

### (1) U.S. Exchanges...

the statement added.

It said the three countries agreed to hold further discussions on the issue and that the exact dates and sites for such talks were to be decided.

The statement did not list which officials were involved in the discussions, although on March 20, the State Department announced that the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, would meet with officials from Russia and China on the matter.

That statement said Zamir Kabulov, Russia's presidential envoy to Afghanistan; Deng Xijun, his Chinese counterpart; and Roland Kobia, the EU's special envoy, would be part of the briefing. Russian state-run TASS news agency said Kabulov attended the talks in Washington.

And, simultaneously but separately, the State Department said Khalilzad had held consultations with Kobia, although it was not clear if the talks were together with the other diplomats or bilateral.

'Peace Must Be Key Objective'

Khalilzad and Kobia "agreed that bringing an end to Afghanistan's war and achieving peace must be the key objective, and that violence should cease," the statement said.

"Both sides underscored their respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan," it said, adding that the United States and EU "encourage all countries to support the current peace process, inclusive intra-Afghan talks, and lasting development and reconstruction in Afghanistan."

The government in Kabul is fighting against Taliban extremists, who are attempting to reclaim control of the Afghan government.

The Taliban controlled the Afghan government before being driven from power in 2001 by a U.S.-led invasion after it refused to end support for Al-Qaeda terrorists following the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.

Taliban leaders, who took control in 1996, imposed a harsh form of Islamic law that denied education and work to women and girls as they cracked down on other social activities.

They were accused by international groups of human rights violations, causing concerns among more-moderate Afghans about their participation in any future government.

The U.S. military has some 12,000 troops in Afghanistan, mostly serving in training and advisory roles, but President Donald Trump has indicated a desire to reduce U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts and withdraw American forces.

Khalilzad has held several rounds of peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar, but the Western-backed government in Kabul has been absent from the negotiations, with the militant group insisting it will not engage with a Western "puppet." (Monitoring Desk)

### (2) Nangarhar Elders...

welcoming recent remarks of National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib about peace negotiations between the US and the Taliban.

Mohib had told reporters and a think tank in Washington that US Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad was keeping the Afghan government in the dark about his talks with the Taliban and had personal ambitions in Afghanistan.

"We don't know what's going on. We don't have the kind of transparency that we should have," Mohib told reporters at a news conference.

He reminded the US that despite championing human rights and freedom of expression, it did not heed calls from the Afghans for inclusion in the peace negotiations

Provincial tribal coordination association members and tribal elders during the gathering at the Tribal and Border Affairs Department in Jalalabad welcomed the NSA views over the peace process and urged the Afghan government to support and accept Mohib's remarks.

Lal Agha Kakar, the Nangarhar tribal association coordination head, welcomed Mohib's recent views and called on the Taliban to hold talks with Afghans and urged foreigners not to interfere in Afghanistan's affairs.

Kakar said Mohib was the first Afghan high profile official who explained his national stance to a strong country (the US) and answered them clearly.

Malak Nazir, a Khogyani tribal elder, also asked all the Afghans to support Mohib in order to motivate other officials to take such bold steps.

Chatral Himat Shinwari, another tribal elder, they would never accept interference of any foreign country in the peace negotiations and asked the Taliban to sit with Afghans for peace talks.

He said the Afghans desired a peace deal with clear objectives and they did not want foreign powers to put their words in Taliban's mouths.

A number of residents and participants of the event held similar views and welcomed Mohib's recent remarks about the Afghanistan peace process. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Ex-NSA Atmar...

alleged the incumbent government could not legally continue beyond the 22nd of May when its term came to an end. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Women, Children...

confirmed the incident and said he convinced the protestors to bury the dead and assured them the issue would be taken up with the authorities concerned.

The public representative said in the past too several civilians had been killed in such bombardments but so far no had paid attention to the issue.

A security official, who wished to go unnamed, told Pajhwok last night a clash occurred when security forces were leaving the area. He said foreign forces were also involved the nighttime operations.

On the other hand, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said 13 civilians had been killed in the Kunduz airstrike. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Govt Leaders...

to assist the families of the victims and take steps to heal the wounded of the incident.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah also condemned the attack and described it as a crime against humanity. "This attack has no any justification because it is in conflict with Islamic and human values," he said.

Attacks like this cannot stop progress in the country, but would further increase the determination of Afghans to build a strong Afghanistan, he said.

"Terrorists will carry out any type of violence and terror in order to achieve their goals, but with the help of the security forces and the people, they will not succeed," CEO said.

Abdullah said Afghan security and defense forces were ready to sacrifice for the defense of their country and such attacks will not remain unanswered. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Former Uruzgan...

