

(1) No Electio...

the electoral system is not reformed, the elections will not be held," Abdullah said, calling it a strong commitment. "The special reform commission has been just formed and they will soon start their work. But there is no alternative to it. Afghanistan's next elections should lead the country towards stability, and real representatives of the people should be elected. Pointing to the elements trying to bring down the unity government, Abdullah emphasized that those elements would be disappointed as the Afghan forces with the continued support of its strong allies like NATO would suppress the insurgents. "The continued presence of U.S. forces helps the Afghan forces in conducting the operations. As the U.S. bases will remain open in Kandahar and Jalalabad, they will continue to their training, advising and intelligence support to the Afghan forces." In addition, Abdullah hoped that Afghanistan would become a self-reliant country in terms of security and economy until next ten years.

His statements come as both the unity government leaders, Ghani and Abdullah, were in the United States for five days where President Barack Obama announced no American soldier would leave Afghanistan until the end of 2015.

In this visit, the U.S. also pledged to keep funding all 352,000 Afghan forces until the end of 2017, and provide an aid of \$800 million USD for the unity government's reform agenda. (Tolonews)

(2) Another Week ...

decision is this that the President or one of the Vice President will introduce these 16 nominees to Parliament on Wednesday and Parliamentary Affairs has been preparing their documents and will send it on Saturday," Deputy Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Mohammad Karim Baz said on Friday.

Meanwhile, the Administrative Board of Parliament has urged the government to also introduce the nominees for the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Central Bank and Supreme Court as soon as possible. "The Parliament has asked the government to introduce the other nominees for MoD and other independent organizations," Deputy Speaker Mohammad Nazir Ahmadzai said. Nevertheless, Deputy Minister Baz echoed comments made by the national unity government defending a patient approach toward the appointments. "Introducing the MoD nominees and other independent organization needs time. The government has decided that next week it will introduce only 16 nominees to Parliament and do the nominees for other organization weeks later."

President Ashraf Ghani announced the names of the 16 nominees just before he left on his trip to The U.S. Last week. The naming of nominees is just the start of a long process in which it is unlikely all those put forward will be confirmed. MPs have said that they will not vote for nominees who will have dual citizenship. (Tolonews)

(3) Afghans, ...

Lt. Col. Zachary L. Miller, who heads coalition operations in Bagram, said: "We are neighbours and share the same security concerns. We are working hard with the elected and local leaders to ensure that Bagram is a safe place to live."

Qadusi was given updates on recent coalition and Afghan operations. The closing of the Korean Hospital and the status of its future were also discussed, the statement added. (Pajhwok)

(4) NATO Welcomes ...

joint press conference with President Ashraf Ghani on Tuesday that no American soldier would leave Afghanistan until the end of 2015.

"President Ghani has requested some flexibility on our draw down timelines. I've consulted with General Campbell in Afghanistan and my national security team and I've decided we will maintain our current posture of 9800 troops through the end of this year," Obama told the reporters in White House after holding a meeting with Ghani and CEO Abdullah.

The US-Afghan relations, notably strained during former president Hamid Karzai's government, have now been significantly improved since the formation of Afghan unity government which in its very first step signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA).

The relations further improved after the Ghani and Abdullah visited Washington where the United States made several pledges including the funding of total Afghan forces until 2017 and an aid of \$800 million to the

reform agenda of unity government. NATO formally ended its combat mission in Afghanistan by the end of 2014; however, a particular NATO personnel are remaining in the country for the new mission called "Resolute Support" aimed at training, advising and assisting the Afghan forces. (Tolonews)

(5) Ghani on ...

to end this state of hostilities. So, peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan is the primary piece," the president told a questioner.

Pakistan was threatened, particularly after the Peshawar school attack, he believed, remarking the terrorists neither required passports nor recognised nationalities, "We need to be able to deal regionally with a compact for stability in prosperity, otherwise we will all sink. And I'm hopeful that we will have sufficient wisdom not to sink, but swim together," Ghani said.

Over the last six months, he added, Afghanistan had gone from a defensive to an offensive position. Today, an unprecedented movement by the Afghan army is taking place in Helmand province and in a number of related areas.

