

(1) Gen. Raheel...

occasions, pledged to help Afghanistan restore peace and security by convincing the Taliban to sit around the negotiation table. However, there is a perception in Afghanistan that Islamabad never delivered on its promises.

"The world witnessed that Osama Bin Laden was killed in Pakistan as well as Mullah Omar. Even Mullah Akhtar Mansour was [allegedly] wounded on Pakistani soil. The world endorsed those terror nurseries and hideouts operating in Pakistan, therefore pressure was mounted on Pakistan at an international level," historian Ghulam Mohammad Mohammadi said.

Pakistan believes that open Afghan borders have provided an opportunity for terrorists to move across the border freely.

Last year 132 incidents were recorded along the border between the two countries and 18 Pakistani soldiers were killed during security incidents along the border.

Sharif's visit comes just days after Pakistan's national security advisor Sartaj Aziz reported that a four member commission comprising representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US will be formed to facilitate the resumption of peace talks. (Tolo News)

(2) Govt. Issues ...

professional investors who have experience of investing in and managing banks in developing economies and who are interested in participating in the privatization of NKB should respond to this advertisement no later than 03:00PM Kabul Time on Thursday 28 January 2016," the announcement states, adding that further information will be provided to qualified investors.

According to the announcement, Key features of NKB are SWIFT and Western Union licenses, More than 100 operating locations, Correspondent banking relationships with major European (EU) and other international banks, IT development and backup center in Dubai, Customer Deposits - approx USD 330 Million and Leading in alternate channels Banking products.

Kabul Bank which was one of Afghanistan's largest private financial institutions was seized by government in 2010 after the exposure of a staggering \$900 million fraud, which led the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to temporarily halt its hundreds of millions of dollars of loans to the country.

Government has managed to collect nearly 60 percent of the outstanding debts from the defaulters and efforts have been made to collect the remaining loans. (KP)

(3) Analysts Slam...

economy and create jobs for the people, statistics show otherwise - with unemployment having seen a sharp increase following the formation of the National Unity Government.

"They are not only the government and private institutions that fire their employees from jobs, but a number of international institutions have also terminated employees and these people have been added to the number of unemployed," chairman of Afghanistan workers department Maroof Qaderi said on Saturday.

However, Ghani entered the election race on the basis of a comprehensive economic reform strategy aimed at alleviating poverty and enhancing economic reforms, but the reality is that none of these commitments have been implemented effectively.

"It is our responsibility to create jobs for the citizens and combat poverty. We have mapped out practical programs in this respect and have committed to implement them and resolve the issue of poverty," Ghani said in a statement during his election campaign.

"In some cases we lost the jobs, but for settlement of the issue we also worked on a number of projects such as implementation of national employment program and launching of TAPI project and projects similar to it," Ali Eftekhari, spokesman for the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) said. Economic analysts meanwhile argue that unemployment has increased to 40 percent in the country over the past year - since the establishment of the National Unity Government.

"Statistics reveal that the unemployment rate was around 25 percent last year - but now this figure has increased to 40 percent which is much higher. This shows the situation is deteriorating," economist Hasibullah Mauhidi said.

The financial crisis that hit the private sector in the country has been recognized as the main reason for thousands of Afghans having lost their jobs over the past year. The crisis has

been largely attributed to the withdrawal of foreign troops and private contractors that supported troops and their military bases.

But employees are laying off staff - with one example being that of those working for Afghanistan Investment Supporting Agency (AISA) and the department of electronic identity cards. An estimated 1,000 people here were made redundant in recent weeks. (Tolnews)

(4) Daudzai Pressures ...

crippling the fight against the Taliban insurgency.

"It was a great mistake to include security forces in the 50/50 formula," he told Reuters in an interview, referring to the power-sharing arrangement under which Ghani has divided key appointments with Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

Under the arrangement, worked out following last year's inconclusive election, appointments are shared out between each side, with key commands often awarded for political loyalty rather than competence.

It is a complaint echoed by many local politicians, who say the patronage system has undermined the fight against the Taliban as it has overrun much of Helmand.

