

(1) The Taxation...

Aviation pledged to build particular mechanism in accordance with international aviation convention. "To decrease traffic jam from Kabul International Airport, I will upgrade Herat and Mazar airports to international on", Zaki said.

Zaki vowed that he would digitalize the taxation system, build terminals in airports, monitor other airlines and create capacities to professionalize aviation. (Markazi Press)

(2) Kabul, Islamabad

Sunday for meetings with senior army officials on border security. A week ago, Lt Gen Nasir Khan Janjua, Commander Southern Command, and Peshawar Corps Commander Lt Gen Hidayat-u-Rehman had visited Afghanistan to discuss issues of mutual importance.

The Pakistan military officials met their Afghan counterparts during their visit. Both sides discussed "matters related to border security coordination and ways of further enhancing the existing mechanism". Earlier, a Pakistani military spokesman said the visits were aimed at enhancing the ongoing Pak-Afghan cooperation and would help boost confidence between the armies of the two countries.

Last month, Afghan Army Chief General Sher Muhammad Karimi had visited Pakistan and met his counterpart General Raheel Sharif. During the meeting, the two sides had agreed that their commanders would begin meetings immediately to further coordinate cross-border security operations. (Pajhwok)

(3) US, India Renew...

in Afghanistan was discussed and the fact that India has a very real interest in what is happening over there. India and the US agreed to work closely together in seeing how to support the Afghan economy and our interests in having a stable and peaceful Afghanistan.

Obama is on a three-day visit to India. On Sunday, he took salute as chief guest at India's grand Republic Day parade in the capital. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghanistan Launc...

the neighboring Reg, Shah Wali Kot and Maruf districts and in the southern region in general.

"Our campaign to eradicate poppy fields in Zhari district would continue until all the fields would be destroyed," Agha said.

The district governor called on the central government to provide alternative crops, including improved seeds and fertilizer, as well as financial support to farmers whose poppy fields have been destroyed.

"The central government should help farmers to earn a living by providing them with alternative crops and financial support," Agha said.

"We have orders from our superiors to destroy poppy farms in Zhari and we continue our campaign to achieve the goal," district police chief Mohammad Masoum Khan told Xinhua.

Once a Taliban bastion, Zhari has gradually been transformed into a peaceful community with residents growing various crops on their land, including wheat, ornamental plants. They also have vineyards.

Taliban militants had been smashed in Zhari about a year ago and since then the government has been busy rebuilding the district, according to Agha.

"The main reason for poppy cultivation is insecurity and poverty," Agha said.

He said since peace and normalcy has returned to Zhari, the government is in the process of building more schools, roads, health clinics and development projects to create job opportunities.

"Our only source for income was poppy cultivation. I had cultivated poppy and earned a reasonable income to support my family. But since the government has banned poppy cultivation, I want it to support us as we plant other crops in the form of seeds and fertilizer," said Abdul Rahim, a resident of Zhari. (Xinhua)

(5) India Embassy...

it was in Kabul a hundred years ago in 1915 that the first Provisional Government of India was established in Kabul.

The ambassador wished a very happy Republic Day to all Indians in Afghanistan and noted with satisfaction the good work being done by them in the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Earlier, live telecast of the Republic Day parade in New Delhi showcasing the military strength, technological advancements and cultural and religious diversity of India was also arranged at the Republic Day function in the Embassy. (Pajhwok)

(6) Signs of Discord ...

commissions as well as their structure and the selection process for their leadership.

However, this week, while a spokesman for Abdullah stressed the importance of reforming the election commissions before the upcoming parliamentary elections, the Second Vice President of President Ghani suggested the elections would be held with only slight changes to the commissions.

"Going toward the election process, we cannot gain the people's trust as much as a transparent process would," said Asef Ashna, the Deputy Spokesman for Abdullah. "Reforms must be made, so that trust is gained from the people and the institutions that are financially supporting the elections."

Meanwhile, the President's Second Vice President, Sarwar Danish, has maintained that the election laws and commissions do not require many changes. His representatives have said that legislative reforms will take time and not be in place by the time parliamentary elections begin, and that the only way to ensure they are in place is to have them issued by presidential decree.

"If reforms are brought, the predicted mechanisms will not be brought in the remaining time," said Muhammad Hedayat, the head of Mr. Danish's Media Office. "If they need to be done within the given time frame, they need to be based on the president's order."

Election monitoring groups have expressed concerns that disagreement among national unity government leaders over the reforms could cause them to be weak, diluted and compromised so much they are ineffective.

"The issue of disagreement has its own specific concerns, because we have very limited time until the elections and the people of Afghanistan are still concerned," Civil Society Institutions Board of Directors member Humaira Saqeb told TOLONews. "One of the suggestions of the civil society network for improving the electoral process is that the electoral commissions must not be politicized."

