Japan Pledges...

of the country.

In its earlier drought response from July to September 2018, WFP was able to provide food assistance to over 500,000 people in need.

Zlatan Milisic, WFP Representative and Country Director for Afghanistan said "This timely contribution from the Government of Japan will enable WFP to meet the basic food and nutrition needs of the affected women, men, girls and boys."

Mr. Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan to Afghanistan, remarked, "People of Afghanistan have been facing food shortage caused by natural disasters that occur frequently in the country. Particularly in this year, due to a severe drought, unprecedented food insecurity has been brought to many areas of the country and it damaged the life of people, especially most vulnerable people such as women and children. Based on this fact, Japan has decided to work with the WFP through providing emergency assistance for the most vulnerable people in the drought-hit areas. Japan always stands by the people of Afghanistan."

The contribution from the Government of Japan, will enable WFP to implement three activities, each of which contributes to both humanitarian and development outcomes.

Firstly, WFP will carry out unconditional General Food Distributions (GFD) of locally procured fortified wheat flour and cash transfers to vulnerable and food insecure communities to meet humanitarian needs.

Secondly, through its food for assets programmes, WFP will fill a humanitarian food need by providing conditional cash or in-kind transfers to the most vulnerable families across the different targeted communities. Finally, in order to ensure that school children do not ever feel hungry at school, and that they can learn effectively, in a volatile and crises-stricken situation, WFP will provide High Energy Biscuits to girls and boys in primary schools and girls in secondary schools.

The intervention will be implemented by WFP and its cooperating partners (both national and international NGOs) in close collaboration with local authorities and UN agencies such as FAO and UNICEF. WFP will maintain strong links with the Government at strategic and policy levels, ensuring that all activities are closely coordinated with government partners to ensure alignment with national objectives.

WFP will collaborate closely with provincial- and district-level line departments and authorities. Local government institutions such as provincial/district offices of the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), will be closely involved in the emergency, self-reliance and nutrition projects from the planning up to the implementation and monitoring phases.

Japan has been assisting Afghanistan's nation-building efforts in various fields including security, infrastructure, agriculture, rural development, human capacity development, education, health, culture and humanitarian assistance. The cumulative Japanese assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 amounts to approximately \$6.6 billion. (Pajhwok)

## (10) IDPs Say Jaghori...

was valued at almost two million Afghans and included clothes, food and other necessary items. He said a convoy left Kabul on Tuesday for Ghazni.

"Non-food items included tents, blankets, pots and kitchen equipment and the food included rice, beans, sugar, cooking oil and salt," said Alizada.

In the meantime, the State Ministry for Disaster Management says that over 20,000 families have collectively been displaced in Ghazni, Uruzgan and Ghor provinces due to conflict and drought.

The clashes in Malistan and Jaghori have been ongoing almost a week now. On Monday hundreds of Kabul residents protested in the city over what they said was government's negligence in addressing the insecurity problem. The protesters called off their action after President Ashraf Ghani assured them that the insecurity problem will be addressed. (Tolo news)

## (11) Ghani Calls...

set up for the purpose of peace talks. He said it was important for women to be included on this board.

The president also called on the Afghan Women's Network members to share their plans and ideas on peace talks with the Presidential Palace within the next three days, read the statement. (Tolo news)

## (12) 49 Irrigation...

to him, another project of a watergate and an irrigation canal was underway and would be completed at the end of the ongoing year at a cost of 273 million afghanis in the same district.

Meanwhile, residents of the district expressed their happiness over completion of the projects and hoped the under construction project work would also be completed in the stipulated time. (Pajhwok)

## (13) Infiltrator...

who wished to go unnamed, said that three policemen were killed and a number others were captured alive by Taliban insurgents. Taliban did not comment on the incident so far.

Two weeks back, a governor's bodyguard in Logar killed two of his colleagues and took away a Humvee vehicle and some weapons and then joined the Taliban. (Pajhwok)