

(1) Mattis Visits ...

will find nothing out of line with India and the United States' alignment in the same fight," Mattis said.

Mattis' trip threatens to be overshadowed by the tensions on the Korean peninsula, where North Korea has threatened to conduct an atmospheric hydrogen bomb test over the Pacific Ocean.

"This would be a shocking display of irresponsibility toward global health, toward stability, toward non-proliferation," Mattis said.

President Trump last week threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea - escalating the standoff over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs.

Not a slight to Pakistan

But most of Mattis' trip is expected to focus on South Asia.

Mattis does not plan to visit Pakistan during his trip. But U.S. officials deny that is meant as a slight to Islamabad.

"The relationship we are building with India is not to the exclusion of other countries," said Mattis.

But many in Islamabad still object to any Indian involvement in Afghanistan.

"We don't foresee any military or political role for India in Afghanistan," Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said last week. "I think it will just complicate the situation."

Nonetheless, India is cautiously moving forward, agreeing earlier this month to provide additional assistance to the Afghan defense forces. The country has already provided more than \$2 billion in economic aid to Afghanistan.

Most of that aid has been on the soft side - such as in the health sector, education, and infrastructure. India has also helped Afghanistan build its new parliament building, for instance.

"We have been very careful and cautious about that, to not involve (India) in the military to the extent they want," Ahmad Shah Katawzai, a senior Afghan diplomat in Washington told VOA. "We want to have friendly relationships with both Pakistan and India."

Support for militants

The U.S. and Afghanistan have long accused Pakistan of supporting certain Afghan militant groups - a criticism now echoed by the Trump administration.

But many fear Islamabad could actually increase its support for the militant groups if India becomes more involved in Afghanistan.

It's a contradiction inherent in the Trump administration's Afghanistan policy, and it will be difficult to resolve, warns Shamil Chaudhary, who worked on South Asia policy at the National Security Council in the Barack Obama administration.

"On the one hand... we want (Pakistan) to end relationships with these militant groups, and on the other hand we want the Indians to do more in Afghanistan, which will trigger the Pakistanis," she says. "That will hurt American efforts in the future, I think."

Expanded US-India ties

During his visit to India, Mattis is also expected to deepen a bilateral military relationship that has grown rapidly in recent years.

In 2016, the U.S. declared India a "Major Defense Partner," a unique label that gave it access to a wider range of U.S. military technologies.

In 2008, U.S.-India defense trade stood at roughly \$1 billion. If current deals being negotiated were to go through, that could increase to nearly \$19 billion.

It isn't clear if any weapons deals would be announced during Mattis' trip, but U.S. officials hope the meetings will help put the "Major Defense Partner" status into practice.

"The relationship between India and the United States has never been stronger, and I think that's pretty much an objective fact," Mattis said.

The partnership has taken on greater importance, especially with China's growing military assertiveness and economic clout. "India, from our perspective, is clearly a pillar of regional stability and security," Mattis said. "We share a common vision for a peaceful and prosperous future in the Indo-Pacific." (Reuters)

(2) Afghanistan Wins its ...

- out of 65 countries.

177 Afghan athletes are participating in 17 sports at the games.

In total, 65 countries are taking part - with Turkmenistan top of the medal list with 211 medals, including 79 gold. (Tolonews)

(3) Appearance of Cabinet ...

Wolesi Jirga Secretary Abdul Qadir Zazai told a press conference the introduction of the ministers-designate had been postponed after Sunday's order from the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.

He said the cabinet picks would be referred to the house next week, after Ashura ceremony. A letter from the ministry said that the issue was delayed due to some technical reasons.

Zazai believed the government might also name ministers-designate of information and culture, foreign affairs and education to fill all 12 vacant portfolios.

A full day of the Wolesi Jirga had been

wasted, he lamented, asking the government not to further delay the process and introduce the cabinet picks as early as possible. (Pajhwok)

(4) Attorney Says ...

said Dadshane's arrest and continued detention was illegal.

"Dadshane's arrest from the first day was against articles 25 and 27 of the constitution and article 199 of the criminal enforcement code. Now as 72 hours have passed since he was jailed, having him in detention is not legitimate according to the law," the head of Herat's Association of Lawyers, Rafi Naderi, said.

Meanwhile civil society activists in the province said a number of institutions looked into Dadshane's case from a political perspective and warned if he was not freed by Tuesday, they will launch a demonstration.