The candidates are Abdul Jabar Qahraman and Saleh Mohammad Achakzai from Helmand province; Nasir Mubarez from the Kochis' constituency from Kandahar; Anwar Niazi from Parwan; Jalal Salehi from Kabul; Sayed Obaidullah Sadat from Ghazni; Otta Singh Khalsa a candidate of Afghan Sikh and Hindu from Kabul; Hayatulah Khan Rahmani from Nangarhar, were among the candidates who lost their lives in different incidents in various parts of the country. (Tolo news)

### (7) 58 Rebels, 4...

Meanwhile, the 209th Shaheen Military Corps confirmed the operation and said Taliban's key commanders Qari Qayamuddin, Qari Yahya, Qari Amir, Zainullah, Obaid, Ehsanullah and Haroon were among the dead.

On the other hand, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed five foreign troops and 13 Afghan security personnel were killed.

Seven NATO forces and 11 Afghan security personnel were wounded in a clash in the Telawoka area of Kunduz City. He said only three fighters were killed in the clash. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Govt Remains...

highly optimistic about the talks while others stress on engagement of all Afghans at such meetings.

"The political parties of Afghanistan, the Afghan government, the Taliban

and civil society organizations should reach to a conclusion which is acceptable for all Afghans," said Mohammad Ismail Khan, member of the leadership of Jamiat-e-Islami Party.

"It will be better if politicians should first create coordination among themselves and then they should sit and discuss national issues and ultimately they should talk with the Taliban," political analyst Jawed Faisal suggested.

Main topics of the meeting, sources said, will be the post-peace deal government, share of political parties in that government, and a ceasefire aimed at ending war and violence in the country.

"The Afghan politicians and Taliban will talk about the future of Afghanistan and about a government which will possibly include the entire Afghanistan," said Nazar Mohammad Mutmaen, a political affairs analyst.

"A national consensus should be created in this regard and an interim government should be established so that it can manage both peace and elections," said Qadir Shah, a spokesman for Mohammad Haneef Atmar's election team.

Afghan politicians recently said government has been invited to attend the Qatar meeting, but the Presidential Palace has said that the Afghan government will not attend meetings in Moscow format.

Afghans from different parts of the country said the achievements of the past 18 years should be reserved in the peace process.

"The talks should be positive and positive responses should be given," said Bashir, a Nangarhar resident.

"When they start negotiations, they should put people's demands and red lines on the table," said Arifa, a Balkh resident. (Tolo news)

### (9) Taliban Claims...

was chaos and people were running. Security forces asked them to calm down and then the second explosion happened," said Najibullah, who was in the stadium for the celebrations.

He said the explosions seemed to originate from where tents were set up for farmers to display their produce. The Persian new year is widely celebrated in Afghanistan but some hard-line Islamists oppose the festivities, saying they are un-Islamic.

Helmand, source of much of Afghanistan's opium, is one of several Afghan provinces in which insurgents have the greatest control and influence.

The latest attack came a year after a car bomb killed at least 14 people who had gathered for a wrestling match in Lashkar Gah.

Fighting has been relentless in Afghanistan amid recurring peace talks between U.S. and Taliban negotiators. The latest negotiating round wrapped up this month with both sides saying there was progress towards ending the 17-year war.

The U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction estimated in January that the government controlled or influenced just over half the country, covering nearly two-thirds of the population. (Reuters)

### (10) Q&A: The End...

countries continue to fester, the extremists could rise again.

What is over is the Islamic State group's physical "caliphate," after the Syrian Democratic forces, a Kurdish-led group supported by the United States, declared on Saturday the capture of the last tiny patch of territory controlled by the militants at the village of Baghouz, in eastern Syria.

That domain once stretched over large parts of Syria and Iraq, which the group conquered in a blitz in the summer of 2014, capturing towns and cities, including Mosul, Iraq's second-largest. The fighters bulldozed berms along the border and proclaimed a contiguous caliphate stretching across a third of both countries. At its height, the territory was the size of Britain, stretching nearly to the northern Syrian town of Aleppo to the outskirts of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, and home to 8 million people.

The extremists governed under a harsh and violent interpretation of Islam. They massacred those who resisted their rule and beheaded hostages including western journalists and foreign aid workers in gruesome videos circulated online. Alleged adulterers were

stoned to death, those believed to be gay were thrown from the tops of buildings, and children were made to watch the atrocities as part of their brainwashing. The group captured thousands of women from Iraq's Yazidi minority, forcing them into sexual slavery.

IS also carried out the more mundane actions of a state — collecting taxes, printing school textbooks, minting its own currency and restoring public infrastructure. It was an experiment in statehood that not even al-Qaida ever tried on a significant scale.

From its de facto capital of Raqqa, in northern Syria, its leaders plotted spectacular attacks abroad, including the 2015 Paris attacks that killed 130 people. As IS began to hemorrhage territory, it began opportunistically claiming attacks without any evidence of its involvement. (Fox News)

### (11) 'Stop Arms Sales...

Whether or not Trump will follow the friendly advice of the Asian giant this time remains to be seen. Bloomberg argues that Trump could potentially use F-16 sales as a bargaining chip in the ongoing trade negotiations. For now, the US administration has allegedly given a "tacit approval" to Taiwan's request to buy American jets, people familiar with the matter have told Bloomberg, noting that, for the sale to materialize, a formal proposal has to be issued by the State Department and the Pentagon first, before going to Congress for approval. (RT)

### (12) 'Total Elimination'...

US President Donald Trump rushed to boast of the US-led Coalition's victories. Earlier this week, he showed reporters a map showcasing how IS-controlled territory has dramatically shrunk over the years, and said that the militants "are losers and barely breathing."

