

(1) NUG Leaders...

Leaders of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are completely prepared in bringing reformations to the electoral organizations," Danish said. "Talks of disagreements between the NUG leaders on reformations in the election organizations are untrue."

While at the conference, Deputy Chief Executive Mohammad Mohaqiq said that adjustments will be brought to the electoral law and reformations will be made in the election commissions.

"There is animus in the government about the electoral reforms," Mohaqiq said. "Last time I met with the Chief Executive I was told that serious reformations will be brought to the electoral commissions and law."

The challenges dealt and seen during the presidential elections have raised concerns for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Several civil society and electoral monitoring organizations believe that the challenges faced during the presidential elections have cost the credibility of the not only the elections, but the election bodies and law.

Recent change brought on the election law was last Wednesday by the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) who approved amending four articles in the election law. (Tolonews)

(2) Amendments to ...

the statement said. Under Article 139 of the Constitution, the councils are not empowered to oversee the departments.

The article says: "The provincial council takes part in securing developmental targets of the state and improving its affairs in a way stated in the law, and gives advice on important issues falling within the domain of the province..." (Pajhwok)

(3) Germany Builds...

Deputy provincial governor Akhtar Mohammad Khairzada said "'Today we witness a very important moment for the development of Samangan. The power grid will supply more than 100,000 people with electricity."

The German Development Commissioner in Afghanistan, Dr. Martin Schuldes, underlined that "In urban, suburban and rural centres, technically reliable access to a transmission and distribution network is essential for steady economic and social development."

Once the municipal networks in Aybak and Pir Nagchir are operational, they will be run and maintained by the Samangan business unit of Afghanistan's power supply company, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat's (DABS), according to a statement by German Cooperation.

The statement further added upon completion of the project, households in both municipalities will be able to apply for a connection and get access to electricity from DABS.

The cost for the construction of the two grids and network investment will amount to AFN 743 million which is equivalent to \$13 million and is financed by the German Government through the KfW Development Bank, the statement added.

The investment is part of Germany's North Eastern Power System (NEPS) programme to support construction of a modern transmission and distribution infrastructure in the provinces of Balkh, Samangan and Baghlan. The energy sector and with it the improvement of the distribution infrastructure is a priority for Afghan-German Development Cooperation

According to the German Cooperation, for the city of Aybak the construction measures include the installation of a feeder link from the existing substation into the city, the construction of a medium and low-voltage distribution network and installation of 85 pole-mounted transformers and three transformer substations in the municipal borders. To provide electricity for the town of Pir Nagchir, a 40km long 20kV transmission line will be installed from the sub-station in Kholm to Pir Nagchir, as well as 40 transformers and 400 volt city grid distribution line covering an distance of 27 km.

At the opening ceremony, the deputy provincial governor Akhtar Mohammad Khairzada and Martin Schuldes were joined by the Director of DABS in Samangan, Engineer Mehrabuddin, Dr. Martin Knoll of the KfW Development Bank, Mr. Dirk Drewes from the German engineering firm Fichtner

and representatives of the construction company TGEM. (KP)

(4) 7 Cabinet Ministers...

present, 154 voted for spymaster Rahmatullah Nabil. Previously, he served as acting intelligence chief. Interior Minister Noorul Haq Ulumi bagged 131 votes, Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi 128 and Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani 151. As many as 170 ballots were cast in favour of Public Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz, who was highest vote winner. Minister of Refugee Affairs Syed Hussain Alami Balkhi bagged 134 votes.

Minister of mines Daud Shah Saba received 146 votes. Among the 24 cabinet candidates, 18 were allowed to explain their priorities to the Wolesi Jirga and the rest were barred from speaking for having dual nationality.

On Sunday noon, Ghani administered the oath of office to the eight successful nominees at the Presidential Palace in Kabul.

The ministers and the intelligence head vowed to protect Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity in all their actions. They also pledged honesty in the performance of their duties.

After the swearing-in ceremony, Ghani and Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah greeted the cabinet ministers, hoping they would do their best to serve the people of Afghanistan.

Second Vice-President Mohammad Sarwar Danish, the president's special representative on reform and good governance Ahmad Zia Massoud and Deputy Chief Executive Mohammad Khan were also present. (Pajhwok)

(5) Islamabad, Kabul ...

addressing a passing-out parade of the first batch of the Counter-Terrorism Force (CTF) at the Elite Police Training School.

All state institutions were determined to win the ongoing war against terrorism at any cost as Pakistan's economic and social survival was linked to it, the prime minister said.