"If he had committed illegal actions, then he would have been introduced to the legal and judicial institutions, but he did not. Civil society organizations will track the issue and if he is not freed, then we will launch a demonstration," Jawad Hamid, a member of a civil society organization said.

Dadshane's family members also said he is not linked to any political party or group, but some people want to treat his case politically.

"My brother's action is rooted in his personal view regarding Hekmatyar's remarks," Dadshane brother, Abdul Samad said.

"I would like to urge the political parties and groups not to sacrifice Dadshane for their political purposes," Sayed Jawid Alavi, his uncle said.

According to the law, Dadshane's case should be have been referred to legal and judicial institutions, but his attorney said despite there being no official complaint against him, he is still in jail. (Tolonews)

(5) India, Afghanistan ...

investment show on September 27 and 28 in New Delhi demonstrates the strong US-India commitment to Afghanistan's future, at the event government and private sector entities will join to announce and create opportunities for cross border business, a win win for all our countries," said US ambassador to Afghanistan Hugo Llorens.

According to Abdullah, some US investors are also expected to participate at the event.

Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) has also welcomed the move and said it was a step forward in furthering the expansion of economic and trade relations between the two nations.

The expansion of cooperation in the carpet industry, the expansion of Afghanistan's exports to Indian markets and investments by Indian investors in the pharmaceutical sector in Afghanistan will be the main topics on the agenda at the meeting between Afghan and Indian officials, the ACCI chief Khan Jan Alokozai said.

"At the trade fair, Afghanistan's products will be displayed including Afghan carpets; we are trying to engage in talks with the private sector in India for further expansion of commercial relations," said Khan Jan Alokozai, deputy head of ACCI. In addition to this, a number of industrialists have said that in order for Afghanistan's exports to reach global markets, it would help if India opened a permanent center for Afghan products to be showcased.

Abdullah will also meet with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Ram Nath Kovind, foreign minister Sushma Swaraj and NSA Ajit Doval among others while in India. (Tolonews)

(6) UK Pledges ...

to implement their plans.

"The UK government has pledged 750 million pounds to our program to support Afghanistan and as an institution I hope we will continue to develop our own programs," Devane added.

Devane also said in December 2016, UK had provided over two million pounds to promote the activities of Feroz Koh Organization, a cultural institution in Kabul.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's acting higher education minister Abdul Latif Roshan said in the past five years the higher education system has undergone positive changes.

"Ministry of higher education made tangible and intangible progress and achievements," said Roshan.

The new promises by the UK government to standardize Afghanistan's higher education system comes amid ongoing complaints by students that the standard of education is poor - despite numerous changes having been made over the past 16 years. (Tolonews)

(7) Ghani Accused ...

the candidates will not be possible on the due date because of some technical issues," said MP Abdul Aadir Zazai.

Some MPs also criticized government for not being ethnically inclusive in terms of nominating cabinet ministers.

"Whenever other ethnicities are concentrated, the one ethnicity is ignored, I think this is not in the interests of the country,"

said one MP.

MPs also accused the government of meddling in the election process.

"The president has already asked individuals working for the election commission to sign blank resignation letters," said Humayoun.

"We want elections not selections," another MP Shekiba Hashimi said.

But government rejects these claims and says commissioners have been selected transparently.

"Members of the election commission have been selected with transparency; the president does not interfere in the election process," said Ghani's deputy spokesman Dawa Khan Menapal.

Government was expected to introduce candidates for the ministries of defense, interior, rural rehabilitation, agriculture, mines, economy, labor, higher education, transport, public works and tribal and borders affairs on Monday. (Tolonews)

(8) US Vows Solid...

we have shared our needs and hope that in the next four years, our air force gets on its own feet," said MoD spokesman Dawlat Waziri.

Currently, the Afghan air force has 120 aircraft, but with the delivery of the new helicopters and planes, the number will eventually total about 400.

"We do not have fighter jets, we need to get equipped with modern technology to control our air space," said former AAF commander Atiqullah Amarkhail.

"Our air force should be provided with the modern methods of training so that they can hit their targets effectively," said military analyst Mohsin Mukhtar.

US officials have said that \$7 billion USD will be spent on the Afghan air force between now and 2021. Just last week, six new Black Hawk helicopters arrived in Kandahar. (Tolonews)

(9) 4 School ...

the school buildings would have 10 classrooms and other facilities, he said, adding the implementation process would be checked for quality control.

Education officials say more than 80 percent of schools in the province are without buildings and that was why teachers were doing their job in rented houses.

