

(1) Afghan...

to Pakistan was also discussed. On the issue of transport links, Ghani said that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway line is expected to be complete by February next year. This was a key project for the three countries and when complete will boast an overall length of 400km.

The TAT railway will cost an estimated \$1.5 to 2 billion USD and is being developed as part of the Central Asia Regional Cooperation Program. It is primarily financed by the Asian Development Bank, which has allocated \$350 million to Afghanistan for its section.

Considered an essential trade route, this will go towards further cementing trade between the two countries. Ghani said at the press conference that already, Afghanistan imports over \$1 billion USD worth of goods from Turkmenistan annually.

In line with this, he said both countries encourage fundamental cooperation between stakeholders in region.

Berdimuhamedow in turn commented on the day's discussions and said they had been fruitful and good results had emerged. He said Turkmenistan is committed to promises it has made and his country's aim is to further improve cooperation between both countries.

According to him, talks were also held regarding regional security issues and he said together with Afghanistan, his country will fight drug smuggling and terrorism.

He emphasized that Turkmenistan was "committed to helping Afghanistan secure peace and stability" and that his country was ready to assist in negotiations if needed - "as an impartial country", he added.

Berdimuhamedow also stated that they are ready to help implement the gas pipeline project as well as the railway link.

In conclusion he said that he sees both countries as "friends and brothers" and that he is committed to cooperating with Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(2) Abdullah Meets ...

Ashraf Ghani earlier where he signed a number of agreements of mutual interests.

At least five accords were inked at an event at the Presidential Palace in Kabul, which was attended by high-ranking government officials from both countries.

Addressing a joint press conference after the signing ceremony, Ghani said that he and Berdimuhamedow also discussed numerous issues relating to trade, transit and economic development as well as security issues.

Ghani was clear in his speech that Afghanistan considers Turkmenistan a "brotherly" neighbor. (Tolonews)

(3) Drugs Main....

been some success in that," he argued.

"This is a tough problem to get at, but to simply, you know, work towards some eradication programme -- to burn them to the ground, while that may have an immediate effect, it doesn't necessarily do anything for long-term stability and security for Afghan farmers," Kirby said.

The United States had been and would continue to be focused on trying to work towards a more secure, more stable, more prosperous Afghanistan, he said. (Pajhwok)

(4) US Praises ...

However, Pakistan has expressed opposition to the creation of a regional body which will oversee the economic and security situation in Afghanistan.

India would also hope for the various ethnic divisions of Af-

ghanistan to cooperate with each other to ensure sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

US secretary of state, John Kerry called on China and other countries to play effective role in development of Afghanistan like India.

"Afghanistan has its good neighboring countries such as; India and China. I think anyone in the international community can benefit from a stable, secure and successful Afghanistan," Kerry said.

Earlier, Chinese President Xi Jinping considered President Ashraf Ghani as an old friend of the Chinese people with whom China prepared to work towards "a new era of co-operation," and "to take development to a new depth."

Despite China's concerns that a deteriorating security situation could threaten greater investment, it agreed to give Afghanistan \$327 million in aid over the next three years - \$81.8 million in 2014 and the remaining sum between 2015-2017.

More significantly, China also agreed to act as a mediator between Afghanistan and Pakistan while Ghani pledged to help China fight its own Islamic militants.

China is interested in playing a larger role in Afghanistan, long seen as primarily a U.S. responsibility after its 2001 invasion.

China's Afghan policy is now feeling the pressure emanating from the withdrawal of western troops and Taliban surge threatening to give a boost to Islamist militancy in China's western Xinjiang region.

US Secretary of State once again condemned the recent deadly attacks in Afghanistan; renewing support form Afghan-Taliban reconciliation process. (ATN)

(5) Dostum in

Dostum has however waited for days to get permission from the National Security Council - chaired by the president - to move into Kunduz.

"I want to congratulate the people in the north for getting rid of insurgents," Dostum said, stressing that "if the president and the National Security Council allows me, I will save the people of Kunduz from the current situation they are facing."

Scores of Taliban and foreign militants were killed in the anti-insurgent operation in Faryab. Initially, Dostum's visit to Faryab was criticized with many people having accused him of building militia groups in the north. However, he has since developed rising support as people, the youth in particular, have taken to social media in support of him, saying he is patriotic and a good anti-Taliban leader. (Tolonews)

(6) President Stresses ...

Kabul residents be taken on board on each developmental initiative, he said, adding that people should be briefed on all stages of uplift schemes. Successful development strategies should be implemented and lessons learnt from failed models. Ministers of public welfare, urban development and transport, their deputies, acting mayor of Kabul, UN-Habitat representative and other officials attended the meeting. (Pajhwok)

(7) Attack on

threats of varying natures. In a statement released by European Union Special Representative (EUSR) on Thursday, Mellbin said: "Freedom of the Media is key to any democracy."

Of the total 39 cases, 28 cases of threat and violence against journalists were caused by government officials making the government responsible for 72% of the cases of threat and violence against journalists.

Taliban account for 12%, unidentified persons are responsi-

ble for 3% and local powerful individuals have been involved in 3% of these cases.

