

(1) Ghani Asks...

adding that corruption was a "curse" that creates tension.

"Corruption is a curse which creates sedition and we must take it very seriously; sedition also brings tragedy. We inherited lots of problems. Governance in Afghanistan has not been taken from swords and guns. Afghanistan's judicial and legal organs are obliged to implement the law equally on all," he said.

Meanwhile, addressing the anti-corruption meeting in Kabul, Afghanistan's Attorney General Farid Hamidi said there is a need for support from the public and Ulema to help eliminate crime, oppression and corruption. "What Ulema said about corruption reflects the voice of the Afghan people," he said.

Issuing a declaration after their two day anti-corruption meeting, an Ulema Council member stated that government should ensure that all appointments made in government institutions are based on merit, and not nepotism and corruption Afghanistan.

Sunday was the final day of the two-day meeting which focused on rule of law and corruption in public offices in the country.

The meeting enabled delegates to exchange ideas on ways to cope with corruption and eliminate it from government offices.

On Saturday, Qiyamuddin Kashaf, Head of the Ulema Council, the country's religious scholars council, said the majority of government institutions are affected by corruption and that this phenomenon is one of the reasons for the ongoing war in the country.

Kashaf said some people are leaning towards the Taliban due to the lack of rule of law and corruption - especially when it comes to their legal problems not being addressed.

"Most of government's offices are corrupt. There are different types of corruption," Kashaf said.

At the event, Hamidi also called on the people to support government's anti-corruption efforts.

He said war, violence, unemployment and poverty have led to corruption in the country.

"This conference is not for peace; it is for a continued and strict fight against corruption and for ending corruption in government offices in Afghanistan.

"Peace is not possible when there is corruption. Corruption has dried the roots of this nation," said Hamidi.

Religious scholars meanwhile said fighting corruption needs action not slogans.

"Let's earn honor for our country, for the religious scholars, for our leaders and let's get rid of this situation," said Waezizada Behsudi, a religious scholar.

In February, Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Afghanistan as the 4th most corrupt country in the world in 2017, trailing only Syria, South Sudan and Somalia.

The study put Afghanistan in 4th place among 180 countries in the world.

The index also highlighted that the majority of countries are making little or no progress in ending corruption, "while further analysis shows journalists and activists in corrupt countries risk their lives every day in an effort to speak out".

The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

This year, the index found that more than two-thirds of countries scored below 50, with an average score of 43. (Tolo news)

(2) Taliban Seek...

Wells and other American diplomats. The contact took place after the Trump administration asked top

diplomats they to launch direct negotiations with the Taliban.

The Doha meeting involved no Afghan officials or ministers in line with Taliban's demand. The Afghan peace process came up for discussion at the meeting, which was described as useful. (Pajhwok)

(3) Child Marriage...

, Paktia, Ghor and Badghis -- representing urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

It highlights multiple factors behind child marriage, complementing already existing studies. In 78 per cent of households, fathers are the main decision makers on issues related to marriage.

As many as 55.7 per cent of respondents agreed girls and boys must be consulted.

Khodr called for ending child marriage to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and give girls and women opportunities to engage and participate fully in their society.

"Getting all girls into school is a key element in reducing child marriage, and it is important to convince parents, especially fathers to send, and keep their daughters in school." (Pajhwok)

(4) Marble Sector...

policy of the mines ministry is zero. The Ministry of Mines has not had any policy in place in the last three years. The acting minister is not ready to talk to us. It is all words but no action by the ministry," said Kamali.

Sultan, the owner of one marble factory said due to the lack of raw materials he has had to stop operations at his factory for the past six months.

Sultan said he moved his factory from Pakistan to Afghanistan two years ago but now regrets the decision.

He said he has incurred losses of four million AFs in the past six months and has had to lay off 30 of his workers.

"This problem will not be solved; therefore, we will suffer. We do not want to suffer further losses here. We want to go back to the neighboring country," said Sultan.

Sultan's brother Hejran who works at the factory has Canadian citizenship. He said due to these problems he is now thinking about returning to Canada.

"My friends used to advise me not to go to Afghanistan. I told them that it is my country and I want to serve my nation by creating jobs for the people. But now I see that those who worked with us are decreasing in numbers," said Hejran.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum meanwhile said they will soon call for bids for tenders of a number of marble quarries and that once contracts have been signed, companies will start extracting the marble for factories.

