

**(1) Sima Samar...**

The Board is expected to allow the United Nations to work more effectively with Member States, regional organizations, non-governmental groups and others involved in the area of mediation around the world.

From 2005 to 2009, Samar was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Sudan.

She has overseen the expansion of human rights education, the implementation of a women's rights program, and the monitoring and investigation of human rights abuses across Afghanistan.

Samar was the Vice Chair of the Emergency Loya Jirga, a role that brought her political and negotiating skills to the fore, and the first Deputy Chair and Minister of Women's Affairs in the Interim Administration of Afghanistan.

She founded the Shuhada Organization, which operates 55 schools in Afghanistan as well as three schools for Afghan refugees in Quetta, Pakistan.

Juan Gabriel Valdés was Foreign Minister of Chile, former Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and, most recently, Ambassador to the United States. (Tolo news)

**(2) Govt's Peace...**

Atmar also talked about the ongoing international efforts to achieve peace in Afghanistan and said concerns about the process existed.

He said the current government's peace policy was not reliable and decisions in this regard were not taken independently.

He said the government had adopted a peace policy which was in conflict with the demands and wishes of the nation.

He said he would work decisively for peace and the countrymen could not afford to see the bloodshed for another five years.

About his electoral team, he said their ticket's main objective was to rid Afghanistan of the current government and crises.

Atmar said Afghanistan faced four major threats - the imposed war, international rivalries, instability in the region, poverty and deprivation and the incumbent government's incompetence.

Atmar ruled out change in the government system but insisted after their victory in the July presidential election, changes would be brought to the Constitution through a loya jirga for the sake of improvement in the system.

He said the post of third deputy president would be created and an advisory board to be comprised of known jihadi faces would be constituted.

Atmar's first deputy presidential candidate Younas Qanoni also spoke on the occasion and said they named their electoral team as peace and they would work to ensure real peace in the country.

The former Wolesi Jirga speaker said a real peace could come to the country if internal differences were set aside before making peace with the insurgents. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Dr. Tamana...**

afternoon in Kabul, Dr. Farmarz Tamana said: "We (Afghans) have a great reputation and honor but unfortunately it has not been used for Afghanistan's development over the course of 100 years and the capacities and potentials are more conducive to the satisfaction of foreigners or mostly engaged in ethnic and domestic issues".

He hoped his electoral team "Afghanistan Development and Plan" would fill the gap with specialists and would create a government that not only care about foreign ties but also work for the country's development.

"There are some problems in the election process, which we also saw in the parliamentary elections, but still we hope the experi-

ences learned from the parliamentary elections can help improve the presidential election."

To answer about US envoy for reconciliation in Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad's efforts for peace talks, he said he believed only Khalilzad's efforts would not succeed as peace-related issues must start from within and a large national consensus consisting of various internal groups should be formed.

Earlier, Dr. Zalmay Rassoul, with the slogan "national unity, justice, security, peace, moderation and equality," Abdul Latif Pedram, with the slogan "freedom, justice and security"; Mohammad Hakim Thorsan, with the slogan "We act, do not chant"; Seyyed Noorollah Jalili; and Inayatullah Hafez have nominated for the presidential election.

According to the IEC, the candidate registration process would continue until Jan 20 and there is no plan to extend this process.

A presidential candidate should be a Muslim, Afghan citizen, having completed the age of 40 and should present 100,000 supporters and pay a million afghanis to the commission based on the electoral law. (Pajhwok)

**(4) Trump Cancels...**

The back-and-forth between the White House and the speaker of the House meant there is no end in sight for a partial federal government shutdown, which will soon enter its fifth week. The shutdown was triggered by a standoff between Democrats and Republicans over funding for construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"While many Democrats in the House and Senate would like to make a deal, Speaker Pelosi won't let them negotiate," Trump said in a speech at the Defense Department. "Hopefully, Democrat lawmakers will step forward to do what is right for our country, and what's right for our country is border security at the strongest level."

Criticism for Trump Democrats insist they will negotiate stronger, more effective border security measures once the government reopens, but that a border wall would be wasteful, ineffective and a blight on America's image. Pelosi, the top-ranking congressional Democrat, said Trump's "insistence on the wall is a luxury we can no longer afford."