Even when strong commanders are appointed, the system leaves commanders often answering to different political masters, with conflicting priorities, Daudzai said.

"It creates chaos in the chain of command. Nobody knows who's in charge of what or who's responsible, the system should be depoliticised immediately," he said.

The new opposition body, dubbed the Council for Safeguard and Stability, is a disparate group of former ministers and officials in the previous government of Hamid Karzai as well as veterans of the anti-Soviet Mujahideen.

It says it wants the government to hold parliamentary elections and a constitutional council or Loya Jirga next year as well as change in areas including security policy.

Critics say the body is just a platform for former politicians, some accused of corruption, now shut out of power. But Daudzai pointed to last month's rally against the killing of seven members of the Hazara minority as evidence of mounting frustration with the government.

PROTEST IN KABUL

The demonstration, the largest in Kabul for years, was generally peaceful but security forces opened fire at one point as angry protesters scaled the presidential palace walls.

"That day was a wakeup call for all of us," he said. "We want to use these kinds of pressure but it has to be coordinated, otherwise it can become dangerous."

The council denies its aim is to bring down the government but Daudzai, widely believed to have leadership ambitions of his own, said he favoured early presidential elections.

A former ambassador to Pakistan, he opposes Ghani's strategy of including Pakistan in peace talks with the Taliban, saying Islamabad wants to control the insurgency, a common view in Afghanistan that Pakistan denies. "For 10 years we went through Islamabad and it didn't work. Pakistan will never give up its asset, which is most of the Taliban," Daudzi said. "They are playing games."

Instead he says, a small group of Afghans, acceptable to both sides, could start contacts leading ultimately to face-to-face meetings. "But it would be Afghan-brokered," he said. (Reuters)

(5) China Adopts...

support for key regions listed in the country's counter-terrorist plan, whereas professional anti-terrorist forces will be established by public security, national security authorities as well as armed forces. (Xinhua)

(6) Honour,...

women equally or giving them legal or constitutional rights in the deeply conservative Afghan society. In many areas, women are considered second-rate human beings, deprived of their basic rights.

"Most of the issues involving violations of women's rights remain unaddressed and unregistered," notes Mrs. Ahmadi, who explains the cases registered with her department are duly processed and referred to the attorney office.

A woman hailing from Bamyan City, the provincial capital, recently eschewed reporting her problem to the department for fear of an angry response from her spouse and in-laws. She is often roughed up by her husband and deprived of her assets.

The woman complains she cannot even put on her own clothes and ornaments. "At times, my husband comes home, not to meet my day-to-day needs, but to thrash and threaten

me. He never gives me money, saying he is jobless."

A mother of two, she washes clothes of other people or peeling trees in the spring to feed her children. "I'll have no relief even if I complain to the authorities against what is happening to me."

She believes: "Such a step would bring me dishonour and my husband could divorce me; living under such conditions will be more difficult," She calls divorce a stigma for a woman in her area.

Razia, a student of the Education University, hears with a disturbing frequency taunts and jabs from passers-by and boys in their private cars on their way to the university. The individuals involved in such acts do not want women to acquire higher education that can empower them in the long term.

She claims police could not control the embarrassing situation because women and girls do not complain to the authorities concerned. She calls for creating awareness in society that men and women have equal rights and command equal respect.

The Afghanistan Women's Network (AWN) also voices concern at growing discrimination against females. Sughra Attayee, head of the AWN in Bamyan, identifies insecurity as a key issue for women, who are teased on roads, leered at in streets and derided in bazaars.

Local officials should play a proactive role in promoting awareness about women's rights, she stresses, alleging the perpetrators of women's rights violations often go scot-free. The AWN asks the provincial government to address the problems being faced by women. Only five percent of women are working in government departments and 12 percent in NGOs, according to the official, views women's participation in cultural, social, political, economic and security sectors as insufficient.

The increasing graph of violence against women and girls is a big challenge that must be coped with on a priority basis, she says. Eighty-nine cases of violence against women were registered in Bamyan last year, compared with 75 while in the first nine months of the current solar year.

