

### (1) RECCA-VII,...

The participants emphasized upon facilitating transit, transportation and trade, women's empowerment and strengthening cooperation among investors and traders.

Foreign ministers from 30 region countries and other parts of the world and representatives of 25 regional and international organizations attended the day two of the conference.

Sarwar Danish said the presence of representatives from 60 countries at the RECCA-VII showed Afghanistan's trade relations with RECCA member countries had expanded.

He added strengthening Afghanistan's trade relations on regional and international level had been one of the unity government's top priorities.

He also said cooperation of regional countries could put existing challenges in Afghanistan to an end.

Danish insisted on improvement in economic relations and implementation of vital regional projects, saying the RECCA platform would increase cooperation and build strong mutual bonds among regional and international countries.

Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani was another speaker who said effective mechanisms like RECCA would help enhance cooperation level among regional countries.

"Indeed, only common efforts through such platform can gradually but surely overcome existing tensions and jointly address our nations' common needs, whether in the economic or security spheres."

"Afghanistan needs stability more than anything else and this conference can give a positive answer to this issue. We can pursue our goals in a better manner this way and can take steady steps for improving regional cooperation," Rabbani added. He said Afghanistan currently faced several challenges in achieving economic prosperity but the ongoing efforts by Kabul administration and regional countries would explore many ways to achieve that goal.

Mikheil Janelidze, Foreign Minister of Georgia, who also spoke on the occasion, announced his country's backing for revival of the Lapis Lazuli Transit Route.

He said: "I am sure that bright future and horizons await the region." He added his country was ready for any kind of economic cooperation and would remain as such.

Indian Foreign Minister Mobasher Jawed Akbar, who also participated in the conference, said that RECCA was like a bridge, connecting Afghanistan with other countries.

He also declared his country's readiness to play its role under RECCA framework.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," said the Indian foreign minister, saying whoever stood with Afghanistan in the current critical situation; they were the nation's real friends."

He also called RECCA-VII a huge opportunity for strengthening regional cooperation, saying this cooperation would ensure a long-lasting peace in Afghanistan.

He said not allowing Afghan goods to reach India via Pakistan was an act against the Afghan people.

Abbas Ahmad Akhouni, the Iranian minister of urban development, said regional cooperation could resolve the existing challenges.

He said his country was also willing to cooperate in terms of boosting economy of Afghanistan.

Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan National Security Advisor, in his speech, said the main purpose of all RECCA-VII participating countries was ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Aziz stated his country was also committed to expanding trade relations with Afghanistan under the RECCA framework.

Aziz, pointing to the concerns of Indian foreign minister regarding the blockage of routes by Pakistan, said his country was fully cooperating to strengthen business relations with Afghanistan and also supported regional economic cooperation.

Anwar Mohammad Qarqash, foreign minister of the UAE, also expressed his country's preparedness to cooperate in economic development of Afghanistan and other RECCA member countries.

RECCA since its inception in 2005 has held six conferences in Kabul, India, Islamabad, Istanbul and Dushanbe respectively. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Wolesi Jirga ...

Hameed Tahmasi has been nominated for the ministry of transport, Mohammad Shafiq Gul Agha Sherzai for the ministry of border and tribal affairs, Tariq Shah Bahrami for defense, Abdul Latif Roshan for higher education, Faizullah Zaki for 'labor, social affairs, martyrs and disabled' and Nargis Nehan for mines and petroleum.

Wais Ahmad Barnak has been nominated

to head the ministry of interior, Shahzad Gul Aryubi the ministry of telecommunication and information technology and Yama Yari public works ministry.

Mujib Rahman Karim nominated for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Nasir Ahmad Durani for the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

Besides the mentioned ministries, the ministries of foreign affairs, education and information and culture are also run by acting heads.

Salahuddin Rabbani, acting foreign affairs minister and Asadullah Hanif Balkhi, acting education minister, have been disqualified by the Wolesi Jirga. Abdul Bari Jahani resigned as information and culture minister.

Asadullah Hanif Balkhi was sacked by the president on Tuesday as acting minister of education and replaced with Mohammad Ibrahim Shinwari, technical assistance at the ministry.

Wolesi Jirga has repeatedly asked the government to introduce all its Cabinet picks to the house for endorsement.

Some acting ministers have been on the posts for more than one and a half years, against the relevant law. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Bids for Convening Loya ..

convening a Loya Jirga.