The current leadership of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) are expected to meet soon with President Ghani to discuss reforms and decide on the timing of the parliamentary elections. (Tolonews)

(7) Basir Plans to...

I will complete the construction of 5,000 kilometres of roads – includes the ring road – and asphalt 3,500 kilometres of district roads," he said.

Basir added securing the strategic Salang Pass, its rehabilitation and staff capacity- building were among his goals, which also include better project implementation and creating a standard framework for road construction.

Generating job opportunities for 5,000 people, hiring professional individuals, keeping a balance in implementing projects, curbing corruption and introducing accountability are his other priorities.

Ghulam Abbas Basir is a son of Ghulam Hussain, born in 1969 in Ghazni province. He received two bachelor degrees in culture and politics and a master's in Islamic education in Iran. (Pajhwok)

(8) Shinwari Promises ...

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(9) 3 More Cabinet...

members had also dual citizenship and they could not raise objections to others having such nationality.

"Why aren't Siddique Ahmad, first deputy speaker of Wolesi Jirga, and Syed Ikram, secretary to the lower house, questioned? Both have dual nationality," she claimed.

Last month, the unity government finally announced a long-awaited list of 25 ministers-designate, National Directorate of Security (NDS) and Afghanistan Bank heads.

Earlier, the Wolesi Jirga decided not to give a trust vote to ministers-designate with dual nationality. Under Article 72 of the constitution, ministers should have only Afghan nationality. (Pajhwok)

(10) High Tariffs...

Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) has voiced support for the iron producers, echoing calls for the tariffs to be lowered for Afghan products being exported abroad.

"Afghanistan's production is improving, steel mills are active and are working, so neighbouring countries must reconsider their Custom tariffs," said Mir Zaman Popal, the Chairman of Industrial and Export Development at ACCI.

Yet officials at the Ministry of Finance (MoF) have responded to the concerns of the iron producers with mild resignation.

"When traders export iron products to Iran and Pakistan, these countries create problems for Afghan traders, as they only want to sell their own products in the markets," MoF spokesman Abdul Qader Jeelani said.

He highlighted that no fees are imposed on domestic products in Afghan customs offices. (Agencies)

(11) Australia Pledges...

said thanked the government of Australia for remaining committed to support Afghanistan in different sectors.

He said the government of Afghanistan is keen to further bolster ties with Australia in various sectors in the future. (KP)

(12) Civil Society

election process is a technical process; unfortunately, they deal with the issue politically, and there is no other barrier in its way," Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA) head Mohammad Naeem Asghari said on Monday. "The absence of the cabinet and business of the president can't ensure formation of the special commission, because the job requires a technical committee."

Civil society activist Jandad Spinghar has said the failure to form an electoral reform commission is rooted in disagreement over how best to approach the reforms. "Some frustration exists over how to start the electoral reforms and I think this has undermined the establishment of an electoral reforms commission, because apparently they agree such a commission needs to be established."

Following this year's troubled presidential election, which saw Abdullah accuse Ghani and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) of conspiring to steal the election, much hope was restored when the national unity government was formed and the leaders promised major electoral reforms.

"People have some expectations of the government, because people participated in the elections and now leaders of the national unity government should honor their commitments and implement the necessary reforms for the election management bodies," Kabul resident Khan Mohammad told TOLONews Monday.

Meanwhile, Sher Shah, a resident of eastern Nangarhar, warned that if no reforms are made, "people will not participate in the parliamentary elections."

Lawmakers in Parliament of voiced a similar sentiment, stressing the importance of enacting electoral reform prior to the next election cycle. "I think it would be a mistake to go toward the elections before implementing reforms, because if the election conducted without reforms, there will be serious challenges ahead," MP Iqbal Safai said Monday.

For now, however, Afghan legislators are busy with deliberations over the new cabinet. "We waited four months to see electoral reforms are brought, but the president and the chief executive are still busy in cabinet and this is a matter of concern to us," another Nangarhar resident named Ali said.

In response to the criticisms, Abdullah has said that implementation of reforms in the election management bodies is one of his top priorities and that a reforms commission will be established after the cabinet is formed.

Election monitoring groups have argued that if legislative reform addressing the authorities of the election commissions is not passed soon, a presidential decree should be issued instead. (Tolo News)

(13) Decision on Final ...

Tajikistan, he recalled, had already offered the line of its railway section

with a total length of 161 kilometres. "We are waiting the Turkmen side to answer as soon as possible and only then will sign an agreement," he pledged.

The next step, he said would be a project feasibility study, with the \$9 million fund provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "The issue on feasibility study has been discussed with our Turkmen colleagues." Earlier in March 2013, the presidents of the three countries had inked a memorandum of understanding on the railway in Ashgabat.