Legal rights manager at the department, Safina Fahimi, says cases of violence registered this year include three murders, two injuries, as many suicides and five rape incidents.

Thirty-one beating, two underage marriage, eight marriage dissolution, one polygamy, one cheating and six insult cases were lodged with the department since March 22 (the beginning of the current solar year). Twenty cases of attempted suicide took place, resulting four deaths.

For instance, she points out, a mother of two, whose husband went to Iran for work, committed suicide through self-immolation this year due to family violence in the Dar-i-Foladi area on the outskirts of Bamyan City. "Her tormentors managed to flee; the incident could not be investigated properly."

Women were murdered with impunity in Waras and Punjab districts, as well as the provincial capital. A woman, who was killed by her brother-in-law (husband's brother) in Punjab, but the killer managed to flee to Iran. AIHRC has recorded 2,600 cases of violence against women, including 190 murders, across the country in the past nine months. Its statistics show 900 of the cases pertain to mental torture, 550 to economic deprivation, 186 to molestation, 70 to physical abuse and the rest to running away from homes and divorce.

AIHRC official Qadia Yazdanparast says 51 killers were arrested while the rest have been at large for a variety of reasons. The government should bring them to justice. Lax law enforcement, adherence to primitive traditions and family pressures keep women from getting justice.

"Currently, women from different parts of the country, not aware of their rights, are being discriminated against. Government officials have been negligent, if not complicit, in crimes against women" she maintains.

Aziza Ahmadi links violence against women to poverty, lack of awareness, forced marriages and unwholesome traditions. But the department is trying to raise awareness, training 45 women each month in each district of the province.

During the 16-day campaign, she visited some of the districts and distributed mobile phone numbers of the department to enable the women to share their problems with the authorities.

Many women have to do hard labour on farms and in animal husbandry, but their revenue line the pockets of male relatives. "As long as they are not empowered economically, they will have to depend on men and con-

tinue to be subjected to violence," she warns.

A member of women's network, Haleema Rezaee, calls inadequate access to justice, cumbersome judicial procedures, abuse of their rights in government departments and NGO and a shortage of female lawyers some of the challenges.

"Even we don't have a female defence lawyer in Bamyan to plead women's cases, because in many cases women could not share their personal issues with male lawyers," she observes.

But the gubernatorial spokesman, Abdul Rahman Ahmadi, affirms the local administration's commitment to protecting women's rights. The governor is personally involved in dealing with gender issues, he says.

Women employees of government departments and NGOs are currently more than 20 percent, with efforts being made to increase their representation, he adds.

In order to control eve-teasing, the security personnel have met several times. But concrete results are yet to come about. Murder cases are being investigated but the process is agonisingly slow, the official admits. (Pajhwok)

(7) NAI Slams...

formation, perhaps, the officials want them to be in touch with the provincial government in order to make sure information released is correct," Hakimi said.

Reacting to NAI claims, officials in both provinces have dismissed the report and termed it baseless.

"We strongly reject the reports which were published in media about restrictions and avoiding of sharing of information with media. We have asked our employees not to give out information this is not approved as this can create problems. Our local institutions are free to share their achievements with media. We strongly believe in freedom of speech, freedom of press, domestic and international media and appreciate their contributions for informing the people," a spokesman for Bamyan's governor said.

According to the Daikundi governor, the order has been misinterpreted in the media. She said the provincial government strongly rejects censorship and restrictions on media.

However, NAI argues that the information which is provided by local governments is filtered and there is no need to coordinate it with the governors.

Freedom of expression is considered one of the major achievements made by the newly democratic system in Afghanistan after the downfall of the Taliban regime in 2001. (Tolnews)

(8) Modi Visit...

also wants to stabilize the relationship between India and Pakistan because if tensions between Pakistan and India settle down, Pakistan army will be able to pay more attention to the Afghan border and also to the tribal areas of Pakistan where they are fighting terrorism.

