

(1) 2 Million People ...

year we have strong will to spend the entire allocated budget."

According to the ministry's media wing, this year's development budget for the ministry is 14 million and 500,000 dollars and so far (fiscal year's month 10) 45 percent has been spent. (Pajhwok)

(2) Closing Taliban's...

about possibly closing it or not closing it, I think it would be a mistake to close it," he said.

The former UN envoy said the Afghan government should give a type of legitimacy to the Taliban if it wants to see results from the peace process.

"In any conflict when a government sits down with an insurgency movement or opposition movement, you do give some kind of legitimacy to that movement," he said in response to a question about the role of the Taliban's Qatar office.

He said the new US strategy is in favor of Afghanistan and that the peace process should be supported following the policy.

"If you look at the American strategy, I think it was a right of the US to provide some more troops to Afghanistan. I think it was important from a military point of view, I think it was important from political point of view and from a morale point of view of Afghan troops," he said.

He said the role of Pakistan is essential in the Afghan peace process but that the neighboring country will not be able to bring the Taliban to the peace table. (Tolonevs)

(3) Turkmenistan Preparing...

priorities of foreign policy and Turkmenistan fully supports and participates in economic projects in the field of energy and transport," says the message.

Earlier, it was reported that Turkmenistan put forward initiatives, including from the high rostrum of the United Nations, to unite efforts in developing fundamentally new mechanisms for stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan.

The RECCA, initiated in 2005 in Kabul, aims to consolidate the efforts of the countries of the region in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and promoting regional economic integration of South and Central Asia. (Trend)

(4) Iran, Afghanistan ...

signed an initial agreement with Iran on the purchase of oil products, cement, and steel.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Karbasian has traveled to Washington, DC, to attend the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG). (Monitoring Desk)

(5) MPs Blame Karzai ...

26 people whowere killed in Uruzgan province (last month)," said Zahir Saadat, an MP.

Meanwhile, other lawmakers said the overall situation of Afghanistan was better under Karzai's government if compared with the current situation. "I appreciate (Hamid) Karzai's 13 years of presidency. Afghanistan had no government and nothing and we were able to have a government," MP Makhdum Abdullah Mohammadi said.

Some MPs said Afghanistan has never witnessed an honest leader to work sincerely for the welfare of the people. "Some Afghans are burning schools, mosques and God's book. They kill innocent people to go to paradise. The truth is that we do not have a history to be proud of," Arif Rahmani, an MP, said.

This comes after Karzai said at a press conference last week the country's security situation is fragile and that there is a need for convening a traditional Loya Jirga in the near future. He criticized the new US strategy on Afghanistan, saying that it is not in favor of Afghans.

His remarks were met with mixed reaction by Afghan politicians. (Tolonevs)

(6) Work on Iran-...

of this mega project, needed transport and transit facilities will be provided and bilateral trade between Afghanistan and Iran flourish.

Mohammad Raza Bahrami, Iran's Ambassador to Kabul, visited the province and oversaw ongoing work on the Herat-Khawaf rail-track. He stressed speedy completion of the project.

He asked the makers of the railroad to hire more employees in order for the project to finish as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Eng. Barzanoni, specialist of the railway project, said of all the 62 kilometres of the railway inside Afghan soil, about 33 kilometers railway was stretched and the rest would be completed in the next 10 days.

Officials say the Herat-Khauaf 191-long railroad is being constructed in four segments. About 139 kilometer of the project is financed by Iran and the fourth segment cost is provided by

the Afghanistan national budget. (Pajhwok)

(7) Atmar Sees ...

the implementation of the decisions made was useful for both sides.

Awon Jeng welcomed the commitment of Afghan forces to combating terrorism. He also commended the holding of the fourth-nation meeting, hoping it would yield positive results. The special representative of the British prime minister is scheduled to travel to Pakistan for talks on regional stability, relations between Kabul and Islamabad and trilateral contacts. (Pajhwok)

(8) Rebels Hell...

after listening to the requests and issues of tribal elders said the unity government keeping in mind the facilities at hand would take practical steps in resolving these problems. (Pajhwok)

(9) Govt. Urged to...

wounded in the attack.

A number of journalists accused government of not having the will to investigate the cases of violence against media workers.

"The basic problem is that government does not have a strong will to overcome violence against journalists," said Shekib Mawlawizada, a journalist.