According to the ministry, they will soon finalize the process and 10 contracts will be awarded to companies to mine both marble and talc quarries. Their plan will go through to the High Economic Council and once approved, they will put the contracts out to tender.

"We are ready to sign contracts in this respect. We will provide the ground for those companies which have the capacity in this sector. One important issue is that they should have the ability of processing and extracting the mineral resources," Abdul Qadir Mutfi, said the ministry's spokesman.

"They say that they are studying the contracts so that a roadmap is prepared. This roadmap and studies have been delayed too long. What we need is a project with easy conditions for contractors. The problems for the stone industry must be solved," Rahim Samandar, chief operating officer at the Chamber of Industries and Mines said.

According to the Marble Stone Association, only four marble extraction projects are active in the country and that this can only meet the raw material requirements for four processing factories - while there are over 150 factories in the coun-

try.

According to the association, if government does not resolve problems in this regard, the factory owners will disinvest in the country. According to the association, the investment total in marble processing facilities is estimated to be worth about \$50 million. (Tolo news)

(5) UK Envoy...

when the war in Afghanistan would end, Kay said: "I don't have the answer."

Officials from Afghanistan's High Peace Council (HPC) meanwhile said that peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban could start sometime this year.

"This does not mean that the Afghan peace process will be carried out or the peace talks started. The peace process comes in the next phase," said HPC spokesman Sayed Ehsan Tahiri.

In addition, a former Taliban commander Sayed Akbar Agha has also said that Taliban's political committee under the leadership of the group's commander Sher Mohammad Abbas is leading the talks in Qatar.

"The Taliban have handed over their authorities to the Qatar political committee, there are eleven or twelve members in the committee," said Agha.

This comes a few days after the US's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells met with Taliban officials this week to discuss ways to lay the groundwork for peace talks, the Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

The report said the aim of the discussion was to build on momentum created by the recent three-day ceasefire over Eid al-Fitr.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Wells led the US delegation, which met with members of the Taliban's political commission in Doha, Qatar last week.

The Taliban's political office declined to comment, according to the Wall Street Journal report, which also stated that Wells did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

"The United States is exploring all avenues to advance a peace process in close consultation with the Afghan government," a State Department official said.

The State Department declined to comment specifically on the question of talks with the Taliban, but said Wells returned to the US on Tuesday after discussing progress toward an Afghan-led process with Qatari officials.

The United States earlier in the week commended Qatar for its ongoing support for peace in Afghanistan and said Wells had met with the Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah.

According to Qatar's The Peninsula daily last week, the two officials discussed recent progress toward an Afghan-owned, and Afghan-led peace process, and pledged to continue both countries' efforts toward combating terrorism and promoting regional peace and stability.

Wells welcomed the Qatari government's support for the ceasefire last month in Afghanistan, and highlighted the deep appreciation of the United States for the Qatari government's constructive partnership and dedication to Afghanistan, read the report.

After Well's trip to Qatar, the US State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert, tweeted "appreciation for Qatar's constructive partnership, dedication and ongoing support for peace in Afghanistan" Addressing a press briefing later that day, Nauert confirmed that Wells attended meetings in Qatar and met with Al Attiyah, along with other high-ranking officials.

Nauert said: "I can tell you that our senior bureau official for SCA, Alice Wells, is returning today from Doha, Qatar, and that's where she's been meeting with the - she met with the deputy prime minister. She also met with other government officials to

talk about their contributions to the situation in Afghanistan.

"Qatar has been an important and valuable partner in that. They have helped with training and equipping, they have helped with supplies, things of that nature that are obviously needed by coalition partners to help facilitate what is going on right there.

"So Alice is returning. She's had good meetings. And part of the reason she went there was to commend the government for their ongoing support for peace in Afghanistan," said Nauert.

Referring to the recent successful ceasefire over Eid al-Fitr, Nauert said: "I know some folks in the media and around the world have pooh-pooed that ceasefire that lasted a few days, but our view on this, if you can get a ceasefire that lasts a few days, perhaps you could get another one that lasts a little bit longer, and that gives the people of Afghanistan hope."

The US officials made it clear that the Afghan government was fully involved in the effort to jump-start peace talks.

The US and Afghan officials warn that official negotiations, if they happen, could be months away, and that those efforts, like previous attempts, could collapse, according to the Wall Street Journal. (Tolo news)

(6) 11 Taliban Killed, 4...

the Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi claimed nine security personnel were killed in Nad Ali and Greshk districts late on Saturday night. (Pajhwok)

(7) Ghani Invites...