"So Pakistan army is not opposed to improvement of relations with India; however they want some positive, tangible outcomes and concrete advancement in the relationship with India rather than meetings of the top leadership from time to time," he said.

Dr Hasan Askari Rizvi believes that Indian prime minister's surprise visit to Pakistan will help improve the environment to reduce decades of tensions between the two countries.

He said the visit can also facilitate the holding of dialogue that is likely to start in January between the two neighbors.

"The visit will not necessarily guarantee that the dialogue will produce positive results, but it gives the hope that they will discuss the issues and try to resolve some, if not all problems," he said.

The professor said that some countries have been strongly advising India and Pakistan to start dialog to resolve their differences.

"The US, UK and even Russia were advising both countries because their concern is that both are nuclear powers and both are making smaller nuclear weapons, therefore there was a concern that if this confrontation continues, it may have dangerous consequences," he said. (IRNA)

(9) 400 Drug...

"This move has been taken to round up drug addicts and move them to the treatment center," said Salamati Azimi, Counter Narcotics Minister. The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Nasrin Oryakhel, meanwhile said vocational training will also be provided to the addicts.

"It is important to pay serious attention to drug addicts. The center will provide vocational training to drug addicts in order to help them return

to their normal lives soon," she said. Officials said the process of rounding up drug addicts will continue for another week. (Tolnews)

(10) Kabul to Host...

Iran exported final products such as construction materials, food and household goods while at the moment these items have been replaced with raw materials since Afghanistan is undertaking small investments in industries. (Agencies)

(11) Kunduz Still...

security forces are highly motivated." He said the security forces are doing everything in their power to eliminate the insurgents and that troops are conducting house-to-house searches. Another military commander, Muslim, said: "We are now at the Miskeen Abad area of Dasht-e-Archi which previously was the Taliban's recruitment center. Our operation is moving well and we want to eliminate the remaining Taliban."

Residents however told of the hardships that they have to endure.

"We are bewildered. We don't know that what will happen in a month and we don't have food," a resident of Dasht-e-Archi said.

Another resident said: "I already buried seven bodies in my home." (Tolnews)

(12) Afghan Militia...

increasingly brutal violence of the fight between Islamic State and rival groups, ranging from local militias to the Taliban.

Islamic State has made inroads in several districts of the province as they try to build strength and replace the hardline Taliban insurgents.

Dozens of members of a local militia force loyal to Haji Zahir, deputy speaker of parliament, have been battling both Taliban and Islamic State militants in the district for weeks.

Islamic State militants first captured four fighters from the militia, known as Pasoon or "Uprising"

"Do you think if they behead you, you cook them sweets?" Zahir asked. AtaullahKhozani, spokesman for the provincial governor said Afghan government forces were not involved in the incident, adding that the incident is being investigated.

In a sign of the growing reach of Islamic State, militants have taken to the airwaves in a radio show called "Voice of the Caliphate" in Nangarhar to win recruits among young Afghans.

Last week, local authorities said they had blocked the broadcast but Zahir said the 90-minute daily Pashto language broadcast was still operational. Islamic State is relatively a new force in Afghanistan and there is some dispute about how strong it is, how many members it commands and how closely they are linked operationally to the movement's main arm in Iraq and Syria.

Last week, the commander of international forces in the country, U.S. General John Campbell, said there were between 1,000 to 3,000 members of the movement in Afghanistan and he said its influence would spread if left unchecked. (Reuters)

(13) Afghanistan...

national (ODI) series consisting of five matches.

According to reports, the latest ranking by ICC was released following the conclusion of the first ODI between New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

Afghanistan were at 12 in the ODI rankings of the International Cricket Council whereas Zimbabwe were at the 10th spot.

Afghan bowlers Amir Hamza and Mohammad Nabi along with the Afghan batsman Noor Ali Zadran were the top performers for Afghanistan in the first match of series.

Hamza picked up four wickets but Nabi's loopy offspin yielded two scalps, including Chigumbura's which broke Zimbabwe's spine, putting them into a difficult situation.