Senior officials including the army chief, the interior minister, military commanders and diplomats of different countries attended the graduation ceremony. (Pajhwok)

(6) Provincial Councils' ...

councils (PCs) have closed their offices in protest.

IDLG spokesman Tawab Ghorzang told Pajhwok Afghan News President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, during an overnight meeting with IDLG officials, ordered a review of provincial councils' supervisory discretion.

He quoted the president as saying the amendments PCs would be referred to the parliament for approval. The IDLG acting head says the new proposals would be defined clearly.

"There was no clear definition of the provincial council's role in evaluating local governance in the past; we would define in a way to better respond to people's problems and improve transparency," Ghorzang said.

Pending the task of floating their suggestions, the spokesman urged provincial councils to reopen their offices and hear people's problems. (Pajhwok)

(7) Public Support...

leading religious figure, said it was a moment of pride for them that the country ultimately had rebuilt its security forces to foil the nefarious designs of the enemy.

Afghan forces had taken responsibility from foreign forces, he said, adding the nation should fully back their forces in ensuring better security, he said, asking militants to shun violence.

Haji Atta Mohammad, head of provincial peace council, called upon religious scholars to advise officials and that they had been playing a highly significant role in reconstructing the country. (Pajhwok)

(8) Review Your

moderation and advocates for temperance, while discouraging violence. The Muslims did not submit to injustice, he added.

"Over the past three decades, Islam has been denigrated because of our own extremism and radicalism that was used by others. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have been killed. This extremism in many Islamic countries has backfired."

He added extremism, which stemmed from the Muslims, facilitated the achievement of major international powers' goals, causing disunity in the Islamic world, he

regretted. Karzai maintained the insurgency was used as a vehicle of colonisation and exploitation over the centuries. "All of us must strive to show the world the real face of Islam and thereby come out of our plight."

The former president added: "Yesterday, the Islamic state claimed killing a Japanese reporter; we condemn the murder and stand firmly with the people of Japan. At the same time, we also condemn acts of violence by some Western countries against Muslims."

Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdullah told the participants: "This centre was established during Hamid Karzai's rule. I praise your mild style of politics and governance." (Pajhwok)

(9) Calls for Electoral ...

steps toward reform, let alone bring about fundamental changes. According to a spokesman for Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, the main reason behind the delay in reform is disagreement between the two leaders of the government, Abdullah and President Ashraf Ghani.

"There have been disagreements over reform details," said Mujeeb Rahman Rahimi, a spokesman for the Chief Executive. "Regarding the creation of an electoral reform commission, the president's opinion was that the commission should be created after the announcement of the cabinet, but our preference was to create it after the inauguration and it should have started its work and should not have been related to the cabinet."

Calls for reform have grown in volume in recent months as MPs and civil society activists criticize the government for not taking action on the issue that defined the climate of political crisis it emerged from at the end of the election process last year. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) and Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) were both alleged by Abdullah during the election to have conspired in favor of his opponent to win the race illegitimately.

"The way commissioners are hired, how the chairman is hired, deputies and secretary of commission, membership requirements, how the chairman and his deputies are selected, electoral commissions' employees and all the same changes will be brought to the Electoral Complaints Commission," vowed Muhammad Abda, the Chairman of Judicial Commission at the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, donor countries have expressed the desire to see concerted electoral reform before assuring future financial aid. When the election crisis reached its peak, the U.S. and the United Nations were forced to step in and mediate negotiations between Ghani and Abdullah.

"With these people, and this system and capacity in the electoral commissions, it is very hard to expect a transparent and better elections in 2015," Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan Chairman Muhammad Naeem Ayoubzada said.

With parliamentary elections around the corner, many are worried the experience of last year's selections will deter Afghans from participation and open the door for larger scale fraud. (Tolonews)

(10) Finland Provide...

literacy training in two years with Finland's assistance. Maki promised his country would continue assisting Afghanistan in education and other sectors of the economy. (Pajhwok)

(11) War-Displaced ...

on the outskirts of the Baharak district centre in tents. He said the aid from government and foreign organisations had been insufficient and could not solve the problems of the families.

"I have urged governmental organs and charities several times to deliver enough assistance, but none of them has paid any attention to my requests," Mujaddedi lamented.

Some of the displaced people said they could not go back to their homes due to threats from the Taliban. "If we return, the militants would kill us on the flimsy pretext of supporting the government," said Abdul Wakil from Khastak village.

He added the presence of Afghan and foreign militants in the district prevented them from returning to their homes. In Juram and Warduj, dozens of rebels and security forces have been killed or wounded.

Provincial police chief Gen. Baba Jan claimed more than a hundred foreign militants including Uzbekis, Tajiks and Chechens had sneaked into the province, where they trained Afghan militants in making bombs and using weapons.