Haque told Geo News.

The PTI leader also said that the PTI is in talks with various political parties for support to form the government in the capital and in Punjab.

"We have the mandate to form governments in the Centre and Punjab," he reiterated.

During his victory speech on Thursday Khan said: "We want to work in every possible way to ensure peace in Afghanistan. I would love an open border system like the EU with Afghanistan. Afghanistan is that neighbour of ours that has seen the most human misery and damage in the name of wars. The people of Afghanistan need peace, and Pakistan wants peace in Afghanistan." (Tolo news)

"We have the mandate to form governments in the Centre and Punjab," he reiterated.

(8) In Helmand's...

girls had been deprived of education.

Four schools of the five schools open were operating in mosques or rented houses, he said, adding around 1,800 students, including girls, were studying there.

"There are many problems we are faced with, such as a shortage of professional teachers and issues in the area of supervision," the official continued.

The reconstruction of one school, where around 300 students were enrolled, got under way launched two days ago, Khan informed.

On the other hand, Helmand Education Director Dawood Shah Safari confirmed it was the first time that a school building was being constructed in Kajahki district.

The project would cost 25 million afghanis provided by the Ministry of Urban Development, he said. Efforts were underway to reopen schools in Taliban-controlled areas, he explained.

"I'm going to stop salaries of voluntary teachers in Lashkargah and send the money to the district to resolve education-related problems there to some extent," the director announced

Student Noor Mohammad complained both teachers and pupil spent their time trading each other stories. The teaching quality was almost zero, he claimed.

"There are no lessons. Textbooks and other resources are yet to be delivered. On this district, most of youth are uneducated," Mohammad added.

Mahboob, another student, said most of time teachers stayed away from classes. "I don't know about the areas that are under Taliban

control. Most of our teachers are working on a contractual basis.

"They have just filled vacancies. They are not professional and remain absent," the student alleged, urging government officials to pay attention to the issue.

A number of others students held similar views. Nasar Khan, one of them, endorsed the allegations and said he had already shared the issue with the authorities concerned. Khan said he had talked to the Taliban to shun opposition to education in the district. The talks have yielded a measure of progress, according to him.

Governor Mohammad Yaseen Khan told Pajhwok measures were being taken to resolve education-related problems in the district.

"Construction work is underway on a school building and the remaining problem will also be addressed gradually." (Pajhwok)

(9) 15 Provincial...

abroad and as well to connect the provinces and districts with the center.

He said the move would help patients receive standard treatment and doctors would be able to enhance their knowledge and as well provincial doctors would get experience through consultations with Kabul doctors

He said the project would cost \$3 million provided by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology.

According to his information, in the first phase the civil hospitals of Paktika and Samangan provinces would be connected with the Jamhoriat hospital in capital Kabul through the Fiber Noori network and after that the rest 13 hospitals would also be connected.

He also informed that some hospitals would be connected with world's advanced hospitals, but provided no further information in this regard.

Meanwhile, Minister Firozi said the countrymen spent \$300 million a year on their treatment abroad.

Najib Azizi, the Afghanistan Telecommunications Regulatory Board head, said: "By signing this agreement our only aim is to how we can bring about positive change in people's lives." He said ATRA would pay for the project as well oversee it. (Pajhwok)

(10) Relatives...

relatives on Sunday held a protest outside human rights commission in Kabul in this regard, asking for clarification on the fate of their commander.

They reiterated the call for release of the commander and his loyalists. Sayed Anwar Rasooli Oghli who was leading the group of protesters said that there is no clarification on the fate of the people who were being held in captivity alongside Nizamuddin Qaisari.

"We don't have any information about them whether they are died or alive," he said.

Accepting the objection letter of the protesters, the human rights commission said that it will act according to its authority in this regard.

This comes days after some Faryab residents gathered in front of AI-HRC in Kabul and called for trial of Nizamuddin Qaisari. (ATN)

(11) Islamic State...

minutes before, they had placed several homemade bombs on the street near the complex. Afghan security forces regained control of the site after a long shoot-out.

The Taliban denied any involvement in the act.

In total, 61 midwives and two children were rescued from the complex, told reporters Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for the governor of province of Nangarhar surrounding Jalal-aba.

The obstetric training center in Jalalabad offers two-year midwifery training courses for women in the province. Although it is not yet clear why the extremists chose that center as their target, they often choose official buildings and medical facilities for their attacks. (PL)