A statement from the Presidential Palace received by Pajhwok Afghan News said that as per Article 110th of the Constitution: "The Loya Jirga is the highest manifestation of the people of Afghanistan." The Constitution has determined and specified the conditions for convening the traditional Jirga, it added.

The statement said that some elements and circles had recently spread rumours about the Loya Jirga coming into session and had sent their people as government representatives to some provinces. "They are not government's official envoys and ordinary people shouldn't meet and consult with them."

As per the statement, in current conditions the call for holding a Loya Jirga has no formal basis and it is violation of Afghanistan's laws.

The statement ordered the government employees to avoid taking part in such processes which are against the law. (Pajhwok)

### (4) APSO Organises ...

Mohammad Mutmain and previous interviews of a civil society activist Ziaulhaq Amarkhil in local media and in VOA's Pashto Service.

APSO would like to make public the information about the conference to counter inaccuracies or misconceptions swirling around the event. "The organization is in direct contact with all parties of the conflict and no side, including the Afghan government, is putting any obstacles in its way." (Pajhwok)

### (5) Turkey to Continue ...

He added that transport projects such as the Lapis Lazuli corridor, the Chabahar Port, the Five Nations Railway Link, the Belt and Road initiative and the Regional Customs and Border Management Cooperation will revive Afghanistan's economy.

He added that Turkish contractors had undertaken 627 construction projects worth \$6 billion in Afghanistan.

Yildiz said that the Turkey-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission session will be held soon.

Turkey had pledged \$150 million in development aid to Afghanistan for the period of 2017-2020 during a conference in Brussels last year.

Also speaking at the event, Rashid Meredov, Turkmenistan's foreign minister said his country pays special attention to relations with Afghanistan and establishing lasting peace in the country.

"The key issue for future of Afghanistan is to develop its economic and social infrastructure," he said. "This is how Afghanistan will be able to turn from a recipient of economic and financial assistance to an equal and full-fledged participant and partner of broad integration processes."

"We are convinced that a strong political, diplomatic and financial-economic assistance to these projects by the world community is direct support for Afghanistan to get new levels of development. The future of this country mostly depends on the degree and volume of international participation in all these projects." (AA)

### (6) Gen. Votel ...

United States and the international community for their comprehensive support to Afghanistan, Gen. Yafthali said the Afghan forces managed to thwart all destructive plans of the militants, highlighting the successful implementation and conclusion of Khalid operations.

In his turn, Gen. Votel hailed the Afghan security forces for their bravery and devotion in the fight against terrorism.

The Ministry of Defense says Gen. Votel

reaffirmed the US and NATO support to continue providing training and equipment to the Afghan forces, particularly the Afghan commandos and Air Forces.

The commander of the Resolute Support Mission and US forces in Afghanistan Gen. John Nicholson was also present in the meeting. (KP)

### (7) 4 Army Officers ...

including corruption.

According to Gen. Waziri, the military court has reviewed around 1700 cases since the start of the year.

He also added that around 100 people were sentenced to 5 years in jail, 380 others were jailed for 1 year, and 8 others were awarded jail terms starting from 5 to 20 years. (KP)

### (8) Noor and Mohaqiq ...

According to Noor, he reached to an agreement with Mohaqiq to step up efforts to bring the political parties and movements as well as the new political coalition under one roof to establish a new political consensus.

He said the two sides also discussed the future programs for the new political coalition.

It was expected that the new coalition will soon announce and declare its presence in a large gathering in the capital few months earlier.

But no further developments have been noted during the recent years with the first vice president and a key member of the coalition being out of the country for the past several months.

The new coalition was formed after a series of deadly attacks and political changes earlier this year and deadly attacks in the city. (KP)

### (9) Afghanistan No...

"There are one or two agreements that we will be signing with neighbouring countries, including Uzbekistan, hopefully in a few days which will help transit," he said in response to a question at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a top American think-tank.

Welcoming the new South Asia policy of US President Donald Trump, Abdullah said he is today more hopeful than before that Afghanistan will succeed and will overcome the challenges that are ahead of it. He said the aim is that those forces which are fighting against the government of Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan will be persuaded to come to the negotiating table.

Abdullah argued that it is important for the countries in the region to realise that terrorism is a common enemy for all of them. If there is one lesson in the past two decades that is these terrorist groups have not served and will not serve the real interest of any country or state, he said.

