

(1) 3 Grant Agreement...

Global Financing Facility (GFF). Chaudhuri noted: "Afghanistan is implementing an ambitious reform program in a context of strong budget pressures imposed by low domestic revenue, though improving, massive security spending and enormous development need."

In this challenging environment, he said, "we remain committed to helping the Government of Afghanistan further improve service delivery to the Afghan people. For example, the new health project will improve health and nutrition services for the entire population of the country in all 34 provinces."

The total support of \$691million consists of three grants:

- \$600 million to the Afghanistan Sehatmandi (Health) Project to increase the utilization and quality of health, nutrition, and family planning services across Afghanistan. IDA will provide \$140 million, while ARTF is expected to provide an additional \$425 million, supplemented by a \$35 million grant from GFF. The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Public Health;

- \$51 million from IDA to the Afghanistan Digital CASA 1 Project to increase access to affordable internet, attract private investors to the sector, and improve the Government's capacity to deliver digital government services, by supporting a regionally integrated digital infrastructure and creating enabling environment. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology will be the implementing agency; and

- \$40 million from IDA to the Modernizing Afghan State Owned Banks Project that aims to strengthen corporate governance and enhance operational efficiency of state owned banks. The project, to be implemented by the Ministry of Finance, will contribute to the modernization, transparency, and efficiency of the three Afghan state-owned banks: New Kabul Bank, Bank Millie Afghan and Pashtany Bank, and will modernize their IT infrastructure and develop sustainable business models to support inclusive growth. (Pajhwok)

(2) China Ready to...

the ministry spokesman, told a press briefing on Monday: "Prime Minister Abbasi's visit to Afghanistan constitutes an important step forward towards improvement of relations."

He said: "We noted the two countries reached many agreements, including on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), advancing the Afghan reconciliation process."

He added China firmly supported re-engagement between the neighbors, hoping high-level contacts would create an enabling environment for peace in Afghanistan.

Also on Monday, Abbasi arrived in China to address the Boao Forum Annual Conference for Asia. The conclave has been organized on the theme of an open and innovative Asia for a world of greater prosperity. (Pajhwok)

(3) Anti-Locust...

10 days ago. They are currently feeding on pastures. He had cultivated 700 kilograms of wheat on 50 acres of rain-fed land. The grasshoppers, if not eliminated, would destroy all his farms, the grower feared, calling for timely action. (Pajhwok)

(4) Aid to Afghans...

Partners Group (DPG). Similarly, UNMAS will receive \$1,000,000 to support demining activities in Badakhshan, Balkh,

Bamyan, Logar, Paktia and Takhar provinces, where many communities remain affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

A total of 1.2 square kilometers of land will be cleared of landmines and ERW, directly benefiting over 7,300 people who reside within one kilometer of contaminated areas.

Indirect beneficiaries are estimated at approximately 23,000. The assistance will contribute to socio-economic development as well as a reduction in civilian casualties.

Likewise, WFP will be get \$1,000,000 for emergency response and the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), WFP will be able to provide life-saving food assistance to more than 7,500 IDPs and returnees and help 920 aid workers and up to 3mt of their cargo to fly to 25 hard-to-reach destinations across the country.

UNHAS is an air transportation service that carries passengers and light cargo for humanitarian and development partners and provides timely medical and security evacuations as required.

Also, WHO will be provided \$500,000 to help underserved and conflict-affected population, as well as returnees from Pakistan and Iran, the statement said. The IOM would receive 1,000,000 to provide multi-purpose cash assistance to more than 2,000 highly vulnerable families returning from Iran.

Japan's contribution will also help facilitate the return of 30 qualified Afghans from Iran, at least 50% of whom are expected to be female, to work in, and transfer their skills to, public and private institutions in Kabul.

Cumulative Japanese assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 amounts to USD 6.57 billion. (Pajhwok)

(5) Etisalat S Lucky...

along with quality focused voice and data services.

'I have never had a car and have used public transportation all my life,' said Fawzia, 'It's like a dream coming true. Now I have a car and can travel at my own preference. Thank you Etisalat for making this possible.'