On Wednesday, Trump even promised that IS will be "gone by tonight," despite the SDF still reporting that it was waging battles that day.

Syria's envoy to the UN, Bashar Jaafari, dismissed Trump's jubilant language as a "bluff" and "untrustworthy." "ISIS is not over yet in Syria," he said, adding that militants are still hiding in the Rukban refugee camp, located within the US-controlled area.

Russia and Syria have tried to get the camp closed down and have the refugees evacuated. Attempts to do so were prevented by the US military, Moscow said. The UN, meanwhile, has sounded the alarm on the horrible "stone age" conditions that refugees face in Rukban. (RT)

### (13) Macron Lectures...

going anti-austerity protests in France since last November and the French authorities have been criticised for their heavy-handed approach against the demonstrators.

And earlier this week, the French Interior Ministry announced plans to ban rallies in some parts of Paris following rioting last weekend.

Macron has also announced plans to deploy French soldiers in the streets this Saturday to secure government buildings and symbolic sites. Critics said this move was reminiscent of last time the army patrolled the streets in France, in the late 1940s.

"As I recall, [Louis XVI] Bourbon, the king of France, banned demonstrations back in 1789. We know what happened next. The French people are not to be excluded from their own streets," Galloy told RT. (RT)

### (14) Trudeau Used Term...

Trudeau of "silencing" former Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould.

Wilson-Raybould earlier testified that government officials pressured her to drop a probe into a high-profile corruption scandal involving a Canadian construction giant that allegedly used bribes to acquire lucrative contracts in Libya. The opposition wanted to summon the former attorney general for further hearings but their attempts were blocked by the Liberals.

Trudeau has denied the allegations and vowed that his government will "continue" to fight for gender equality and women's rights. (RT)

### (15) Somalia Govt...

gunmen stormed the building, he said.

The death toll is expected to rise as dozens of people were believed to be inside the building at the time of the attack since Saturday is a working day in Somalia.

Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the ongoing attack, saying that its fighters were inside the building, which is located not far from the headquarters of the Somali intelligence agency.

As the attack unfolded, gunfire could be heard from inside the building. White smoke billowed from the scene, according to witnesses.

A similar attack targeting a busy area in Mogadishu at the end of February killed at least 24 people. That attack also began with a pair of car bombs exploding in a popular area of Mogadishu where Somalis were relaxing at restaurants.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab frequently carries out suicide bombings targeting public places, hotels and government offices.

Al-Shabab, Africa's most active Islamic extremist group, has been fighting for years to take power and create an Islamic state in Somalia.

The group continues to mount lethal attacks despite being pushed out of Mogadishu. It mostly operates from rural areas in the country's south.

African Union peacekeepers stationed in Mogadishu and elsewhere in the country have helped Somali forces to keep al-Shabab fighters at bay. (AP)

### (16) New Zealand Reopens...

"I am very happy," he said after praying. "Allah is great to us. I was back as soon as we rebuilt, to pray."

Most victims of the shooting, which New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern quickly denounced as a terrorist attack, were migrants or refugees and their deaths reverberated around the Islamic world.

Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, who visited the Al Noor mosque, said the attack assailed human dignity.

"This is a moment of deep anguish for all of us, all of humanity," he said.

Police said they were reopening the nearby Linwood mosque, the second to be attacked during Friday prayers last week, as well.

New Zealand has been under heightened security alert since the attack with Ardern moving quickly with a new tough law banning some of the guns used in the March 15 shooting. [

Ashif Shaikh, who was in the Al Noor mosque on the day of the massacre in which two of his housemates were killed and who came back on Saturday, said he would not be deterred.

"It is the place where we pray, where we meet, we'll be back, yeah," he said. (Reuters)

### (17) Trump Decides...

Trump's tweet, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders explained it by saying: "President Trump likes Chairman Kim and he doesn't think these sanctions will be necessary."

But she did not specify which sanctions Trump spoke of.

The administration source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Trump's tweet had nothing to do with the Thursday sanctions, but rather was meant to refer to a decision to not go forward with additional large-scale sanctions on North Korea at this time.

There has been no sign of direct contact between Washington and Pyongyang since the collapse of the Feb. 27-28 summit, though Trump has stressed his good personal relationship with Kim and his administration has said repeatedly it is willing to reengage.

North Korea has warned it is considering suspending talks and may rethink a freeze on missile and nuclear tests, in place since 2017, unless Washington makes concessions. Hours after Thursday's sanctions announcement, North Korea on Friday pulled out of a liaison office with South Korea, a major setback for Seoul, which has pushed hard for engagement between Washington and Pyongyang.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on March 4 he was hopeful he could send a team to North Korea "in the next couple of weeks," but there has been no sign of a North Korean willingness to extend such an invitation. (Reuters)