The first track of the cross-border railway was laid in July 2013, which is expected to be completed in 2015. In addition, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) had expressed interest in financing the Tajik section of the \$1 billion project. (Pajhwok)

(14) Serious Measures...

further said that security forces were put on alert after a recent meeting among officers of security forces, local government officials and local elders.

"Security forces are also on alert to respond to any terrorist act in case it happens" he told Khaama Press.

He added that the security situation along the border with Pakistan as well as the districts including Dargam is better and currently there are no security issues.

Last month hundreds of insurgents including foreign fighters attacked Dargam district and began a fight of about three weeks with Afghan National Security Forces and civilians. Local security officials said that hundreds of Taliban were killed in the clashes.

As per the information provided by the local security forces the attack was jointly organized by Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban with the assistance of Uzbek, Panjabi and other foreign fighters.

Security forces had the assistance from residents of Dargam district who had taken weapon against Taliban insurgency. (KP)

(15) Paktia Govt.

gradually realising the practice has terrible consequences.

Dowry is the amount of money paid by the groom's family to the bride's family on which both parties sign the agreement of engagement.

"Support of tribal elders in some areas and public awareness has convinced people to reduce dowry. We are trying to ensure long-term agreements between tribes to minimise dowry," she added.

The amount of dowry varies from area to area, but generally it ranges between 500,000 afghani and one million afghanis.

One resident Haji Zarif told Pajhwok Afghan News if someone wanted to marry a second woman, he should pay more than a million afghanis. Most youths do not marry due to high amounts of dowry, he confirmed.

Another resident, Saifullah, aged 28, is still single. "My elder brother has engaged but not married so far. After my brother's marriage, we will struggle for collecting money for mine." But another dweller, Noor Rahim who married six years after his engagement, said: "My father-in-law forced me to pay 500,000 afghanis in dowry, but my family did not have this much money."

"Then I worked for one year in Iran and for five years in Dubai to get married," the man explained. He opined a couple could lead a happy married life if dowry was not made a condition.

A tribal elder from Syed Karam district, Abdul Ghafoor, said the high amount of dowry was a widespread problem and a challenge to a vast majority of youth in the province.

He suggested the government implement a series of public awareness programmes to banish the unwanted custom from their community.

"Most of such problems trigger family disputes due to the high amount of dowry. Father-in-laws often taunt brides for being sold by their families and that creates tensions," Ghafoor argued A religious scholar, Maulvi Abdullah Fahim, said that there was no concept of dowry in Islam, but only 'Mahr' – a small amount of money – was pledged by the groom to his bride. The Sharia Law says that Mahr is the right of a bride and her father or family cannot take it. Fahim said dowry was forbidden in Islam and asked people not to insist on it in return for their daughters. (Pajhwok)

(16) Kabul Children's ...

have attributed to harshening weather, are likely to impact the quality of care the hospital is able to provide.

"The number of losses in this hospital is based on the number

of visitors," Quraishi said. "Last month our loss percentage was 5.4 percent."

The Ministry of Public Health has been appealed to by Indra Ghandi officials for help in staffing and equipment in order to better handle the recent sharp influx of patients, but no action has yet been taken. Ministry officials declined to comment on the issue when approached by TOLONews. (Tolonews)

(17) Cancellation of ...

make a final decision on whether or not to consider him for a confidence vote.

Noorul Haq Ulumi, Sadat Naderi and Salahuddin Rabbani have cancelled their second nationality and their documents have been shared with the Wolesi Jirga.

Under Article 72 of the Constitution, ministers should have only Afghan nationality, but Wolesi Jirga has the authority to accept or reject them. (Pajhwok)

(18) Cold Threatens...

garbage to warm our tents so that our children survive," Mirwais, a refugee, said. "Despite that, our children are suffering from different types of disease and we do not have enough money for medical treatment."

Zahra, another refugee, criticized the government she said she voted for with bright and high hopes of a resolution to the problem.

"We voted for this government and expected that it would help us, but instead we were forgotten."

Meanwhile, the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR) has claimed that the ministry has set up particular programs to support the internally displaced families and those who return from seeking refuge elsewhere.

"We had undertaken a four phase relief and rescue program to support the returnees and displaced families," Islamuddin Juraat, spokesman for MoRR, said. "So far we have conducted only two phases. Firewood, food and clothing have been distributed and there has not been any sort of leakage in the aid distribution."

Thus far, aid distribution has been very delicate. The majority of the displaced families constitute of children who have lost their lives in the extreme weather conditions. (Tolonews)

(19) Hundreds of

Afghan News on Monday that Ayan and his associates had started selling plots of the land.

