

(1) Bamyan Film ...

boys and girls took part in two months program in which 26 short movies have been made and displayed in this event," he said.

Governor Mohammad Zahir Zaheer said Bamyan was the most suitable place for film making in every season, adding introducing Bamyan through movie to the people would be helpful in promotion of tourism.

He said the Bamyan Film Festival would be supported on local, national and international level. (Pajhwok)

(2) Education Sector ...

Khali Fahim, SCA representative, said though the provision of education was government's responsibility; yet NGOs supplemented execution of educational programs on local level.

According to him, the mentioned NGOs have been facilitating disabled children, street children, girls, IDPs and repatriates' in finding access to education as a priority.

He said the NGO community currently supported 400,000 children (60% of them girls) under community-based schools in remote areas besides mainstreaming children with disabilities in the educational system and providing preparatory education to 4,650 children of returnees. Fahim said over the past two years, the SCA built and reconstructed about 800 schools in various parts of the country and supported 2,500 teachers and 70,000 children in 13 provinces, including flexible education opportunities for about 5,500 nomadic children.

Parween Azimi, the NAC representative, on the occasion said they trained more than 7,000 people since 2016 in topics such as administration, teacher's training, Early Childhood Development, Disaster Risk Reduction and more. She said one of the NAC projects was establishing 24 kindergartens for children aged from four to six years old in remote areas.

The NAC continued to invest in diploma-upgrading for teachers in cooperation with teacher's training colleges under the MoE.

She cited the establishment of a master's degree program "Inclusion and Diversity in Education" at the Shaheed Prof. Rabbani Education University as another example.

Fazal Rabbi Haqbin, Tashabos Educational Organization representative, said 34,000 high schools students (girls 52% and boys 48%) were covered by the organization's program "building self-reliance and empowering youth" through socio-economic education.

Tayyiba Rahim, Nai Qala Association head, for her part said her association was able to play a vital role in facilitating children's access to education, especially in remote areas.

For example, the association funded construction of eight school buildings, surrounding walls, water wells, resource centers and additional classrooms in Ghazni and Bamyan provinces, she explained, adding the institutes imparted education to over 6,000 boys and girls. (Pajhwok)

(3) Corruption ...

to fight against corruption, oppression, robbery and violation of human rights," he said at a ceremony on Thursday.

He said that the number of terrorists has tripled in Afghanistan in the past few years but he said the Afghan government is the winner in the war against these groups.

"The support provided to them (terrorists) from government institutions in the region helped the flow of foreign insurgents into Afghanistan. The number of terrorists has increased three times compared with seven years ago when I was addressing a ceremony here," he said.

At the same event, the senior deputy minister of interior for security, Gen. Murad Ali Murad, said the ministry is implementing plans to overcome corruption.

"We have a six-month plan which includes all the activities as well as laws (in the ministry)," he said. (Tolnews)

(4) IECC Chief ...

inattention with this process will affect the stability of the country," he said.

According to the findings of the report, at least 40 percent of Afghans are concerned about the interference of government in election.

However, the head of the Independent Election Commission, Najibullah Ahmadzai, said they are committed to holding the election in time.

"Transparency, impartiality and a strong will as well as security are crucial (for elections). I can say that government has not interfered in the activities (of the electoral bodies)," he said.

The report says that 41 percent of Af-

ghans have no trust in activities of the election organizations but it indicates that 53 percent of the people are still interested in participating in the upcoming elections. (Tolnews)

(5) IEC Lacks ...

"We are committed to working with all institutes and political parties to hold impartial, transparent, fair and nationwide elections and provide information to the public," he said.

Ahmadzai also stressed the importance of technology in elections, particularly in preparing voter lists.

He believed technology could help 80 percent transparency in polls. "Ensuring security is also important because it would reduce concerns about lack of transparency."

Abdul Aziz Aryayi, head of IECC, also talked about problems in his commission.

"We face many problems not due to our management but due to interferences of some individuals and we have discussed about it, if the problem is not resolved in a month, I will resign," he said.

He said he had no authority to select employees and the shortage of budget was another problem that should be addressed.

The IEC has announced July 7, 2018 the date to hold parliamentary and district council elections and the government has declared its readiness to go for the ballot in the given time. (Pajhwok)

(6) Iran's Defense...

concerning providing security, maintaining regional stability and expansion of bilateral ties.