Noor Ali Zadran's 63 proved to be gold dust as the opening ODI match was a low scoring game with Afghanistan setting a target of 132 runs by losing all their wickets. (Tolo News)

(14) 40 Development...

sectors such as transport, water and sanitation, irrigation, power, livelihoods, education, etc while the work of another 686 is currently in progress in various communities. (PR)

(15) Security...

Ported on Sunday the killing 10 armed militants in different provinces of the conflict-hit country over the past 24 hours.

"Units of national security forces conducted several anti-terror operations in Faryab, Sar-e-Pul, Khost, Ghazni, Herat, Zabul and Helmand provinces over the past 24 hours, and as a result, 10 armed insurgents have been killed, eight wounded and six others made

captive," the ministry said in a statement.

During the operations, a good quantity of arms and ammunitions including explosive materials have also been found, said the statement which provides daily operational updates.

Bu the ministry did not mention possible casualties inflicted on the government security forces. (Xinhua)

(16) UN Syria...

national unity government, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem said on Thursday during a visit to Beijing.

Saudi Arabia hosted a conference earlier this month to try to create an opposition bloc. The summit agreed to set up a 34-member secretariat to supervise peace talks, and that committee will also select the opposition negotiating team.

The civil war was sparked by a Syrian government crackdown on a pro-democracy movement in early 2011. Islamic State militants have used the chaos to seize territory in Syria and Iraq, and some 4.3 million Syrians have fled the country.

"The people of Syria have suffered enough," the U.N. statement said.

The Security Council resolution also called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to draw up within a month options for monitoring a ceasefire in Syria.

The United Nations is mulling "light touch" options for monitoring a possible ceasefire in Syria that would keep its risks to a minimum by relying largely on Syrians already on the ground, diplomatic sources have said. (Reuters)

(17) Ukraine...

divided over the blue and white shrine where they worship. The parish belongs to the Moscow-backed Church but an informal local referendum last year showed that a majority of villagers wanted it to come under control of the Kiev Patriarchate. (AFP)

(18) Israel Rejects...

willing to compromise on other issues at hand once they get assurances on the borders of the Palestinian state. In response to this report, an Israeli official, who wished to remain anonymous as he was not at liberty to discuss the issue with reporters, denied the report. "Israel is willing to resume to the negotiations table without preconditions," the official said, reiterating a sentiment made public several times recently by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He added that Shalom and Erekat did meet but denied the allegations that Israel refused to restart negotiations. (Xinhua)

(19) Russia Says...

Moscow's main Middle East ally, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, defeat Islamic State and other militant groups. Bondarev also said that the supply of Russian surface-to-air S-400 system to Syria had helped to "set the (Syrian) air space in order."

A new message purporting to come from the leader of Islamic State said on Saturday air strikes by Russia and a U.S.-led coalition had failed to weaken the group.

The United Nations currently aims to bring together Syria's warring parties on Jan. 25 in Geneva to begin talks to try to end nearly five years of civil war. (Reuters)

(20) Iran Following...

the original \$1.7 billion held in bank accounts. "This case is being followed by the Office of the President and Ministry of Foreign Affairs which we hope we will get it to a conclusion," he told reporters in Tehran on the sidelines of a forum on Islamic finance.

In 2012, President Barack Obama issued an executive order blocking all of Bank Markazi's assets held in the US in order to prevent Tehran from repatriating them. (PressTV)

(21) More than...

driven from their homes and at least one person has died in a flood-related incident, according to reports. The Argentinean Ministry of Defense said the military was helping to distribute daily food rations to communities isolated by the flooding.

Argentinean President Mauricio Macri, who took office earlier this month, also toured the worst-hit areas on Saturday. (Xinhua)

(22) Iraqi Forces...

seized the nearby houses, including the house and outbuildings of Sheikh Majid al-Salman, the prominent leader of the powerful Sunni tribe of Dulaim, the source said, adding that the troops are fighting to advance further to government building.

The battles killed at least 16 IS militants while three security members were killed and eight others injured, the source said. (Xinhua)