

(1) AAF is Powerful ...

late on Saturday.

"I am proud of speaking to you on this special day. An important step has been taken today in fighting terrorism," he remarked, saying the war on terror was not limited to Afghanistan and the Middle East.

"It isn't a war only on the Haqqani Network, Taliban and Al Qaeda, but it is a struggle against the enemies of humanity." He stressed the war should succeed because it was important for the whole world.

Providing a peaceful environment for the Afghan people was more important than anything else, because they were entitled for this right, he added.

Addressing the Afghan forces, he said: "You are fighting for the future of humanity and you have proved your ability in this area. We stand shoulder to shoulder with you."

About those supporting terrorists, he said: "You are pursuing a goal that is unachievable. Taliban could not succeed. The US and NATO have reaffirmed their commitments to Afghanistan."

He claimed Daesh was on the run and the Taliban had been weakened because they were under pressure from Afghan forces in different areas of Afghanistan. He said that Afghan forces were testing their abilities everyday on the battleground and supported NATO ground forces in the country.

Afghan air force launched 15 air offensives on a daily basis on average and the number was rising with each passing day, the US general said.

"Our message to the enemy and their supporters is clear: You cannot succeed. An increase in the number of Special Forces, AAF and Afghan National Army (ANA) assaults show enemy supporters would fail..."

Nicholson said providing of Black Hawk helicopters to AAF sent a clear message to the enemy that they would fail. Insurgents should stop killing Afghans, lay down their weapons and work for the future of their families, he observed.

The delivery of Black Hawk helicopters to AAF, he said, was a manifestation of President Ashraf Ghani's view about the future of Afghan forces. "I can say for sure Afghan security and defense forces have significantly improved" they are powerful and brave."

He promised the US and NATO forces would continue to stand with the Afghans and support their country. The meeting in Kandahar was important because it was attended by prominent Kandahari leaders, he noted.

Acting defense minister Lt. Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami, who also attended the ceremony, prayed for the souls of martyred Afghan security personnel and congratulated the president and Afghan forces on receiving the advanced helicopters.

Pointing to the four-year security plan, he said the helicopters were part of that strategy. The acting minister also thanked Gen. Nicholson for his continued support. (Pajhwok)

(2) Certain Circles in ..

circles are intentionally and willfully attempting to extend the war in the country.

Hekmatyar called on the tribal and Jihadi elders to step up efforts in a bid to take the responsibility of the security in their own areas.

The leader of Hezb-e-Islami claimed that the government and the foreign forces have remained short to ensure security for the people.

According to Hekmatyar, the ongoing war and violence in the country is against the interests of Islam and Afghanistan as only the Afghan people are paying the price.

In the meantime, he expressed hopes that the peace and stability will return to the country, insisting that the Afghan people should remain optimistic in this regard. (KP)

(3) Karzai to Ask Govt. ...

South Asia.

According to Karzai, the new US strategy is against the interests of the region and the country.

The former Afghan President also opposes with the involvement of India for the implementation of the new US strategy.

Speaking to reports in London last week, Karzai said India should not be pulled into the US' approach to Afghanistan, warning that the new US approach was part of a "bigger strategic game" that would not bring peace to the region.

Karzai further added that India should maintain its own and independent approach towards Afghanistan considering the national interests of both the nations. (KP)

(4) IEC to Wrap ...

Last month, the IEC along with the National Procurement Authority (NPA) put out a request to handpicked companies for quotations for all electronic equipment for next year's elections.

However, according to the IEC only one company, Prologix, met the submission deadline.

However, a number of election commission officials have said they do not want a deal with Prologix to go ahead. Others were however in favor of an agreement with the company.

In addition, some commissioners and oversight institutions have said the company does not meet all criteria needed to secure the contract.

But the election commission's spokesman Abdul Bade Sayad on Sunday said a committee is assessing Prologix's proposal and once this process is complete, they will decide on whether to award the contract to the UAE company or not. Sayad also said the tension and disagreements between the commissioners have been resolved and no problem will remain in the IEC in this regard.

"Disagreements have been resolved and we are waiting for the committee's decision on the company," said Sayad.

The Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), which has a representative on the assessment committee, has said Prologix does not meet the required criteria and have recommended the IEC find a more suitable company to deal with.