Even if the actual number of cases has decreased by approximately 10 cases, the current percentage rate of violence exercised by government officials is record high since AJSC began reporting three years ago.

"It is alarming that the government is responsible for 72 % of all cases. The government should do its utmost to bring perpetrators of threats, attacks and killing of Journalist to justice. Attacks on the media must be stopped", said Ambassador Mellbin. (Pajhwok)

(8) ANSF Conduct

of Astana Baba area of Sheren Tagab district of Faryab province.

Sheren Tagab district governor Loqman Gahrik said that Astana Baba area once again collapsed to the Taliban on Wednesday.

According to officials the area was cleared of insurgents in an operation led by first Vice-President General Abdul Rashid Dostum in which more than 80 villages were cleared, 50 Taliban were killed, four were arrested and more than a hundred joined the government's peace process.

The district governor said Thursday that after Dostum left for Sar-e-Pul on Wednesday the Taliban used the opportunity to carry out attacks and re-captured most parts of the Astana Baba area of Shiren Tagab district.

According to the district governor more than 50 local policemen disappeared after the Taliban attack.

Meanwhile in another operation, Afghan troops have retaken Kohistanat district of Sar-e-Pul province.

According to the Ministry of Defense (MoD) the district has been cleared of insurgents by Afghan

There are no reports on casualties yet. (Tolonews)

(9) Council of....

interference in Afghan affairs by neighboring countries and said that most of the security issues stem from outside the country.

The party members said that they will support the peace process and will not allow any group to make Afghanistan a safe haven for terrorists.

"The party supports, and will defend, the peace process and the party will not allow Afghanistan to be a safe haven for terrorists," Khalili said.

The party called on anti-government groups to join the peace process.

"We call on Afghan Taliban to stop destroying their 'house'," said Qazi Amin Weqad one of the party members said.

In addition, Ahmad Zia Masoud, special envoy to Ghani, who was also present, says today was a historic moment in Afghan politics - where different role players came together to find solutions.

"Despite problems the country has seen development and Afghanistan has made some achievements," Massoud said.

According to him it is usual for political parties to come together during a crisis in order to find solutions for their country. Massoud went on to say that nepotism is rife in the country and even political parties are formed on the back of it.

"We should weaken the tribal axis but strengthen the national axis as any tribal government does not have good consequences," Massoud said. (Tolonews)

(10) Maidan Wardak....

province and urged him to improve law and order.

The governor assured PC members that he would use all the available resources address all

issues. He mentioned that President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani had given him deadlines to resolve civil, administrative and judicial issues in three months. (Pajhwok)

(11) Ghani Commends...

market access, creating industrial parks, availability of raw materials, setting up vocational schools to modernise the industry important features of cooperation with Turkmenistan. (Pajhwok)

(12) Govt. Responsible...

journalists," Sharifi said. Meanwhile, media supporting agency Nai expressed concerns over what it said was government's restriction on media and called it a threat to the freedom of expression.

"We believe that as each day passes, government imposes new restrictions on the media," Nai director Mujeeb Khelwatar said.

The concerned committee conducts the study twice a year. Its latest study however showed a 43 percent drop in the safety of journalists. (Tolonews)

(13) Afghanistan....

consulate said.

The Salma dam project has been built on Harirod river with the financial support of India where at least \$300 million have been invested.

Salma dam is expected to produce 42 megawatt of electricity and will irrigate around 80 hectares of agricultural land.

India has played a crucial role by participating in the rebuilding of Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.

Since 2002, the Government of India has committed USD 2 billion dollars to the socio-economic rebuilding of the Afghan state and society in accordance with the development priorities of the Government and the people of Afghanistan. (KP)

(14) Mullah Mansoor ...

Omar's son Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob and called the tensions among the Taliban leaders at all-time high.

Dadullah also confirmed that Mullah Omar did not die naturally but was assassinated, confirming the reports suggesting Mullah Omar was mysteriously killed in April 2013 in a hospital in Karachi city of Pakistan.

Mansoor Dadullah is the brother of the former senior Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah who was actively operating in southern Helmand province before he was killed during an operation in Helmand province in 2007. (KP)

(15) "Defensive..."

the group using own resources would defend their areas when needed and was paid no salaries from the government.

Qadis was a peaceful district but the security situation started deteriorating two months ago.

A resident of Boya village and a member of the group, Allah Dad, said they were tired of Taliban attacks. He said the rebels had been preventing local residents from harvesting their crops. Allah Dad said he joined other youth of the village in the defensive group to defend their areas.

He said the groups were created as a result of efforts by the provincial council members. He said the volunteers wielded old guns and urged the government to provide them with latest guns and ammunition.

A member of the same group from Langar Sharif area, Noor Mohammad, said they possessed guns which they had bought during the jihad era and now they used the same guns for defence of their areas. (Pajhwok)

(16) Pak Govt. ...

Jamali told Dawn on Thursday

that interior ministry had some observations over the process that caused the delay. Like registered refugees, the government would not issue Proof of Registration cards to undocumented Afghans, he added.