"Very mysterious groups who will have close connections with regional networks which work against the interests of Afghanistan; therefore, they try to make silent the freedom of speech in order to reach their ends," said Ainuddin Bahaduri, a member of Afghan Journalists Safety Committee. (Tolonevs)

(10) Cancelling Mobile ...

the Wolesi Jirga.

This comes after the majority of MPs in the Wolesi Jirga on Wednesday voted against the 10 percent tax levy - a levy introduced in 2015.

Members of the Wolesi Jirga's Telecommunication Commission, who carried out an investigation into the tax collection process, said the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology should have collected 14 billion Afs in the past two years.

However, according to the commission, only about 7.9 billion Afs was collected during this period.

The commission also claimed that the process lacks transparency and monitoring.

"The continuation of the process of collecting 10 percent tax from telecommunication services customers has resulted in money not going to government's treasury and instead the public's money is being wasted," said Qais Hassan, head of the Wolesi Jirga's Telecommunication Commission.

"The money which is collected from the people is pouring into the accounts of private companies but it does not go to the government's treasury," said Musa Nusrat, a member of the commission.

At Wednesday's session, the Wolesi Jirga members cancelled the tax collection process after a majority vote. They said this was because the process was not transparent and did not meet the required norms. (Tolonevs)

(11) Paktika Insecurity: ...

acceptable for the people of Paktika and its residents would block the main highway in protest if the situation persisted.

Nader Khan Katawazai, a lawmaker from Paktika province, said tribal elders were being killed based on ISI orders to create differences between different tribes of Afghanistan.

Mahmood Sulaiman Khan another lawmaker said the deteriorated security situation in Paktika had resulted in the halt of implementation of uplift projects.

"A four million dollar project approved by the president has not been so far implemented due insecurity and threats to the personnel involved in the project," he said.

A resolution passed in the gathering read that if their demands weren't met, sit-in tents would be erected in front of the parliament and Presidential Palace. (Pajhwok)

(12) Ministry to Give...

officials said these adjustments are included as amendments in the Income Tax Law and have been endorsed by the cabinet and will soon be sent to the House of Representatives.

"In order to encourage the private sector and attract investment and to create jobs for people, we introduced some of these facilities to the Income Tax Law," said Abdul Qadir Zazai general director of revenues of the ministry of finance. Meanwhile, a number of factory owners have said that considering the decline in investment in the country, this new move could have a positive impact on the increase of investment in the country. "The law is not yet prepared but there are some rumors but yet it is welcomed if government supports any industry in the country,"

said Parwiz Qarizada chairman of the Iron and Steel Works Union.

According to the Ministry of Finance, factory owners have had to visit the ministry four times a year to hand in balance sheets but under the new process they will only have to hand these in once a year. (Tolonevs)

(13) Rugby Tournament ...

will enable Afghan rugby players improve and raise the standard of domestic rugby to a good level.

"This time the tournament was held in the far flung district of Kabul called Butkhak where people were unaware of the sport of rugby and the aim of the federation was to show the sport of rugby to local residents of the area and enjoy the tournament "Said Musa Hashimi, Afghan Rugby Coach / National Squad's Player.

With the recent activities of rugby of the Afghanistan Rugby Federation, the scope for development of the game is vast. It is a one of the best mode to get the youth off the trouble zone and onto the playing ground, where they can make something out of themselves. A path could be set using Rugby as the vehicle to drive this noble cause into a human welfare and achievement.

Unlike last year this time the event had many sponsors, including Afghan United Bank, Afghanistan Commercial Bank, Defacto, Chicking Afghanistan, Majid Mall, Clarks Afghanistan and Imperial Exclusive Stores. The final match was played between Afghan Kings sponsored by Defacto and Afghan Eagles sponsored by the Afghan United Bank as a result, Afghan Kings managed to score 15 points against 10 and take the Afghan Super 7s Champion's title.

With just 1,000 players registered with the ARF, rugby has a long way to go before it can claim to be anywhere near as popular as Buzkashi, soccer or cricket. A small group of onlookers stood on the sidelines on Thursday - many watching rugby for the first time.

The history of rugby in Afghanistan is an intermittent and discontinuous one, often played by invading armies. The game was first introduced into the country from British India and was played by British troops. After the British left Asia, the game died very soon in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has indigenous sports which bear some resemblance to rugby football. One of these sport game is called Buzkashi, which has been compared to a cross between rugby and polo and uses a dead goat or sheep as the ball. The goal of a player is to grab the carcass of a headless goat or sheep and then get it clear of the other players and pitch it across the goal line or into a target circle or vat. The game has even been referred to as "Sheep Rugby" by the Society for Creative Anachronism since the 1970s.