Bahrami said that stability in Afghanistan is beneficial for all countries of the region and expressed Iran's support for Afghanistan's government and nation. Iran and Afghanistan have 936 kilometers common borders and their trade exchanges volume exceeds \$2.2 billion annually. (IRNA)

(7) RS Launches ...

insisted on strong cooperation between judicial institutions and security forces.

"The cooperation between security forces and legal institutions will help us in secure justice and implement the law," said Abulhaq Ahmadi, head of Herat's appellate court.

"We hope that we will move towards a better Afghanistan by implementing proper plans, good understanding and by learning from the past experiences," said Maria Bashir, a lawyer. (Tolnews)

(8) India Meets SCO ...

More importantly, it will not let China unilaterally change the reality on the ground. In Afghanistan, India has been a significant stakeholder and everyone, including the US, Russia, and China, knows that, even Pakistan. India has invested a lot in reconstruction efforts and training Afghan officials and in other ways." Dr. Harsh Pant, distinguished fellow at the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation told Sputnik.

"What is important, however, is that New Delhi must keep in mind how it could help Afghanistan and its people through the SCO contact group meeting. It is not that all stakeholders in Afghanistan have shared goals, and we must be clear where and with whom our interests converge," Dr. Pant added.

India became a member of the China-dominated grouping recently: in June of this year, alongside Pakistan. The SCO contact group on Afghanistan was reportedly revived recently after Russian President Vladimir Putin's intervention, even though the group had existed since 2009.

"What India has done for Afghanistan in terms of socio-economic projects and the training of civilian and armed forces personnel since 2001 has no parallel. Besides, India has promised to execute another 116 projects across Afghanistan. Very few nations have such a track record," The Economic Times quoted an official from a SCO member nation as saying.

The meeting will be attended by all eight members of the SCO, along with Afghanistan. During the Indo-Afghan trade and investment show, India also hosted Russian envoy Zamir Kabulov.

Since the eviction of the Taliban in 2001, India has created a \$2 billion humanitarian aid program that is not only Afghanistan's fifth largest but also "reputedly the most focused and effective, dollar for dollar," noted security expert Ajai Shukla in The New York Times.

Reports of India getting militarily involved in Afghanistan have been doing the rounds in the media in recent weeks. In fact, under a 2011 Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan, India can provide direct military support — initially as trainers but potentially as combat troops if the need arose. "But In-

dia doesn't need boots on the ground," Shukla notes.

India's development and rebuilding efforts such as Afghanistan's Parliament, schools, hospitals, buses, the Salma Dam in Herat province, roads and training efforts have generated enormous goodwill for India in the country. All these and the deep cultural ties the two nations share provide India an advantage over other large donors. (Sputnik)

(9) Trump's Afghan...

polices, a lack of key reforms and for not taking steps to stop rampant corruption in state institutions while the U.S. spent hundreds of billions of dollars on Afghan security and reconstruction projects.

Karzai said the regional cooperation Kabul and the United States were receiving until a few years ago in their efforts to stabilize Afghanistan has diminished and instead turned into a rivalry. He apparently was referring to increasing contacts Russia and Iran have established with the Taliban while the insurgent group continues to use alleged sanctuaries in Pakistan.

"No I am not," Karzai replied when asked about allegations he was fueling conflict between major powers.

"I am trying to bring a balance back in Afghanistan. I am trying to create an environment of cooperation between the big powers in Afghanistan and the neighbors because that is what we need exactly, and very much badly in our country," he insisted.

Karzai has been among a few prominent Afghans who have opposed from the outset President Trump's strategy that he outlined in August. The plan allowed a modest U.S. troop surge and stepped up airpower to help Afghan security forces break the military stalemate with the Taliban.

President Ghani's National Unity Government and many Afghans in general have welcome the new U.S. plan, hoping it will enable Afghan forces to reverse Taliban gains and pave the ground for a peaceful settlement to the Afghan war. Ghani's spokesman, Shah Hussain Murtazawi, dismissed Karzai's assertions, saying the Afghan government is moving in the right direction to ensure security of its citizens.