The construction of the four buildings would provide 6,000 students with a proper education environment and the department was trying to find funds for the rest of school buildings as well, Lodin said.

More than 50 percent of schools in the restive province are shut due to security problems while many of the rest lack buildings, professional teachers and other facilities. (Pajhwok)

(10) New Peace Body...

peace committees.

Some residents of Ghazni also lambasted the committee's past leadership of doing little to promote peace and reconciliation in the province.

Mohammad Akram, a resident of Ghazni City, said unemployment had forced many youth into joining rebel ranks.

"The money spent on peace process can generate many jobs for the youth by launching a mega development project," he said.

Khalil Hotak, former head of the peace committee, rejected allegations leveled against him and claimed he had worked a lot for peace and reconciliation in Ghazni. He said as many as 20 Taliban men joined the peace process as a result of their continued efforts in Ghazni.

In the past, many government institutions, including the parliament, had accused the HPC of failing to achieve any major breakthrough in reconciliation with the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

(11) Anti-Polio ...

over the past two years, there were concerns children could contract the virus, if left out of the vaccination campaign, Kamawal said.

He added 9,000 children on four districts of the province were still deprived of the polio drops.

Due to security threats, the drive could not be implemented in the Pangaz area of Achin, Oghaz and Papin areas of Haska Mina, Maman Dara area of Achin and Dwa Khuli area of Nazian.

Meanwhile, Information and Culture Director Awrang Samimdad said it was the responsibility of media to present public awareness programmes about the benefits of the anti-polio vaccine. He also called on parents to vaccinate their children.

Tor Payki, a women affairs department worker, also asked mothers to ensure their children administered polio vaccines. (Pajhwok)

(12) Thousands Face ...

department supplied 24,000 liters of water through tankers to these families on a daily basis, Hakimi said. "This process of water supply has prevented these families from migrating to other areas and the supply will continue until rainfall", he said.

Amanullah, a resident of Sharikyar area of Aibak, said their area faced the shortage of potable water due to lack of raining. "Deep wells are not available here because the undergoing water level is very deep

and people cannot dig such wells", he said. He added local residents kept rain water in special ponds and used it for drinking. He said the rural rehabilitation and development department supplied one water tanker in a week to their village, which he said did not meet their requirement.

"Local people purchase 200 liters of water from private tankers against 200 afghanis", he said. The water is supplied to their area from a location about 60 kilometers away. Amanullah asked relevant organs to find a permanent solution to the water shortage in their areas.

The rural rehabilitation and development director said the issue would be shared with relevant organs in Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(13) Peace in Afghanistan...

said a handout.

He said Pakistan rendered great sacrifices to protect the world from terrorism at a cost of human and financial loss. "It is a matter of grave concern that the world community did not realise sacrifices of our nation, armed forces and other law enforcement agencies but unfortunately we are being wrongly accused of promoting terrorism," he added.

"Credit goes to the Pakistan armed forces which cleared the area on our side of Pak-Afghan border in short span of three years through successful operations," he said, adding, "but it is also a fact that US-led fully equipped coalition forces could not achieve any tangible success in Afghanistan in the last more than 16 years." Pakistan has always extended all out support to the world community to bring lasting peace in Afghanistan and will continue to do so, he added.

The chief minister dispelled the impression that religious seminaries were used as a nursery to promote terrorism, adding that these seminaries are spreading peace and promoting education to the most neglected and disadvantage segment of the society and in a way helping the government.

He informed the German ambassador that reforms had been introduced in the religious seminaries. "And the seminaries are imparting modern education enabling students to cope with the challenges of the modern world," he added. (Agencies)

(14) Nangarhar Private ...

goal has been to make profit.

Officials of these institutes claim problems existed in the past have been resolved to some extent.

Students' complaints and demands:

Students of the Spin Ghar private university in one voice complained against high fees and improper learning environment, but expressed different opinions regarding imaginary students and practical studies.

Ilham Khan, a second year medical student at the university, rejected the presence of imaginary students, but his other classmates acknowledged the issue, saying such students only appeared for exams.

Riazuddin Riaz, a journalism student, said before admission students were promised complete practical studies, but then backed out of the promise due to lack of resources.

Khorasan is another private university where students complained about high fees and lack of educational facilities.

Asadullah, an economy faculty student at the university, said many students were unable to submit their fees until final examination for being high. "The university administration fines students who fail to submit their fee and not allow them sit exam."

Al-Taqwa University has two faculties and its students are happy with the teaching process but confirmed imaginary students in the university who only appeared for exams. "These imaginary students are sons of powerful individuals or have strong references."