Safiullah Ahmadi, acting general secretary of the federation " We believe Afghans, who have faced decades of conflict and hardship, are even better suited to the rough and tumble of the rugby field, which is more similar to the national sport Buzkashi but without the need for horses "

Despite all the issues in Afghanistan the country's cricket and football already gained a strong following and regional success has offered a rare glimmer of hope in the war-torn country. The Afghanistan Cricket Board and Afghanistan Football Federation are really paving roads for other federations to do more for the development of the sports in general so that Afghans who have been suffering for the last three decades should have some joyful time to watch sports in the grounds or at their homes through their local TV channels. (KP)

(14) Hakimi Discusses...

for exchanging customs information, establishment of a working group to improve the financial and banking functions, double taxation, air co-operation, opening border markets were other issues discussed in the meeting, the source said. (Pajhwok)

(15) Some See Trump

consequences that will come with continued presence of aid support for extremists inside Pakistan," Siraj said. "Hence, this has generated some serious internal calls to review Pakistan's overall policy toward extremist groups." "Trump's position might have helped bring about a visit to Afghanistan by Pakistan's military leader, and may have influenced Pakistan's effort Thursday to free an American woman, her Canadian husband and their three children who were being held by the Haqqani network, which is considered the most lethal terror group in the region. Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, during a recent visit to New York, called terrorist groups like the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba a liability and said officials need some time to get rid of them, which seemed to reflect a change in policy. Up to now, Pakistan has always denied any links with the Haqqanis or any other terror group, including the Afghan Taliban.

In addition, Pakistan's Election Commission on Wednesday rejected the registration application of a newly established political party with alleged ties to a banned militant group.

The events have fostered some optimism about the U.S. relationship with Pakistan, which has been rocky at times during the 16-year war in Afghanistan. Pakistan still needs the United States on its side, as Pakistan fears India and wants continued financial aid and military materiel.

To avoid global isolation, Pakistan will need to modify its security policies and break any links with terror groups that pose a threat to regional security. Pakistan also has lost a huge number of civilians and troops to terrorism.

"The right step" "It's a positive and the right step for all the right reasons," said Mona Naseer, a columnist for Daily News Pakistan. "We need to stop playing a cat-and-mouse game on our Afghan policy, or otherwise we risk global isolation."

"What prompted the [military chief's] visit might be for different reasons, not only the Trump administration. I feel the other significant aspect is the Chinese government's recent stance in the BRICS summit, too," said Naseer, referring to the countries that make up the five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The BRICS nations called for patrons of the Pakistan-based militant groups to be held to account.

"What happens in the future, its effect or visible change, I'm not so sure about," Naseer said.

Still, some experts don't think Trump can pressure Pakistan to the point that it feels it must change.

"I do not think we should assume that U.S. pressure is the reason for [military chief General Qamar Javed] Bajwa's visit. Pakistan has its own reasons for wanting to push for a detente with Kabul," Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Wilson Center's Asia program, told VOA.

"It will want to build trust to get Afghanistan to do more to cut down on cross-border terror," Kugelman said. "But the big issue is the border itself. Pakistan has a strong interest in pushing for better cross-border management in order to move toward a legitimization of the Durand Line [the de facto border], which Afghanistan does not recognize.

"All this said, the U.S. wants better relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, so there is some reason to believe that the COAS's [chief of army staff] trip was meant at least in part to appease growing U.S. impatience about Pakistan's inaction on Afghanistan-focused terrorists on Pakistani soil." Rahimullah Yousufzai, a senior journalist based in Peshawar, agreed, telling VOA that even before Trump announced his Afghan policy, there were efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve relations and cooperate to wipe out terrorists on both sides of the border. (VoA)

(16) Explosion in ...

all three dead. At least one more was also wounded in the explosion, the officials added. The anti-government armed militant groups have not commented regarding the report so far.

The anti-government armed militant groups frequently use explosives materials for the roadside bombings and car bombings to target the government staff and security personnel.

However, in majority of such incidents the ordinary civilians are targeted besides such bombings incur casualties to the security personnel and in some cases the Taliban militants themselves are killed or wounded. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in its latest reported highlighted that 40 per cent of all civilian casualties during the six-month period were killed or injured by anti-government forces using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), such as suicide bombs and pressure-plate devices, which were responsible for the deaths of 596 civilians and injured 1,483. (KP)

(17) Explosion ...

off, leaving two people wounded. In the meantime, other reports indicate at least three people, all policemen, including an officer were wounded in the explosion. No individual or group has so far claimed responsibility behind the incident. (KP)

(18) Senior Police...

police officer was slightly injured the attack, which was also confirmed by the governor's spokesman, Omar Zwak. But he had no more information.