The car was given away as a part of Etisalat's loyalty program. Customers spending 100Afs or more in a week could stand a chance to enter Etisalat's grand lucky draw and win a car. Etisalat Loyalty Program is Etisalat's way of saying thanks to its customers by providing them with valuable incentives. In it, customers can earn points for using any of Etisalat's services and can redeem them with numerous gift items, pay bills, buy airline tickets or talk-time. (PR)

(6) Paktika Police...

in a number of Paktika districts. However, he did not name the perpetrators.

"We have shared this issue many times with the governor's house, but no solution could be found so far," he said.

He added SarHawza, Gayan, Zirou, Omna, Nika, Gomal and Barmal districts had wide pine nut forests and keeping the trees was responsibility of every Afghan.

But Paktika police spokesman Shah Mahmud Aryan denied the police were complicit in the cutting down of pine nut trees.

"We have tribal agreements in many districts based on which no one including police can cut down pine nut trees," he said. However, he said the issue would be investigated.

Pine nut trees in Paktika, like in many other provinces, are public property but both their protection and collecting harvests is the

responsibility of local people. (Pajhwok)

(7) 14,000 Tourists...

of the Aga Khan Foundation in Badakhshan, said under an agreement with the Ministry of Information, tourist spots in Wakhan, which were neglected during the war, had been rehabilitated.

The Wakhan areas had been rehabilitated to promote tourism in the province, he said, adding guesthouses and modern bathrooms had been established in different parts of the district.

He added: "The Aga Khan Foundation has successfully projected the historical importance of Pamir to the world. Jointly with the Ministry of Culture, we are making efforts to promote tourism in the province."

Siddiqui Lalzad, director of information and culture, told Pajhwok the people of Wakhan and Ishkashim districts had earned about \$200,000 last year, a crucial step toward the growth of the region's economy.

Faiz Mohammad, a resident of Wakhan, said the number of tourists to Pamir had increased. "The services we have provided to them have led to a remarkable income." (Pajhwok)

(8) Ghani Praises...

had declined by 30 percent as well as Baad marriages had She suggested there were 6,700 women's councils in Khost and donor organizations should be encouraged to implement long-term and short-term projects for them to improve their economic situation.

Responding to their suggestions and demands, the president called it "a great news" that hundreds of thousands of girls went to school in Khost and the level of Baad marriages had zeroed, something he described as cultural development.

"We pay special attention for women's economic improvement, the Citizen Charter Program would cover all districts of Khost for projects and women would be given special share," he said.

He said efforts were underway for rehabilitation of pine nuts forests and the nuts' processing as well as walnuts and olive gardens would be also created, a process in which women could participate.

Ghani ordered the higher education minister to pay special attention to provinces where women were given a low share in education scholarships and assess Khost's Sheikh Zayed University for launching post graduation classes. (Pajhwok)

(9) Ghaznis Urge...

conflict in Afghanistan, so the Afghans should know and stop the war", he said.

He said the peace tent in Ghazni would not be removed until lasting peace was ensured in the country.

Shah Mohammad, the High Peace Council (HPC)'s provincial committee head, urged the Taliban to put their weapons on the ground and join with the government.

"I thank Ghazni people for their peace struggling for," he said, asking religious scholars and tribal elders to mount pressure on the Taliban to accept peace.

Governor Abdul Karim Matin said the Taliban had no clear reason for continuing the conflict. "Taliban continue to unleash violence without any reason, I ask them to put the war to an end and reconcile with the government in order to see a secure and developed Afghanistan," he said.

He said the Taliban should meet their demands including for-

eigners' withdrawal, through negotiations.

Similar tents advocating peace have also been erected in Helmand, Kabul, Paktia, Khost, Nimroz, Farah, Kunar, Herat and other provinces. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban's Shadow...

insurgents were killed while planting mines in Gereshk district of Helmand province, six insurgents were killed in Zurmat district of Paktia, four insurgents were killed in Bala Block district of Farah, four were killed in Kohistan district of Faryab and three were killed in Shahjoy district of Zabul province.

During the operations 37 other insurgents were wounded, Radmanish said adding that 25 more were arrested.

No details were given about casualties among security forces.

Taliban has not yet commented about the operations. (Tolo news)

(11) Pashtun Protestors...

FATA regions, participated in Sunday's gathering and chanted the slogan da sang azadi da (what kind of freedom is this).

The protests are also attended by the families of the missing people.

The killing of an aspiring model from the community - which makes up about 15 percent of Pakistan's 207 million population - in January sparked the countrywide protests.