Habib Ameri, a first year law student, complained against continued absence of teachers and presence of ghost students in the facility.

The Roshan University is known for higher fee. Its medical students pay 30,000 afghanis per semester, highest in Nangarhar. Mohammadullah, economy student of the university, said the administration provided more facilities to medical students then economy and law. They also talked about imaginary students at the university, saying such students belonged to powerful families.

Ayana University, the oldest in Nangarhar, has lost its trust among common people. People complain the Aryana University issues degrees to students against money. One of the students at the university spoke on the condition of anonymity. He said the university's teaching process and as well the attendance of students and teachers was disorganized and even 'imaginary' students also existed there.

Students grumbled the government didn't monitor universities in a persistent and accurate way and as a result, the situation of education at such institutes was deteriorating.

Civil society concerns:

A civil society activist and Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA)'s representative in Nangarhar, Mohammad Hanif Hashimi, told Pajhwok that the public sector uni-

versity could not absorb all students, thus leaving many students with no option but to get admission in private institutes.

However, he expressed concern that private varieties only focused on making profit instead of improving their standard of education.

Afghanistan National Labor and Worker Union president Dr. Liaqat Adil told Pajhwok that besides resolving issues university students faced attention should also be paid to finding jobs for them.

Adil said the number of private higher educational institutes had mushroomed in Nangarhar but they faced problems quality-wise.

He said hiring foreign teachers at private universities in Nangarhar was 'injustice' with talented Afghan young, urging recruitment of local teachers.

Provincial council's observation and criticism:

Dr. Nasar Kamawal, who heads the provincial council's education organizations' monitoring commission, said that higher educational institutes in Nangarhar had many problems in terms of fees and practical education.

He also confirmed ghost students' existence in some of the private institutes, saying Aryana University was notorious for that.

Private students' response:

Officials of the private higher educational institutes in Nangarhar admitted the mentioned issues, but said they have been resolved to a great extent.

Spinghar Higher Education Institute director Dr. Khair Mohammad Momand said fee was charged keeping in view the costs and each student accepted the amount on the day one of their admission and they were satisfied with the fee.

He assured there was no 'imaginary students' in his institute because attendance was checked every day and students with excessive absence were even deprived of exams.

Officials at Alfalah University, which has recently been upgraded to university from a higher education institute, said the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) granted the university status to their institute for best quality.

The university's political science and law faculty head, Abdul Saboor, acknowledged some issues in practical education and training areas, but said quality had been brought to other spheres.

He said for controlling imaginary students' phenomenon a computerized attendance database had been set up and that they charged lower fees compared to others. He said about 500 impoverished students had been exempted from fees.

Khorasan University is famous for heavy fees, but its administration officials said their aim was imparting quality education. The university's public relations head, Bahir Zaland Aurang, said Khorasan was the only private sector university in the east providing bachelor's and master's degree education.

He insisted there was no ghost student registered with them and to prevent such cases, they had developed a database system for transparency in students' attendance.

"Our fee is a little high because we provide better education facilities to students compared to some other universities", he said.

Officials at Al-Taqwa private university said they had been able to overcome their previous problems. (Pajhwok)

(15) Kunduz Residents ..

rein in such elements.

"These people harass schoolgirls, kill civilians and commit robberies and kidnappings. In a word, they do whatever they want, but there is no one stopping them." In particular, the number of armed men has significantly risen in Khanabad district, resulting in problems for the ordinary people.

A dweller of the district, Ahmadullah, said several civilians had been killed by illegal armed men in recent years. "The gunmen force poor people into doing whatever they want."

"We have complained many times about the problem but our voice has fallen on deaf ears," he added. A number of other residents hold similar views. (Pajhwok)

(16) A Dozen Insurgents...

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban's spokesman, in a statement claimed the fighters pushed back government forces attacking them in Qaleebad. One officer was among seven soldiers killed in the clash, he added. The Taliban after overrunning several areas in Aqcha district and in neighboring Khanq district about one month back stormed public uprising forces' posts in Bish Kapa and Qaleebad villages and took control of the villages. (Pajhwok)

(17) Pakistan Positioning...

finance them," said Raziq.

According to him, Pakistan aims to transfer Quetta Council, known as Quetta Shura, to southern Helmand province where Taliban leaders and their families will be based.

Raziq said Pakistan was Afghanistan's enemy and that the public should not expect Pakistan to let the people live in peace. (Tolonews)