On the other hand, Zwak said Afghan forces were advancing in an ongoing operation in Nad Ali district and on the outskirts of Lashkargah. A large number of militants had suffered casualties, he claimed.

Zwak said that a Humvee vehicle and a Corolla car full of explosives were destroyed in an attack by foreign force-

es in the Naqilabad area of Nad Ali on Saturday morning.

Only one Afghan soldier had so far been killed and five others wounded in the offensive, he concluded.

Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, claimed they had stopped the operation making progress and inflicted casualties on the security forces. (Pajhwok)

(19) US-Canadian ...

expressions of relief from U.S. and Canadian officials. In a statement, the Canadian government said it was "rejoicing over the long-awaited return" of the family.

"Resilience and determination" But details are now emerging of the ordeal the family faced while held captive by members of the Haqqani network. In a statement made at the Toronto airport and reported by the Associated Press late Friday, Joshua Boyle said members of the Haqqani network killed one of their children, a infant girl, and raped his wife during the time they were held hostage.

"God has given me and my family unparalleled resilience and determination," Boyle said in a statement reported by the Associated Press.

"The stupidity and evil of the Haqqani network's kidnapping of a pilgrim and his heavily pregnant wife engaged in helping ordinary villagers in Taliban-controlled regions of Afghanistan was eclipsed only by the stupidity and evil of authorizing the murder of my infant daughter," Boyle said.

Before their arrival in Canada Friday, word of the birth of a fourth child had not been public. He said one of his surviving children is in poor health and had to be force fed by their Pakistani rescuers.

Rescue in Pakistan

On Wednesday, acting on a tip from U.S. intelligence, Pakistani officials say their troops rescued the family, hours after their captors transported them in a car to the Pakistani side of the long porous Afghan border.

A U.S. plane was standing by at the military airbase in Islamabad, waiting to fly the family to a U.S. military base in Germany for a medical checkup, but Pakistani security sources told VOA Boyle refused to board the flight fearing their "scrutiny."

Instead, the family boarded Pakistan's state-run carrier and left for Britain where they took the Air Canada flight to Toronto.

Kidnapped by Taliban

The Afghan Taliban claimed responsibility for kidnapping the couple. U.S. officials maintain the couple was held in captivity by the Haqqani terrorist organization linked to the Taliban. The insurgent group, which released two videos of the hostages while they were in captivity, had been demanding the release of their prisoners in exchange for Boyle and his wife.

One of the prisoners the militants wanted to be freed is Annas Haqqani, who is on death row in an Afghan prison. The detainee is the younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani, who heads the Haqqani network and also serves as a deputy to the leader of the Taliban. A senior Taliban official when contacted by VOA claimed the Coleman and Boyle "converted to Islam" while in captivity.

"The Taliban need not have to keep them hostage and thought they were freed to go anywhere they wanted to because their hardships as an extended family were increasing in captivity," the official said requesting anonymity. U.S. and Pakistani officials have expressed hope the hostages' release could represent a turning point in traditionally mistrusted-marred relations between the two countries and it could lead to better cooperation between the uneasy allies in fighting Taliban and other Islamist extremists in Afghanistan. (VoA)

(20) Flour, Sugar ...

the commodity cost 60af according to Sharif Ahmad, a gas seller in Kolola Pushta area of Kabul.

Abdul Hadi, a worker at the Wazirabad Fuel Station, told Pajhwok Afghan News that each liter of diesel and petrol cost 46af, the same rate of last week's. According to Sara-I-Shahzada moneychangers, one US dollar accounted for 68.20af and 1,000 Pakistani rupees 638af this week against last week's rates of 68.20af and 635af respectively. (Pajhwok)

(21) Key Hezb...

guards of the prison and other prisoners in the attack in Mawlawi Wazir. According to Hezb-e-Islami, another person was also wounded in the attack. According to reports, scores of prisoners belonging to Hezb-e-Islami are currently serving in the key jails of the country, including the central Pul-e-Charkhiprison. The latest incident involving the brutal murder of a key member of Hezb-e-Islami came as efforts are underway to release the prisoners of the party under a peace agreement signed with the government in September last year. (KP)