The current year is going to be difficult in terms of security year, as Afghanistan had no break during the winter. The president claimed the Afghans had demonstrated their capability and will, but they were still going to be tested. (Pajhwok)

(6) Ghani Discusses...

for a prosperous Afghanistan, but acknowledge his frustrations with extremist activities in Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan's problems are not confined within the geography of Afghanistan. We are dealing with a changed ecology of terrorism..." Ghani said. "Without understanding terrorism as a system where both symbiotic and competitive relationships take place, we are not going to understand the full dimensions of security. The state system is a chain. When links are severed and when several links break simultaneously, the risk to the rest of the system increases, so we are faced with new threats because of the collapse of Syria, because of the collapse of Iraq, the collapse of Yemen. This needs to be appreciated."

Referring to the Taliban, Ghani said touted the national unity government's survival in its early, fragile months as proof of its ability to defy and withstand the insurgents ambitions.

"And then, of course, there's the phenomena of the Taliban as a distinctive ideological phenomenon but simultaneously a socio-economic one," he began.

"In this environment, what I'm proud to say is at the beginning, when authority was transferred to me, the attempt [by the Taliban] was to collapse the state like in Yemen, or like Syria, or others. But in the last six months, we've gone from a defensive position to an offensive position. Today, an unprecedented movement by the Afghan army is taking place in the Helmand province and a number of related areas."

Ghani's confidence was nonetheless tempered by a sober recognition that the near-term for Afghanistan would be an uphill battle. "But, the net result conclusion, is that 2015 is going to be a very difficult security year. We had no break during the winter. We have demonstrated our capability and will, but we are going to be tested," he said.

Looking beyond security, and beyond just Afghanistan's borders, Ghani spoke about his vision for Central Asia. "Now, in the next 25 years, Asia is going to become the largest continental economy," he asserted.

"What happened in the United States in 1869 when the continental railroads were integrated is very likely to happen in Asia in the next 25 years."

The national unity government has blazed forward with a number of economic projects in its first months in office, despite facing budget shortfalls and declining development aid rates. "Without Afghanistan, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia and West Asia will not be connected, so that is our first advantage. Our goal is to become a transit country - for transport, for power transmission, for gas pipelines, for fiber-optics. It's a network approach to the economy, because this will create massive jobs and opportunities," he said, while acknowledging the country's current infrastructural constraints.

Brining both his global security and regional economic remarks together, Ghani expressed hope for the US-Iranian nuclear talks. He said the lifting of sanctions on Iran could open up new opportunities for development in Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(7) Obama's Troop...

Obama announced to withdraw all the American forces by the end of year 2016.

However, after a meeting with the Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah in the White House on Tuesday, Obama announced to keep 9,800 troops until the end of 2015, which he earlier planned to decrease to 5,600.

But the U.S. House Speaker Boehner has said that the congress would review Obama's proposed U.S. troop level in Afghanistan.

"Arbitrary political deadlines should never be put ahead of ensuring success that we have worked so hard to achieve," Boehner said. "We will review it closely, specifically President Obama's troop level announcement for the remainder of 2015."

Welcoming Ghani's address to the congress, Boehner called the Afghan leader's message "powerful."

"I had an honor to have President Ghani from Afghanistan here in the congress this week. His message of peace and his tributes to the service and sacrifice of our brave Americans was powerful," he said. Meanwhile, the NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg has supported Obama's decision on slowing the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

"I welcome President Obama's decision to extend the period where US forces will remain close to 10,000 troops in Afghanistan," Stoltenberg told reporters.

He noted that the decision was a sign of strong commitment of the United States and NATO to Afghanistan.

The US-Afghan relations, which were notably strained during former president Hamid Karzai's government, have now been significantly improved since the formation of Afghan unity government which in its very first step signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with Washington.

The relations further improved after Ghani and Abdullah visited Washington where the United States made several pledges including the funding of total Afghan forces until 2017 and an aid of \$800 million to the reform agenda of unity government. (Tolonews)

(8) UN Remains ...

in the region and the importance of Afghan-led and owned peace and reconciliation talks, the statement said.