"We as the observer decided that the company is not eligible. Let's see what the election commission's decision will be," FEFA executive director Yusuf Rasheed said.

Some other election watchdog organizations meanwhile said government is involved in issues that should only be dealt with by the IEC.

"Government stepped in over the buying of equipment for the election commission. Based on the election law, this is an obvious interference in the election commission's affairs," Habibullah Shinwari, a member of Afghanistan Election Watch said.

The Independent Election Commission came under sharp criticism last month over the Prologix affair as it reportedly sent letters out to hand-picked companies rather than putting it out for public tender. (Pajhwok)

(5) Employment Plan...

Commission (IARCSC) shows nearly half of the appointees have studied to the bachelor level. Of every six people employed, one is illiterate.

It says the number of male complainants is five times higher than females. Of every three individuals, two have been promoted to higher grades during the first six months of the current fiscal year after proper evaluation.

One-third of the development budget has been spent in the first six months of the ongoing year.

Dr. Roohullah Amin, IARCSC complaint commission head, presented the six-month report on IARCSC performance in Kabul.

In line with the report, the IARCSC should have recruited 8,558 people to vacant positions at 37 ministries and independent institutions. But the commission managed to hire 3,160 people in the first six months.

As many as 1,888 positions in 37 government institutions had been left vacant in 2017 due to terminations, retirements, resignations or deaths and there was an urgent need for filling these vacancies.

"There is a possibility of some employees at ministries and civil services being terminated against the law. Any kind of explanation in this regard would help remove doubts in public minds regarding the ministries and other institutions in removing people illegally."

Lack of coordination between IARCSC and different government institutions, failure to evolve a proper strategy, delay in approval of posts and lack of clarity about the number of CBR posts are the main reasons behind the inability to fully enforce the employment strategy, according to the report.

It added, the ministries of counternarcotic, women affairs, water and energy, rural rehabilitation and development, mining and petroleum, agriculture, civil aviation and authority, the Attorney General Office and the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) lag behind in implementing the plan.

The gender issue is yet to be addressed and a balance between males and females has not been struck in the employment strategy. A huge disparity exists in the number of women and men hired, especially at the provincial level. Occupational capacity, lack of security, particularly in provinces, cultural restraints and local traditions are viewed as key obstacles to women's employment.

Professionalism and upgrades to civil services are important findings of the report.

According to the report, during the period, 84 percent of those appointed were aged between 19 and 40 years and the remaining 16 percent between 41 and 65, showing the entry of young talent energizing different institutions.

The report highlights the importance of having experienced employees in the

institutions but at the same time stresses the need for the induction of young talent.

The report hails the induction of young and professional individuals with higher education as a huge achievement. At the same time, the appointments strengthen civil services.

According to the statistics, many illiterate people have been hired to the posts which should have gone to educated candidates.

The induction of young talent with modern education and having familiarity with contemporary tools left a positive impact and played a basic role in bringing fundamental changes in line with drastic reforms.

Most of the educated individuals were hired at the centre.

"Security issues, inadequate rights and privileges for educated individuals in the provinces and comfort gaps between capital and provinces are the main reasons for the young talent quitting the provinces in search of job in the central capital," the report says.

In the employment process, an analysis of complaints and other administrative anomalies is seen as a vital indicator of implementing reforms, protecting people's rights and transparency. Findings of the observations show 604 people have registered complaints against 37 ministries in six months. (Pajhwok)

(6) Free Modern ...

internet, preparation for Kankor examination and website making.

Sayedullah, a resident of Asadabad, the provincial capital, has registered himself at the centre. He told Pajhwok it was his great wish to get modern education, but could not do so because of his economic problems.

He expressed pleasure over the free teaching at the centre set up by the Afghan Debt Foundation. (Pajhwok)

(7) Taliban Reacts in...

air force during the a ceremony organized in Kandahar province on Saturday. President Mohamad Ashraf Ghani and other senior officials had also participated in the ceremony.

The Afghan Air Force is expecting to receive around 159 Black Hawk helicopters in coming years as part of the ongoing efforts by the international allies of the country for the modernization of the Afghan Air Force in a bid to boost the capabilities of the national defense and security forces. (KP)

(8) Nangarhar Governor,...

Arrested a week ago, Noor Mohammad Alokozay told a press conference on Sunday said that he had been illegally arrested under a conspiracy by the governor, but he was released by the Ministry of Public Works.