Later Thursday, Trump also canceled a planned trip by a U.S. delegation to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The delegation, consisting of Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, U.S. trade representative Robert Lighthizer and assistant to the president Chris Liddell, was scheduled to travel next week.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said the president wanted to make sure "his team can assist as needed" during the government shutdown.

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers missed a paycheck last week and are set to miss another next week.

"Not only are these workers not paid, they are not appreciated by this administration," said Pelosi, who leads the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives. "We should respect what they do for their country."

Criticism for Pelosi Pelosi's move on the State of the Union address drew sharp criticism from Senate Republicans.

"By disinviting POTUS for SOTU, Pelosi erased any pretext for her unwillingness to negotiate an end to the shutdown. It is personal, petty, and vindictive," Sen. John Cornyn from Texas tweeted Thursday.

While many Democratic lawmakers applauded Pelosi, Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia told MSNBC, "I think this [delaying the State of the Union address] is the wrong ap-

proach to be taking. ... We should try to have every type of respectful dialogue that we possibly can. Where I come from in West Virginia, we just don't act this way."

Lawmakers of both parties are wary of the shutdown's impact on their home states and constituencies. Georgia Republican Sen. Johnny Isakson told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper he fears a lack of Transportation Security Administration airport screeners will make it impossible for travelers to come for next month's American football Super Bowl.

"We've got a Super Bowl coming to Atlanta in about three weeks, the biggest tourism event in the world this year," Isakson said. "What if the largest airport in the world, that's going to bring people to the largest football game in the world, goes out of business because the TSA strikes? Then you've just cost millions of dollars to the United States of America, my home city of Atlanta and others."

Trump has called for more than \$5 billion in taxpayer funding for the wall, while Democrats have offered \$1.3 billion in new money for border security, but none specifically for a wall. (VoA)

**(5) 'Fraud Increased...**

cast by each ethnic group (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek).

Tomas Johnson, the report author, also attended the conference through Skype and said the report was prepared based on facts, eyewitness accounts with fully impartially.

He said he obtained the results of the second round of the 2014 presidential elections lately and that was the reason the report was also published late.

Daud Ali Najafi, former IEC secretary who was present at the conference, called the report as 'professionally written' and said the report pointed to all sides in the elections.

"The list of voters for the next presidential elections should be prepared one month ahead of the Election Day and a census process should be launched, if we have accurate number of population, then there is no need to transfer more ballot papers to polling stations," he said.

Najafi said elections would be never transparent unless the IEC acted as an independent organization and according to the law.

Mohammad Naim Ayubzada, the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) head, said fraud and government's interference in election affairs increased with each election while the public trust in the polls and the IEC's independence declined.

He criticized the procedure of appointing the election commissioners and said, "The Selection Committee of election commission members is not a clear filter because the commissioners are chosen based on political motives, we should not expect reforms in elections until these commissioners pass through this filter."

He also criticized power concentration in the IEC and said, "The capacity of provincial IEC offices should improve to help limit fraud. All authorities should not be confined only to the central office of the commission."

Pointing to the peace process, he said: "The peace process is still without fate, this process will probably affect the presidential elections and may delay the polls."

Ayubzada said the voter registration process should be based on biometric system in order to increase transparency in the presidential elections.

The presidential elections are scheduled for July 20, 2019. Eight candidates have so far registered their candidacies for the elections. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Poor Leadership...**

history spans over 5,000 years, but it faced with many bad events as a

result of poor leadership of our former leaders in the government, we feel a vacuum in the country."

He hoped his team, 'Peace, Law and Prosperity' would be able to fill the current vacuum and end all types of tribal discrimination and dependency on foreigners and eventually make Afghanistan a developed country.

About transparency of the July 20 presidential election, Hakimi said, "There are problems in the electoral regime, we observed the parliamentary elections, hoping serious reforms would come. Without reforms, the presidential elections are impossible or we await another worse poll."

He opined the IEC should learn from past mistakes and problems happened in the parliamentary elections and should not repeat them in the presidential election.

About the ongoing peace process, he appreciated the efforts of US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and said peace should be established in the country by any possible way. "The war has affected our all political, development, economic and social sectors".