During the talks, Ban underlined the historical relationship between Afghanistan and the United Nations and reiterated the organisation's continuing commitment to supporting the Afghan government and people.

In Kabul, the Presidential Palace said Ghani updated the UN chief on the overall security environment in the country, particularly against the backdrop of regional diplomatic efforts for Afghan-led reconciliation. (Pajhwok)

(9) Abdullah Notes ...

evidence of militants not receiving support from Pakistan. "We have not seen that. But we are hopeful this would be the case," Abdullah said in response to a question on Pakistan's support to the Taliban.

Discussions on bilateral trade and cooperation with Pakistan were moving in the right direction, but the ground realities remained the same on counter-terrorism issues, even though the civilian leaders were on the same page with Afghanistan on the need to crush all terrorist groups, he said.

"The ground is being prepared and contacts are being established, a mechanism is being discussed for coordination. These are continuous efforts on both sides. But at the moment the ground situation remains the same," he reiterated.

Realities on the ground had not changed, the CEO said of the continued existence of the Taliban's Quetta Shura. Recent terrorists attacks in Pakistan, he noted, had created, an environment against terrorism. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was keen to address the challenge, he believed.

"The threat is common. We can deal with it, if we don't distinguish between these groups. They now say terrorism is terrorism. There is no difference between good and bad terrorists. We are not pessimistic; there is a much more positive environment. But we have to work hard to translate it into action," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(10) Plan to Cut ...

timeline for military personnel to remain in Afghanistan through this year," the White House press secretary.

Josh Earnest explained Obama's intention had been unchanged to draw down the forces by the end of 2016 to protect the embassy and maintain the military-to-military relationship. He told reporters the change in pol-

icy did not affect that endpoint and that was important for the people to understand, given sort of the long trajectory of the drawdown.

"It was only a few years ago that we had more than 100,000 US military personnel in Afghanistan. We're down to about 10,000. We will remain at that level of about 10,000 through the end of this year.

"But by the end of 2016, we'll be down to about 1,000 troops, again, just to defend the embassy and to fulfill this security cooperation relationship," Earnest said.

The decision on a drawdown of troops from 10,000 to 1,000 would be taken in consultation with the US military commanders on the ground. "There will also be conversations with the Afghan government. We are partners with them, and we will continue to be partners with them even after the end of 2016," Earnest concluded. (Pajhwok)

(11) Delegation Reaches...

He said the men had gone missing displaced during fighting in the area. More than 20 people, kidnapped on same highway some weeks back, have already been released. A month back, 30 passengers were abducted on the Kabul-Kandahar highway in the Shahjoi district of Zabul. (Pajhwok)

(12) Peace Talks ...

the start of negotiations did not mean reaching peace overnight, he cautioned, saying only the process would get off the ground. Pakistan had made it clear to the Taliban they need to talk to the government of Afghanistan, he admitted.

Abdullah stressed women would be represented in talks with the Taliban. "Women would be represented in the talks, which have not started yet. There have been contacts in order to facilitate talks."

He spurned reports the Taliban were asking for seven-eight provinces, saying that was not the way to stabilise a country or achieve peace. The conditions for talks with the Taliban remained the same: Give up violence, sever links with terrorist groups and accept the constitution. They could fight politically for what they wanted to achieve within the realm of law, he argued.

"Preserving achievements of the past 14 years, is a duty and a responsibility that we can't ignore. This includes the constitutional rights of our people. Under no circumstances, such compromise would lead to peace. It would lead to further chaos," the CEO remarked. (Pajhwok)

(13) Ghani Aims ...

likely to happen in Asia in the next 25 years," said Ghani. "Without Afghanistan, Central Asia, South Central Asia, East Asia and West Asia will not be connected," President Ghani said.

His remarks at the Council on Foreign Relations, a New York think tank, were followed after he secured a commitment from President Barack Obama on Tuesday to keep more U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

He said the planned railroad could allow goods to reach Europe in five days, via the Caspian Sea, while insisting that his goal was turn Afghanistan into a transit country.