He said they initially submitted the bridge but faced with conspiracy of some individuals before formally inaugurating the bridge.

The bridge contract had been signed with the MoPW which also monitored the bridge during its construction, but the governor illegally detained them, he said.

"I was somehow aware about this issue in Eid ul Adha days, I urgently ordered my colleagues to blacktop the damaged part to prevent water from reaching the steel, but when I saw the area, someone had poured acid and chemicals on the damaged part," he said.

He said some circles in Nangarhar wanted to prevent implementation of projects and discourage investments with such acts.

Alokozay said a professional team of MoPW was investigating the matter and a decision would follow soon.

But Nangarhar governor Mohammad Gulab Mangal said any company if found involved in corruption would face the same action.

In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, Mangal said it proved corruption when a bridge got damaged before its inauguration.

The governor said he ordered detention of the company owner because the public, civil society activists and youths were angry over the issue and he tried to prevent a possible serious incident from occurring.

"Did you see how Farkhunda was killed in Kabul, if I did not arrest him such an incident was possible here too," he said.

"I am not regretful over my order, I would neither apologize, I would show harsher reaction if the company repeats (corruption) in future," he said.

Provincial council secretary, Zabiullah Zamari, also said a disaster was possible if the governor had not detained the company owner.

He said the Behsud bridge was a national project and the issue should be investigated and those involved in corruption should be taken to task.

Zabit Mangal, Nangarhar public works director, said the Behsud bridge project did not relate to them because the MoPW was watching it.

He said he was unaware about the detention of the company owner. Con-

struction work on the second Behsud bridge was launched three years back but the more than three million US dollars project faced some problems due to lack of budget. (Pajhwok)

(9) Gen. Raziq Confirms...

privy of the development has said the leader of the Taliban group has instructed his fighters to end the war with the terror group.

The source further added that the leader of the group has instructed his fighters not to attack the militants of the terror group in a meeting with his commanders during the recent days.

Akhundzada has also told his fighters and commanders that the cause of the Taliban and ISIS-led insurgency are similar and therefore the conflict between the groups should end. (KP)

(10) Tribal Elders Call...

TOLOnews journalist Tamim Hamid traveled with a military convoy from Wardak center to Sayed Abad district recently and spoke to soldiers about the route's security. They said they faced security problems at times.

Mashoq, 25, who is a member of the police's special forces unit, said he has been a policeman for six years and that insurgents plant mines on the roads and often ambush motorists.

"First they (insurgents) detonate mines on police tanks and then start firing from both sides of the road," said Mashoq.

At Sunday's meeting, one tribal elder Sayed Amir Sadat said: "The security situation is better than (it has been in) the last two years."

"Our big problem is that no big projects have been implemented in the district so far," another tribal elder Bahadur said.

The only project undertaken in the district in recent years was an electricity sub-station, which was part of a \$150 million USD power project for the southern provinces. This was however, been delayed by two years due to security and technical problems, said the tribal elders.

"We can supply (power to) between 20,000 and 25,000 families in southern provinces. Currently we have plans to distribute electricity to six villages that are located near the sub-station," said the sub-station manager, Mohammad Nabi.

Wardak police chief Ahmad Fahim Qaim said parts of the district and a few other districts in the province are not secure and that insurgents carry out activities in these areas from time to time.

"They (insurgents) do not have permanent strongholds here, but they come to Sayed Abad from Sad Dara, a place in Nerkh district that also has routes to some other districts," said Qaim.

Sayed Abad security forces meanwhile said they escort vehicles through the district in convoys at night. (Pajhwok)

(11) Freed Taliban ...

leader was released."

He said the Taliban governor had recruited his men from Baghlan's Dandi-Ghori and Tala Wa Barfak districts to launch attacks on police posts in Shibar. Farid acknowledged reinforcements often dispatched from the Bamyan City to the district but the roads were blocked at times by the enemy planting mines on them.

He also urged higher authorities in Baghlan to clear Tala Wa Barfak district as insecurity there affected Shaibar.

Bamyan is one of the peaceful provinces of Afghanistan but insurgents have been fighting security forces in areas that border unstable provinces. (Pajhwok)

(12) Kohistan Education...

temporarily suspended but I don't believe that all schools are non-operational in the district."