"At the end of the day they have their own interests which is in destruction and terror and violence," he added.

Abdullah said majority of the people of Afghanistan are keen to see a peaceful process. Acknowledging that there are challenges ahead of them, he said there are still groups who believe that they can win through methods of terror and violence.

"They receive support and they have sanctuaries. That remains to be a big challenge for us," Abdullah said.

"But I have no doubt in my mind that there will be conditions and circumstances that more and more groups will be convinced that they need to join the peaceful process rather to continue an endless war," he said. (PTI)

### (10) Rabbani Says ...

approaches and initiatives, which bolster interstate cooperation at the regional and continental levels," he said.

According to Rabbani, Afghanistan's foreign policy has for the past 16 years remained focused on initiating, strengthening, and utilizing mechanisms of regional cooperation, under which projects and programs of common benefit across the region are implemented.

He went on to say Afghanistan is grateful to Turkmenistan for being one its strongest partner countries, "as we have strived to further advance both the RECCA and Heart of Asia-Istanbul Processes."

He said Turkmenistan was making a profound contribution to both initiatives.

According to Rabbani, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan are working together to implement major projects such as the TAPI gas pipeline, TAP-500KV (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan), Lapis Lazuli Corridor and regional railway initiatives.

"These and other notable infrastructure projects constitute the key priorities of RECCA," he said.

He said the 7th RECCA meeting comes at a time when the need for economic growth, stability, and confidence-building is greater than ever before across the region.

"Our gathering therefore provides a timely opportunity to assess our shared needs; to discuss the challenges that confront us; and to identify concrete steps towards the

economic integration of our wider region," he said adding that regional economic integration is one of the key pillars of Afghanistan's foreign policy.

He said the RECCA Annual Review 2017 takes note of notable progress in the implementation of several regional cooperation and investment projects.

"These range from large-scale energy projects such as the TAPI and CASA-1000 to regional railway projects such as the Five-Nation Railway; transport and transit corridors of Chabahar and Belt and Road; as well as the Digital Silk Road communications network."

He said that each of these mega projects hold enormous promise for creating and expanding prosperity throughout Asia.

He also stated that the signing of the Lapis Lazuli Route Agreement on Wednesday in Ashgabat marked a milestone in Afghanistan's efforts to achieve greater connectivity through improvement and building of infrastructure for increased trade across Eurasia.

"By the same token, the signing of the Joint Ministerial Statement on TAP-500KV and the MOU on Digital TAP are among other major achievements," he said.

Rabbani also mentioned the new Afghanistan-India Air Corridor Program, which he said had since June enabled the country to export more than 1,150 metric tons of goods to India.

"At a time when extremists and terrorists exploit poverty and joblessness among our region's youth, the achievements I pointed out will continue to provide employment opportunities for our countries' young workforce," he said.

According to him, Afghanistan spearheads the promotion of reviving the Silk Road transport and commercial networks. "The realization of these networks, however, depends on whether we double and triple our efforts to address challenges that have so far prevented us from fully achieving our goals."

But he said there were three areas that need to be developed without further delay.

"First, our region is devoid of transport infrastructure, which needs to be developed without any further delays. This requires that we create a coalition of public and private sources in support of implementing our common priority projects."

"Second, despite the immense potential for trade complementarity in our wider region, the actual volume of trade remains minimal. In addition to physical infrastructure development, we must make additional progress in improving soft infrastructure in the areas of: policy coordination, customs harmonization, removal of non-tariff barriers, visa facilitation, improved communications and enhanced air connectivity."

In this connection, Afghanistan is sparing no effort whatsoever.

"To reduce our foreign aid dependency through pursuit of a private-sector-led-growth policy, we are working to make the most of our WTO membership for advancing the facilitation and expansion of trade across the wider region."

"Finally, our region can significantly benefit from greater synergies among platforms for regional trade, transit, and transport cooperation across Eurasia. We believe that RECCA is well-positioned to serve as a coordinating platform in this wider context," he said. (Tolnews)

### (11) Afghanistan's ...

Afghanistan, the world's main source of heroin, stands at around 9,000 metric tons this year.

"Increased insurgency and funding to terrorist groups is likely within Afghanistan while more high quality, low cost heroin will reach consumer markets across the world, leading to increased consumption," the UNODC said.