"America's new strategy is for permanent peace and stability in the region and is based on views of the [Afghan] people and the government [of Afghanistan]. Foreign forces are only advising and training Afghan forces who are leading and themselves conducting security operations," Murtazawi noted.

U.S. officials so far have not responded to Karzai's allegations.

Karzai also questioned the emergence of Islamic State in Afghanistan in the last few years, citing the development for Moscow and other nations, including Tehran, to engage with the Taliban in order to keep the Syria-based terrorist group from threatening their territorial boundaries using "ungoverned" Afghan spaces.

"It is for the last four years, five years that they [Russia and other nations] have taken a different attitude because of the emergence of Daesh, because of the emergence of those other radical groups. They are wondering why? How come? Because the U.S. presence here was supposed to end extremism not to add to extremism," lamented the former Afghan leader.

Russian and Iranian officials have acknowledged maintaining contacts with the Taliban, which controls or contests more than 40 percent of Afghan territory. Moscow, Islamabad and Tehran have expressed concerns that the continuation of hostilities, particularly in Afghan border regions, will create security challenges for them. (VoA)

(10) Saffron Price Goes ...

in a standard manner.

Nisar Ahmad said, Mullah Akbar (now known as father of saffron), Arbab Abdur Razaq and Mullah Habibullah from Pashton Zarghon district were pioneers of saffron cultivation. Ahmad, who had studied up to grade nine, said his family did not allow him to continue his education.

As hundreds of thousands of Afghans including educated people are jobless in Afghanistan, Ahmad with his little education is now a specialist in promoting saffron in the country. Ahmad said saffron farmers from Kapi-sa, Farah, Balkh and some other provinces sought his advises about saffron cultivation in recent years. Still physically strong, Ahmad said: "Mahmood Karzai, brother of former president Hamid Karzai invited me to Kandahar to provide him information about saffron promotion."

He said women in Kandahar did not work outside home. "I told Karzai that

cultivation of saffron is a man's job but its picking—a delicate work—is the job of women because it requires much patience and accuracy," he said.

He said saffron could not be promoted without women's partnership as women's support in this area was required in all countries.

"I once met with Ahmad Zia Massoud for attracting government's support for saffron promotion in Herat, we also discussed that the plant would be a good alternative to poppy, but unfortunately the agriculture and counternarcotics ministers who were present in the meeting had no information about saffron," he said.

Government's inattention to support saffron cultivation has paved the ground for narcotics promotion in Afghanistan, he said, adding drugs could not be controlled despite spending millions of US dollars on counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan over the past 16 years.

Nisar Ahmad said saffron was a good alternative to poppy and the Afghan government should support farmers in this regard.

He said the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) was the first organization that encouraged him and other farmers in Herat.

Najibullah Qarizada, who has acquired medical education and has business experience, said he returned from Turkey to Herat two months ago and was interested in saffron cultivation.

He obtained 10 acres of land on lease in Injil district with three shareholders for saffron cultivation.

He said saffron was cultivated in October and it started appearing from the earth in a few weeks. The plant starts blossoming once it grows well and its onions in the final (fifth) year increases by multiple times," he added.

Qarizada said each four kilograms of saffron onions cost from 900 to 1,300 afghanis in Herat. "Each half acre of land yields 480 to 600 kilograms of saffron onions."

Herat is one of the busiest markets for saffron union in Afghanistan. Qarizada said the ground should be first softened and then applied with fertilizer before planting saffron onions 25 centimeters deep in the soil. (Pajhwok)

(11) Civilian Casualties ...

U.S. warplanes dropped more bombs than in any single month since 2010, driven largely by Trump's strategy of trying to reassert pressure on militants after several years of drawdown by foreign troops.

A spokesman for the U.S. military command did not immediately comment on the report.

General Dawlat Waziri, spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Defence, rejected the findings and said the government took civilian casualties seriously.

"It is quite obvious that Taliban and other insurgent groups cause more civilian casualties," he said, adding that insurgents also "use civilians as human shields and hide in residential areas".

Overall civilian casualties decreased slightly compared to the same period last year, the report said.

At least 2,640 civilians were killed and 5,379 injured this year, compared to 2,616 killed and 5,915 injured in the same period of 2016.

The drop reflected fewer casualties from fighting in populated areas, the report noted, as militants failed to capture any major cities.