Chief prosecutor Sherzai said some heads of organizations and other district education directors would also be prosecuted soon. (Pajhwok)

(13) Indian Engineer ...

The engineer was abducted 40 days ago. Local officials launched efforts for his release the day he was abducted, Mangal said, adding the captive was finally freed on Saturday.

Mangal had no information about the condition and name of the engineer.

Provincial police spokesman, Naqibullah Amini, said the engineer was abducted 45 days ago in the Badam area of Maidan Shahr, the provincial capital. He said the Indian was released as a result of efforts by police and the provincial leadership in Dasht-i-Top area. He has been handed over to the Indian embassy in Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(14) Kashesh Owner ...

to create more job opportunities for women.

Anayatzada said that she has secured two new premises which will in future be used as training centers.

"Now I feel that I have become self-reliant and I always expand my work. I have prepared two other facilities and in one month these will be inaugurated,

where women can also learn handicraft work," Anayatzada told TOLOnews.

She said women that are employed in the factory first undergo training so as to be able to make goods in accordance with the market requirements.

She said currently 12 women are being trained as tailors at her factory.

One of the new recruits is Mariam, who is learning to become a tailor.

She said: "I am very happy that my family allows me to come and learn and I am very happy with my teacher who trains me well," said Mariam.

Anayatzada's factory focuses on embroidery, weaving and tailoring.

Another Kashesh employee, Zahra, said she has learnt to embroider fabric and is now able to provide for her family.

"Working is good for every woman and it is better than to sit at home where nothing will change; it is better for a woman to work for herself and also for her family," Zahra said.

The Kashesh workers TOLOnews spoke to were all happy in the jobs and said they were constantly trying to improve their handiwork and designs. (Tolnews)

(15) Book Containing...

who began her career in the year 2000. Her photographs have since been published in newspapers and magazines worldwide, including the Telegraph Magazine and British Vogue, as well as being exhibited in New York, London, and Prague.

In November 2014, out of over 4,000 submissions, Jessica's portrait of "Skate Girl" won second prize at The National Portrait Gallery's Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize Award, where it was exhibited for the first time.

Skateistan is a non-profit organisation empowering youth and children through skateboarding and education in Afghanistan, Cambodia and South Africa. (Pajhwok)

(16) Taliban Notorious ...

slightly wounded.

A resident of the area who did not want to be named, said he was unaware about the casualties, but confirmed that the gun battle lasted for one hour. There was no word about the clash in Farah from the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

New U.S. Helicopters Mark Major Change for Afghan Air Force

KANDAHAR - Senior Afghan and American officials welcomed the arrival of new U.S.-made military helicopters on Saturday, beginning a process that will radically transform the young Afghan air force.

While the plan for new UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters has been in the works for some time, it forms a major part of the U.S.-led military coalition's training efforts, which were expanded under proposals approved by President Donald Trump in August.

"It's a modernization of their program that will allow them to project power throughout Afghanistan," said Lieutenant Colonel Trent Alexander, a U.S. military adviser to the Afghan air force. "While transitioning to the Black Hawk will not be a quick task, it will not be a difficult task."

At a ceremony at Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani formally accepted the first new helicopters, calling it a "historic day" that would allow the air force to better respond to the demands on the security forces.

The Russian-designed Mi-17 helicopters that currently form the backbone of the Afghan air force worked well for crews used to Russian equipment, but deteriorating relations between Moscow and Washington meant that the Americans were unable to provide new parts and aircraft to replace the overworked aircraft.

"The Mi-17 was a great aircraft and it brought the Afghans the ability to be capable, however, with the introduction of the UH-60 they are now sustainable," Alexander said.

TALIBAN REACTION

By 2024 the U.S. plans to provide the Afghans with at least 159 Black Hawks, including 58 fitted with extra rocket pods and machine guns to provide close air support, a fleet that will dwarf the fewer than 40 Mi-17s currently operational.

The Black Hawks will cost the American government almost \$8 million a piece, officials said, after a process that completely refurbishes and upgrades U.S. Army surplus aircraft.

So far only two training Black Hawks have arrived, with the delivery of several additional helicopters delayed by the U.S. military's humanitarian response to hurricanes in the Caribbean.

Retraining an Afghan pilot to fly the Black Hawk takes about five to six months, said Alexander. Members of the first class of six pilots said they were excited over what they view as more modern helicopters. (Reuters)