Last year's report warned that Kabul's weakening grip on security in many areas was contributing to a collapse in poppy eradication efforts, a method championed by the United States after it led an invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 when the country was under Taliban rule.

This year, provincial governors eradicated around 750 hectares used for poppy cultivation, more than twice as much as last year. But areas under cultivation also hit a record this year at 328,000 hectares, up over 60 percent from last year. Southern and north-eastern regions saw the biggest growth. The average yield per hectare was also boosted by a 15 percent since last year, according to the report.

In money terms, the farm-gate value of the opium produced was up by over 50 percent at around \$1.4 billion, or 7 percent of Afghanistan's estimated gross domestic product, the UNODC said. (Reuters)

to use the Afghan soil are a serious threat to peace and stability in Afghanistan, and the region.

"This was also demonstrated earlier this

month when elements inimical to peace and security in the region had targeted and martyred a Pakistani diplomatic official in Jalalabad," the statement added.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan said, the government of Pakistan calls upon the Government of Afghanistan to take immediate action against the terrorists and terrorist groups finding sanctuaries in Afghanistan to target Pakistani security forces. Strengthening the border management is critical to preventing such cross border attacks. (KP)

### (13) Czech War ...

four Czech soldiers and the fifth died later in hospital. A few days after the clash, the unit with Mevold was also attacked.

He was hit by an anti-tank missile. He suffered serious wounds, including a head injury. Despite this, he continued with shooting, covering his fellow combatants. (CTK)

### (14) Siemens to Provide ...

Mohib, Afghan ambassador to the United States, said: "Here, deep in the Heart of Texas is where Afghanistan will begin her challenging, but vital mission to rebuild our domestic power production industry -- and provide all Afghans with reliable and affordable electric power."

"Using the powerful, next generation SGT-A45 mobile gas turbine, the Bayat Power 1 gas-to-power project will help further the foundation upon which the American people and the Afghan people, working together, can help create thousands of jobs here in Houston -- and a future of energy independence for Afghanistan."

Martin Tartibi, global head, for SGT-A45 Mobile Unit of Siemens Energy, said: "Siemens has decades of experience in the development of gas turbine technology. We continue to innovate to address the changing needs of the market, and the SGT-A45 is a solution that meets and exceeds the need for fast power."

"We are pleased to announce this MoU that will provide flexible and rapid supply of electricity for the critical power needs of Afghanistan, and Bayat Power customers."

The Bayat Power 1 gas-to-power program was announced last year, with an MOU between Bayat Power and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, calling for a three phase, \$250 million Independent Power Producer (IPP) investment programme.

Dr. Ehsanollah Bayat, chairman of Bayat Power, said: "This first phase will help kick-start Afghanistan's journey towards energy independence, help restore our domestic gas-to-power industry and develop our nation's economy. (Pajhwok)

### (15) Peace Talks...

Mujahid called lack of trust was the only challenge. Pointing to recent meetings in Qatar and Oman, he said such sessions were helpful in creating an environment of confidence.

"Talks are going well. A meeting will be also held in the United Arab Emirates in the near future. All sides have sincerity of intent for understand that war is not a solution."

"People are tired of war. Creating a mechanism acceptable to all warring sides and regional countries is a fundamental point," he remarked.

Maulvi Khaliqdad Haqqani, HPC head for Paktia province, also claimed enhanced willingness for peace on both sides. However, he stressed security for those joining the peace process and trust between the two parties. "War is not the solution, both sides are in contact. Distrust exists, but such meetings can help identify problems. The important thing is that everyone should feel safe," he said. But tribal elders accused foreigners of interfering in the peace process and creating problems. They called for independence of the government and the Taliban. Both sides should try to put an end to the conflict, he believed. (Pajhwok)

### (16) IEC Chief 'will ..

members of the IEC have signed a letter calling for Ahmadzai to be fired. The letter has been sent to the president.

In reaction to this, Ahmadzai said the five IEC members have sent the letter because of mounting pressure on them by the second vice president Mohammad Sarwar Danish.

"When they (Presidential Palace) asked me to resign, they told me at the time that the commissioners would write something against me; either due to pressure or in exchange for money. This is a conspiracy," he said.

The IEC chairman said the upcoming elections would face many challenges if he steps down from his post.

"Is it a solution if I resign? Who will guarantee that the upcoming elections will be okay? I want the president himself to summon me and ask me (to resign)... I have that much respect for the president," Ahmadzai said. (Tolnews)