The head of the U.N. mission in Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, praised the Afghan government for formally endorsing a national policy designed to reduce civilian casualties.

"The government owes it to its citizens, particularly the victims of the armed conflict, to ensure full implementation of the policy through a concrete action plan," he said.

Overall the U.N. attributed 64 percent of civilian casualties to anti-government militants like the Taliban and Islamic State. Pro-government forces were responsible for 20 percent overall, while the remainder was attributed to joint fighting or unidentified groups, according to the U.N. (Reuters)

(12) Afghan ...

for women in many families," she said. The robotics team attended the FIRST Global Challenge — a three-day international robotics competition that aimed at promoting science and technology among youths worldwide.

The contest was launched in July. (Tolnews)

(13) Badakhshan Forces ...

fought against the Taliban (in Badakhshan) for the past five years. We are now ready to defend the country and

support the Afghan security forces in the province," said Mohammad Majid, commander of public uprising forces in Baharak district.

"International terrorists and al-Qaeda militants are operating in Badakhshan. We want the elimination of the terrorists in all districts and we want a large-scale military operation against them," said Lotfullah, member of the public uprising forces in Wardooj. (Tolnews)

(14) Daesh Presence...

meeting was aimed at enhancing Afghan security forces' cooperation with security forces of regional countries. He said no meeting on strengthening security cooperation between security forces of regional countries had taken place in recent years.

Muradyan also criticized the Afghan government's peace policy for giving much chance to Pakistan in, saying the fact was that Afghanistan currently held the keys to peace.

Acting Afghan Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak said today's meeting was important because regional countries had realized that peace in Afghanistan was in their interest. (Pajhwok)

(15) Afghan Elders ...

Jabir, Maulvi Inayatullah, Maulvi Sher Muhammad, Ustad Zakaria, Ameer Lal Muhammad, Ustad Allahyar and Maulvi Masoom Gul were part of the visiting team.

They also drove to the Landikotal Army Garrison and met Political Agent Khalid Mehmood and other officials. Special contingents of Khassadars and Levies escorted the Afghan elders. (Pajhwok)

(16) Herat ...

Raziq Ahmadi, the Herat education director, said his department was making efforts to meet the needs of blind students.

About the Braille printer, he said: "We, at the education department, have a Braille printer and we will make efforts at activating it and will hand it over to them."

According to local officials, currently 150 blind individuals are studying at the Herat Blind School. (Pajhwok)

(17) Peshawar Poliovirus ...

there frequently.

After the eruption of the new polio case, Miakhel said a three-day anti-polio vaccination campaign would be launched soon in six districts of the province.

He said concerns about the virus journey from Pakistan to Afghanistan had long been existed.

Poliovirus has been found in children of families who have recently returned from Pakistan. (Pajhwok)

(18) Ongoing Helmand ...

militants had suffered casualties during the operations that resulted in the seizure of weapons and ammunition as well. He said so far four security personnel had been injured during the raids.

A police official said the Taliban had been unable to put up resistance due to airstrikes.

However, a Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousaf Ahmadi, said the fighters had blocked the security forces from advancing.

He said the government forces were also inflicted heavy casualties during clashes in Sangin and Nawa districts. (Pajhwok)

(19) Kunar Police, ...

highway.

But residents of the area have a different account. One of them, Mohammad Ismail, who lives in Dew Gul valley, said all those killed in the drone strike were civilians.

He said the victims wanted to proceed together for a wedding, but they were attacked and killed all by the drone. (Pajhwok)

(20) Well-Equipped ...

increased but players lacked access to training and exercising facilities.

Abdurahimzai said the need for such an academy in Kabul was long felt considering people's high interest in the game. "Besides batting, bowling and fielding, the boys are also subjected to physical training in this academy," he said.

Abdurahimzai hoped the academy would offer talent to the national side. (Pajhwok)

(21) N. American ...

of the couple surfaced in December last year when they appeared in video urging their governments to secure their release. They were pictured holding their two young sons, who had been born while they were in captivity.

It was not clear when the video was shot, but it was released after rumours swirled in Kabul that the government was planning to execute Anas Haqqani, son of the Taliban-allied Haqqani network's founder, who has been held since 2014. (AFP)