Residents confirmed Ayan had grabbed vast tracts of government land and planned to develop a township on it.

Fitrat said a joint commission of municipality, urban development, agriculture and police departments had decided to vacate the land. The commission has asked people to stay away from dealing with Ayan or buying his land.

However, police chief Brig. Gen. Khudayar Qudsi said construction work on the state land had been stopped following the direction of the commission.

According to residents, Ayan and his men had earned millions of afghanis by selling 600 residential plots. A man wishing not to be named said: "I paid 150,000 in advance to buy 20 plots."

But Ayan vehemently rejected the government claim and said that the land was his family property and he had every right to develop a township on it. (Pajhwok)

(20) Cut in Additional...

trenchment due to fund paucity. He warned if the force was cut, the security situation would be affected. He stressed the need for measures to raise the number of security forces in the province to control law and order. The governor said: "The fighting in Dargam district of Kunar has also had a bad impact on security in Nuristan."

The Nuristan highway, he added, had been under Taliban's control for the last nine years and a security offensive should be launched soon to clear the route for traffic.

In the not-so-distant past, the governor recalled, Nuristan officials would live in neighbouring Nangarhar and Kunar. "But now they are living here following a marked improvement in security."

He urged the president to appoint a new governor who should build close coordination with the local people to improve security and develop the province. (Pajhwok)

(21) Four Tajik...

Afghan side informed us about the postponement of the handover date," Tavakkalzoda said.

According to him, the captured Tajik border guards are in good condition. He promised that they will be returned to Tajikistan in the near future.

"Those who captured the border guards got in touch with us and said that they got nothing against Tajiks. They promise to hand over our border guards in the near future," the Panj chairman said.

We will recall that four Tajik border guards were taken hostage by an unidentified group in Afghanistan on December 19, 2014.

On January 8, the Khatlon prosecutor's office made public the identities of the abducted four Tajik border guards. In its statement, the Khatlon prosecutor's office confirmed earlier reports that four Tajiks had been abducted by Afghans in December. It said they were border guards Farhod Kalonov, 19, Siroj Davlatov, 23, Tuy-chiboy Nourboyev, 19, and Mehroj Shodiyev, 20.

The statement also said that the commander of their military unit, Alimhammad Dodokalonov, had been held responsible for the incident and charged with negligence. (Asia-Plus)

(22) Dozens of...

140 million afghans had been set aside by the Finance Ministry for the project. (Pajhwok)

(23) At Least 30 ...

others wounded in fighting with Taliban insurgents in the surrounding areas of Kunduz city.

Taliban have killed several civilians through roadside explosions in Kunduz and other provinces who have taken weapons against their insurgency. (KP)

(24) Residents

mented, saying people should come forward to counter nefarious designs of the enemy.

Brig. Gen. Mohammad Nasir Hidayat, commander of first Afghan National Army (ANA) crops, told the gathering that security forces had been equipped with all advanced weapons. The ANA, he said, had close coordination with other forces and had the ability to face any challenge efficiently. (Pajhwok)

(25) Bomb Rips

Asadullah, an eyewitness, said the blast took place at lunch time but he did not know what triggered the explosion. (Pajhwok)

(26) 89 Drug

Takhar provinces, the statement added. It said that 404 kilograms of heroin, 90 kilogram of morphine, more than three tonnes of opium, 359 kilograms of hashish, 1,499 kilograms of chemical materials and 942 liters of alcoholic beverages were also recovered during the operations.

The detainees have referred to a special court of the AJTF for further legal process. (Pajhwok)

(27) ANSF Raids

types of IEDs placed by enemies of Afghanistan for destructive activities in Herat and Nimroz provinces," the statement noted.

The statement, however, did not provide details of possible ANSF casualties. The Taliban have not yet commented in this regard. (Tolonews)

(28) Angry Protestors ...

hammad Ashraf, said: "Sentiments of Muslims across the world have been hurt by the cartoons; we want the cartoonists punished." (Pajhwok)

(29) Greek Leftist...

just two seats short of an outright majority and in need of a coalition partner. The Independent Greeks won 13 seats. The alliance suggests a hardline stance against Greece's creditors, who have dismissed Tsipras's demands for a debt writ-off and insisted the country stay on the path of reforms and austerity to get its finances back on track. (Reuters)

(30) U.S. Official...

private" business and implied that the U.S. assistant secretary of state apparently avoided seeing him due to his having seized power in last May's coup to oust Yingluck's elected government. Anti-Corruption Commission, which had lodged the graft charges against her in the parliament, accused that she had turned blind eye and deaf ear to alleged malpractices among government officials responsible for the storing and distributing of the rice bought from farmers nationwide, resulting in an estimated 20 billion U.S. dollars in losses of the taxpayer's money. (Xinhua)