Officials said that approximately one million Afghans were residing in the country without legal documents. Registration of undocumented Afghan nationals was included in the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's 20 points NAP that was announced on December 25, 2014.

"Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees," said 19th point of NAP, but federal and provincial governments have yet to work out feasible solution to the issue except snap action by the police and other law enforcement agencies.

Majority of these unregistered Afghans have been living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The government planned to obtain accurate data of Afghan nationals through registration. Officials said that around 13,000 unregistered Afghans had been arrested in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after enforcement of NAP and cases were registered against 6,000 Afghans. (Pajhwok)

(17) Taliban

there. A day earlier, Junbish-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan party deputy head Massoud Ahmad Massoud told Pajhwok Afghan News the Dostum-led forces on Tuesday afternoon captured Astana Baba area which served as the Taliban's last stronghold. He said the operation had so far resulted in the capture of 80 villages and the killing of 50 Taliban gunmen. Another four militants were captured alive and nearly 100 others surrendered, he said.

Col. Mohammad Akbar Bashash, the Khwaja Sabz Posh district police chief, said a public uprising commander Fayyaz along with his 80 fighters went to Astana Baba area on 40 motorcycles for security, but Taliban besieged them and killed 20 of them.

About a dozen uprising members, including Fayyaz, were able to flee, but the remaining had been missing since then. (Pajhwok)

(18) Takhar

Mohammad Mir, five days ago. Mir's uncle Abdullah, accompanied by about 200 tribal elders and influential figures from Rustaq and Yangi towns, arrived in the provincial capital to lodge a formal protest with the authorities.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News Maqul's men had gunned down his nephew in the line of duty and in broad daylight. He blasted the government for doing nothing to detain the killers.

"Mir was captured in Sar Rustaq area by the commander's gunmen on his way back to office from the search of a house. He was later shot to death," Abdullah claimed, warning of taking up arms against the killers if the authorities failed to arrest them. They were ready to die but would not spare the killers of his nephew, he said, blaming the commander and his armed loyalists for fuelling anarchy in the district. He assailed the government for being unable to initiate a probe into the murder.

A provincial council member from the district, Ainuddin Rustaqi, accused Maqul's father-in-law -- backed by 300 gunmen -- of killing the attorney. He said they would take their own decision if the commander and his supporters were not disarmed.

He said the provincial government would be responsible for consequences if the people resorted to unilateral action due to its foot-dragging on the sen-

sitive issue.

"Not only Rustaq, six other districts across Kokcha River will plunge into chaos," Abdullah said, adding public representatives were walking a tight rope in establishing the government's writ.

Approached for comments. Maqul told Pajhwok vehemently rejected the allegations as a defamation campaign against him. "If I am a suspect in its eyes, the government should investigate me.

"If found guilty, I'm ready to go to jail," the commander said, insisted the attorney had entered the house illegally that he had been killed by its inmates and their relatives.

Brig. Gen. Noor Mohammad Hakimi, the provincial police chief, told the elders from Rustaq and Yangi the attorney had not been murdered by Maqul. "Let's find the killer, leave alone Maqul. We are trying to ascertain who the murderer is."

But acting Governor Abdul Latif Ibrahimi said Mir was killed in broad daylight and there was strong evidence of who the killer was. A delegation had been dispatched to the area to investigate the incident, he added.

"We haven't put this case on the back burner and will take practical steps to address it after sharing the issue with the central government," the acting governor remarked.

On the other hand, the elders threatened with continued protests if the commander was not detained by Friday. The said the rulers would be accountable for any untoward situation arising from their protests. (Pajhwok)

(19) Taliban Plan....

Kabul's Sarobi district and Nangarhar's Khogyani. Hesarak Operation

Hesarak district lies close to Pakistan's tribal region of Waziristan and is connected to Kabul, Kapisa, Logar provinces and a number of districts in Nangarhar through narrow routes.

It is said insurgents in the district are supplied logistics from Waziristan.

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Naseem Sangin, the 201st Selab Military Corps fourth battalion's commander, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Taliban wanted to have safe havens in Hesarak and from there carry out their attacks into Kabul, Logar, Kapisa and eastern provinces, but we frustrated their designs."

Casualties Exact figures for casualties among security forces during the operation in the Khogyani zone are not known, but the 201 Selab Military Corps commander, Gen. Mohammad Zaman Waziri, said casualties among the Taliban exceeded 200.

Concerns Local officials said residents due to fear had given in control their houses to Taliban insurgents who would attack security forces from these houses.

The Operation Iron Triangular is said to be concluded next week amid concerns that the Taliban would stage a comeback and recapture areas they lost to security forces during the operation once the security forces disappear.

Local problems The Hesarak district chief said besides schools and health clinics all sectors needed assistance. "The population of this district reaches 200,000 people but only 20,000 people have access to healthcare services.

I hope we will be assisted in this regard," Haji Abdul Khaliq sai. (Pajhwok)

(20) UN Experts...

pearance is reported to the authorities and all necessary measures to seek and find the disappeared person and to avoid irreparable harm," the statement noted. (Xinhua)