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**(7) Khalilzad Assured...**

General Bajwa reiterated that peace in Afghanistan was important for Pakistan and assured continued efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region.

Lisa Curtis, Deputy Assistant to US President and senior director for South and Central Asia and US charge d'affaires to Pakistan were also present. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Investors Hopeful...**

"Most of the applicants are currently from Herat province, in the other 11 provinces, investors can each receive a square meter of land for 50 AFs," said Sameer Rasa, head of the Public Relations Office of the Senior Advisor.

Alongside security threats, lack of access to land and lack of electricity are two key challenges which create an obstruction for investors and the local business community. (Tolo news)

**(9) Commanders Among...**

seven Kalashnikovs, two walkie-talkies, hand grenades, rocket shells and a number of other weapons were seized by the NDS personnel in the raid. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Pakistan Takes...**

to severity of the issue, Minister for National Food Security and Research, Sahibzada Mehbod Sultan and the ministry officials are liaising with the provincial agriculture departments in a bid to resolve the issue, the official added.

Talks are currently underway through the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul, he said. (Monitoring Desk)

**(11) Trump will...**

The Afghans will have to step up. "It's not that we'll do nothing... we'll probably still be there longer than I would like," Paul clarified. "The president does acknowledge that America's longest war does need to come to a close."

This comes as a new analysis by senior researchers at RAND Corporation, a non-govt organization, highlights the consequences of a possible withdrawal of half of United States troops from Afghanistan - who have been engaged in the war for the past 17 years.

The research analyses US President Donald Trump's stance and poli-

cies towards Afghanistan from his campaign era to the announcement of the new strategy on South Asia and Afghanistan, as well as to the recent announcement on a possible withdrawal of almost half of US troops from the country.

James Dobbins, a senior fellow at RAND, and US special envoy for Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, is among the writers of this research.

The research says drawing down military and civilian personnel will limit accountability for the use of aid funds, increase corrupt diversions and result in legislatively required cutbacks.

The research suggests that the Afghan government will continue to weaken in the case of the US troops withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The research shows the following consequences are likely:

- Other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces also leave.
- US and other international civilian presence is sharply reduced.
- External economic and security assistance diminished.
- The government in Kabul begins to lose influence and legitimacy.
- Power moves from the center to the periphery.
- Responsibility for security increasingly devolves to regional militias and local warlords.
- Regional states back rival claimants to national power.
- The Taliban loses interest in negotiating peace with the United States.
- The Taliban extends its control over territory and population but encounters resistance.
- Afghanistan descends into a wider civil war.
- Civilian deaths rise sharply and refugee flows increase.
- Extremist groups, including Al Qaeda and Daesh, gain additional scope to organize, recruit and initiate terrorist attacks against US regional and homeland targets. (Tolo news)

**(12) Turkish Aid...**

and Turkish Foreign Ministry representative Nuruddin Rahmani.

The raging Afghan conflict is in its bloody 18th year, with thousands of lives lost and millions of people forced to flee their homes. (AA)

**(13) Art lords Nominated...**

honored at a gala celebration in London, join Index's Awards Fellowship program and receive dedicated training and support.

"The most focus is on arts and culture and on the use of arts as a tool for civic campaigns. Among the nominees there are reporters and artists who have been imprisoned and those who work for freedom of expression, democracy and human rights," ArtLords founder, Omaid Sharifi said.

ArtLords has been nominated for the awards along with attendants from Turkey, Azerbaijan and Saudi Arabia.

Selected from over 400 public nominations and a shortlist of 16, the 2019 Freedom of Expression Awards shortlist exemplifies courage in the face of censorship.

ArtLords is a grassroots movement of artists and volunteers in Afghanistan who encourage ordinary citizens, especially women and children, to paint murals on issues which concern them. ArtLords completed over 400 murals in 16 provinces of the country. In March 2018, for International Women's Day, ArtLords painted a tribute to Professor Hamida Barmaki, a human rights defender killed in a terrorist attack six years ago. (Tolo news)

**(14) 15 Taliban...**

between rebels and security forces in 2nd police district but said it happened in 3rd. He said the militants were pushed back and no side suffered casualties in the overnight clash.

Taliban have not yet commented on the incidents. (Pajhwok)