Some three months back, 29 foreigners, including women and children, were detained by police soon after they entered Badakhshan. Afghan air force recently killed three foreign nationals including two Tajiks and a Chechen in Juram.

Security officials have said clearing operation were underway to eliminate rebels and pave the ground for the displaced families' return. An official of the refugee department, Wajihullah, said 420 families had been driven from Argo, 242 from Juram, 51 from Yaftal, 106 from Warduj and 60 families from other parts due to insecurity. Another 71 families have been displaced by natural disasters. He acknowledged the affected families had been faced with a variety of problems, including homelessness and lack of food. But Abdullah Faez, head of the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) for Badakhshan, said that they had recently distributed food items and winter clothing to 140 displaced families.

He added the food aid included rice, cooking oil, sugar and beans. The warm clothes included blankets, shawls and carpets worth 2 million afghanis. The families had been displaced from Jurm and Warduj to Ishkashim and Baharak. Meanwhile, legal director to the refugee department said around 900 families had been displaced across province this year. Food items, clothes and cash were distributed to the households by UN-HCR.

He said each family received 147 kilograms of flour, three cans of cooking oil, 17 20 boxes of cookies, six blankets, water, soap and 3,450 afghanis in cash.

Some of the displaced people said they had lost their homes to war and militancy and did not have a proper place to live in.

Mohammad Kabir, a representative of 45 families from the Ghachan village of Warduj district, said: "We need shelter on an emergency basis. Many of the displaced households are living with relatives."

He acknowledged that government provided land plots to some of the affected people and NGOs had built homes for them. But shelter-related problems are yet to be resolved.

Jahidullah verified that 70 war-hit families had been provided homes, having two rooms and a bathroom and a living room. The cost of each house is \$1,400. (Pajhwok)

(12) Distribution of ... extended to President Ashraf Ghani to kick off the process. He did not give the exact date for beginning the cards process but said the people of capital Kabul would get their cards in the first phase. Habibi said that EICDA has the capacity to distribute 2,000 cards on daily basis.

He said the distribution of computerized cards would help prevent rigging in future the ballots. He informed the fresh cards could not be used in the parliamentary election as there was need for five to seven years to cover the entire population.

Earlier, officials of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) demanded distribution of electronic cards to ensure free and transparent elections. (Pajhwok)

(13) Wardak PC ... protest will continue until the law is amended in provincial councils' favour," Sharifullah said, adding if the president wants to eliminate corruption in local government then the councils should be granted the right to oversee the local departments.

Provincial councils in 22 provinces have so far closed their offices in protest to the lower house decision.

However, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) based on a presidential decree, today confirmed starting work on draft amendments to the law on provincial councils' role. (Pajhwok)

(14) Projects worth... irrigate 3,600 hectares of land, benefiting 10,000 families.

In addition, some culverts and streams were also constructed to facilitate farmers irrigating their lands. The World Bank-funded projects were completed in two

years. Rahmatullah, a resident of Surkh Marghah locality, expressed satisfaction with the completion of the schemes, saying their long-standing demand had been met. (Pajhwok)

(15) Bamyan Election...

election process, he admitted, remarking that holding free and fair election in such circumstances was a pipedream.

In addition, the people of Bamyan came out in large numbers and cast their votes. Around 174,000 voters, including 74,000 women, took part in last year's presidential election, he recalled.

He said 188 polling stations and 951 polling centres had been set up and the turnout in Bamyan was remarkable in last year's provincial and presidential elections.

People, he said, were politically mature and understood the importance of elections but they needed awareness training courses.

The spillover of militancy from Parwan, Baghlan and Maidan Wardak provinces had contributed to insecurity in Bamyan, he claimed, stressed an improved environment for future elections. (Pajhwok)

(16) Hundreds...

against the constitution, adding that in the past Provincial Councils were monitoring government activities based on a decree by the previous President.

She said Provincial Council members have used this right for their personal interests.

In the meantime, Tawab Ghorzang, spokesman for the Independent Directorate of Local Governance says they have received instructions from President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and currently working on plans for coming up with solutions for this problem.

He asked Provincials Council to open their offices and continue to work as they are working on the issue. (KP)

(17) Sacriligious ...

Muslims do not reciprocate insult with insult.

In January, the French satirical magazine once again published a sacrilegious cartoon of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), only a week after gunmen murdered eight journalists and four others at its offices in Paris.

The move has hurt the sentiments of over a billion Muslims throughout the world and caused angry protests in many world states.