On Sunday, Pashteen led a rally of an estimated 60,000 protesters in Peshawar.

According to RFE/RL's Radio, the mass demonstration took part despite a media blackout in much of the country on reports about the protest. (Pajhwok)

(12) Govt's Laxity...

hospital for treatment."

"But if his wounds are serious, we contact countries we whom we have contracts, if the wound is treatable then we transfer the patient to that country."

About Hussian, he said the loss of both legs might not be treatable, but he could visit the military hospital if he was treatable because he would definitely receive the service. (Pajhwok)

(13) Armed Taliban...

province early Tuesday morning, Nangarhar media office confirmed.

According to a statement issued by the provincial media office, Taliban insurgents entered HazarNaw High School at about 3am local time and set fire to the administration block of the school. Some school documents were destroyed in the fire. However, fire fighters were able to bring the fire under control before it spread to the rest of the school, the statement said.

Pajhwok Afghan News meanwhile reports that education department spokesman Mohammad Asif Shinwari said about 12 insurgents tied up two guards before setting the fire.

Shinwari also called on police to investigate the matter and on tribal elders to help track down and prosecute the culprits.

According to the statement, classes resumed as normal on Tuesday.

The Taliban has not commented on the incident. (Tolo news)

(14) Uzbekistan Cuts...

Special Representative to Afghanistan Ismatilla Irgashev said his country has decided to reduce the electricity prices from the current 8.5 cents a unit to 5 cents a unit.

"Ismatilla Irgashev, Uzbekistan's special envoy to Afghanistan in his meeting with the president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan pledged to reduce the current 8.5 cents electricity price to

5 cents and the new prices will come in to effect from July," the presidential palace said in a statement on Monday.

According to the statement, another 1,000 megawatts of power will come through Uzbekistan's Surkhan region to Baghlan province to Kabul, which will help overcome electricity shortages.

"In recent months, seven provinces across the country were supplied with electricity, in Badghis province, the price of electricity from 35 Afs per kilowatt was reduced to 6 Afs while in Ghazni province, the price of electricity has been reduced by 75.6 percent," the statement said.

"It is important to mention that a 70 megawatt transmission line will be connected to Jalalabad while the actual capacity of the line is about 300 megawatts. To some extent electricity shortages have also been resolved in northern provinces and the logistical process of supplying electricity to the central regions of the country is in the implementation phase," the statement concluded. Meanwhile, officials of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) have welcomed the move by Uzbekistan, saying the process will have a significant impact on electricity prices in the country.

Currently, Afghanistan imports 300 megawatts of electricity from Uzbekistan.

"In the middle of 2018, the price of electricity will be reduced from 7.5 cents to 5 cents and this will enable us to purchase the 300 megawatts of electricity at 5 cents," said DABS spokesman Wahidullah Tawhidi.

Economic commentators have said the decision by Uzbekistan to reduce the electricity prices will also open a new phase of rivalry among power exporters in the region. (Tolo news)

N.Korea FM Makes Rare Moscow Visit amid Diplomatic Thaw

MOSCOW - North Korea's foreign minister held rare talks with his Russian counterpart in Moscow on Tuesday, as Pyongyang moves to improve strained ties with its neighbours.

Ri Yong Ho's visit came ahead of planned nuclear summits between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and the presidents of South Korea and the United States in the coming weeks.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov welcomed Ri to Moscow on Tuesday morning, saying that "Russia is as inclined as ever to develop good neighborly relations with North Korea".

His North Korean counterpart said he hoped for further "development of our relations" in comments translated into Russian.

After the meeting, Lavrov answered questions from journalists alone, saying the ministers "examined in some detail" the nuclear situation on the peninsula.

"The Russian side confirmed that we welcome gradual normalization of the situation, an end to mutual threats and readiness for contact between the two Koreas as well as between North Korea and the US," Lavrov said.

He said that upcoming talks should aim at denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but stipulated that Pyongyang must also receive "cast-iron guarantees" of its security. He added that he had accepted an invitation for a return visit to Pyongyang, without giving a date. Alexander Vorontsov, a specialist on the Koreans from Moscow's Oriental Studies Institute, said it was "particularly important (for Pyongyang) to enlist support, including from Russia, to cover its back" before further summits. (AFP)