The Iranian foreign ministry deplored the publication of the blasphemous cartoon, describing it as a "provocative" and "insulting" move.

Afkham underscored that it was not enough for the western governments to admit to their wrong policies, and they needed to adopt correct decisions which serve the interests of the followers of all religions and nations. (FNA)

(18) 148 Criminals...

were held in connection with murder and robbery.

As many as 22 AK47s, 14 pistols and other communication were seized from the suspects. (Pajhwok)

(19) Pakistan May...

authorities already renewed Proof of Registration (PoR) cards of 1.6 million Afghan refugees and thereby legalised their stay in Pakistan until December 2015.

But authorities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where most of the refugees are living, believe that establishing new camps near the border was not feasible. (Pajhwok)

(20) 13 Insurgents ...

claimed Afghan forces remained unhurt during the operation. Two dreaded militant commanders, who led anti-state activities, were among the dead, the military spokesman added.

But Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi did not speak on the Sangin fight. He said six Afghan security forces were killed and five others wounded in a mine blast in the district. (Pajhwok)

(21) Three Foreign ...

officials said on Sunday. However, the Taliban insurgents have not yet commented about the air strike.

The Afghan security forces have recently increased clearing operations across the country to clear the areas of insurgents after taking over full security responsibility of the country from foreign troops. (Tolonews)

(22) 70 More...

checking at checkpoints.

The federal government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa set a deadline for the expulsion of Afghan refugees on 20th December last year. (KP)

(23) A Group of ...

policeman in Lashkargah last week, Maj. Gen. Nabi Jan Malakhel, police chief, told journalists. The targeted killers, he said had been working under Maulvi Wafa who entrusted them the task of target killing of leading officials and individuals. The killers in reward were given 500,000 by their mentor, Wafa.

Elsewhere in southern Ghazni, the spokesman of the 203rd Thunder Military Corps said that five militants were killed in security forces operation in Kadikhel locality of Andar district while the offensive was underway in a number of areas of the province.

Nazifullah Sultani said that military operations to purge Andar, Khogyani, Maqur, Dehyak and Gilan districts of insurgents had been underway. (Pajhwok)

(24) NDS Seizes...

infrastructure affairs head. But despite repeated attempts, Pajhwok could not reach the district police chief and infrastructures affairs official for comments.

After initial investigations, the items were return to the Maidan Wardak police headquarters. (Pajhwok)

(25) British ...

that Muslims were "inherently apart from British society".

Around five percent of people in England and Wales are Muslim, according to a 2011 census, and there are around 1,700 mosques across Britain. (AFP)

(26) Death Toll ...

for a revision of a ceasefire plan agreed in Minsk last September. The terms of that 12-point protocol have been repeatedly violated but Kiev and foreign governments see it as the only viable roadmap to end the nine-month-long conflict in which more than 5,000 people have been killed.

In eastern Ukraine, the Kiev military reported no let-up in rebel attacks on government positions. Clashes are intense around the town of Debaltseve, Polyovyov said, referring to a Kiev-held transport hub connecting the two main rebel strongholds that separatists aim to cut off.

Residents are being encouraged to abandon the areas of fiercest fighting, where many have been living in makeshift bomb shelters, waiting for breaks in the bombardment to make quick trips for food and water.

In Kiev-controlled Slaviansk, refugees arrived in buses from Debaltseve and other frontline towns. Pensioner Vyacheslav Gurov said half of his town of Avdiivka had been completely destroyed.

"We don't even know who's shooting. Both the rebels and the national guard are at it ... there's no water, no electricity, no heating, nothing," he said.

Following the collapse of Saturday's talks, there was no word on when renewed negotiations might take place. (Reuters)

(27) Officials Meet to...

Ukraine had warned airlines flying over its territory to remain above 32,000 feet. The Malaysia plane, however, was flying at about 33,000 feet from the Netherlands to Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian capital, when it was fired upon.

A majority of the 298 people aboard were Dutch citizens. The Netherlands wants airlines to tell passengers before takeoff whether a plane's flight path will cross a conflict zone. Airlines and other nations say that goes too far.

The U.N. agency and the International Air Transport Association, the world's leading airline trade group, want long-haul flights over ocean to report their whereabouts every 15 minutes. If a plane deviates from its route or if there is some irregularity, the plane automatically would report its position every minute. That way an impact site should be within about 6 nautical miles of the last reported position.

Malaysia Airlines 370 vanished en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people aboard. The Boeing 777 was capable of reporting continuous location information by satellite, but the system was not in use. The plane is believed to have crashed in the Indian Ocean. More than 25,000 square miles of ocean have been searched, but nothing has been found. (AP)