The planned railroad will have a length of 2,237 miles and is expected to eventually become linked to China, besides allowing Afghanistan to transport its wealth of mineral deposits, including lithium, copper and gas and oil reserves, which the Pentagon estimated was worth roughly \$1 trillion in 2010. (KP)

(14) New Afghanistan ...

to the World Bank. The central bank has stopped processing banking licence applications until the new law is approved, said Rustaqi.

The new banking law and the central bank's rules will cover areas such as operating procedures, contract specifications and the operation of a centralised sharia board to determine whether products obey Islamic principles. Banks with Islamic windows include Afghan United Bank, Ghaznafar Bank and state-owned New Kabul Bank. Afghanistan International Bank launched an Islamic window last year.

The central bank's Islamic banking rules have been developed over the past year by Afghanistan Holding Group and Malaysia's Amanie Advisors, with funding from Harakat-AICFO, a non-profit body which channels funds from foreign donors into projects that help to develop the Afghan economy. (Reuters)

(15) President Receives...

rejected by the Ministry of Hajj. Pointing to the widespread participation of Afghans in the April 5

elections, Ghani said 38 percent of women participated in the polls in the hope of a better future. (Pajhwok)

(16) Start of Peace ...

negotiated peace with the Taliban for many years, with a number of signals of progress, shortly followed by disappointment. From President Hamid Karzai to the new national unity government, engaging the Taliban in dialogue has been a top priority, yet a process perpetually bogged down in uncertainty and clandestine activities.

"Warm slogans and promises that used to be heard during the days of Mr. Karzai are heard again, many benefits are given to Taliban, but the Taliban have never stopped fighting," Kabul MP Hafeez Mansoor said on Thursday. "In his last days, Hamid Karzai's attitude was different than his first days in office, today it's the same story."

Although national unity government leaders signaled promising progress on getting the Taliban to the negotiating table by leveraging support from Pakistan and China at the start of the 2015, in recent weeks, that brief budding of optimism has been clouded over by the familiar opacity and delays characteristic of past pushes for talks. (Tolonews)

(17) US Lawmakers ...

successfully, the speaker said, adding they would review the specifics of President Obama's announcement regarding force levels.

Congressman Ed Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Eliot Engel hailed the presidential address as a powerful symbol of the enduring bond between the US and Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(18) Five Held on ...

The door of the bank treasury could not be opened by a single person as the keys and pass codes were with three authorized persons, Hudawal said, asking the head treasurer, one of those authorized persons, for clarification.

"All of them are under the investigations," Hudawal said. "We put pressures on them to return back the money."

The Parliamentarians also spoke over the issue, asking the government to recover the

"Properties of these individuals should be sold out as soon as possible in order to recover the money," MP Fariba Ahmadi said.

The economic experts, however, criticized the government for failing to properly assess the financial risks, despite the biggest experience from the Kabul Bank scandal. (Tolonews)

(19) Thousands Rally ...

youth and women took part in the demonstration, shouting slogans against the government and warning of bigger protests in

Claiming government officials were involved in the assassination, the protestors asked President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah to thoroughly investigate the incident.

One of the demonstrators, Maulvi Abul Rashid Mujaddedi said the police officer always tried his best to maintain security and let people live in peace. He mourned Khan's assassination a big loss. (Pajhwok)

(20) Funding Crisis...

student should pay one afghani to their school each day. In a school where 500 students study, the daily collection should be 500 afghanis."

"One afghani each will not burdened students. There are students who can pay 50 afs a day. The money collection is crucial to overcoming teachers' shortage," he said.

To implement the plan, the director said, he had travelled to various districts, discussing it with local residents who had endorsed the idea. He said parents were ready to pay the money in return for educating their children. (Pajhwok)

(21) Daesh Boldface...

Taliban and Daesh extend to peaceful province such as Daikundi, then not only will a district come on verge of collapse, but it will increase the likelihood of human tragedy," Daikundi MP Assadullah Saadati said. (Tolonews)

(22) 14 Applications

seeing the message would donate blood.

He said the security app had been named Farkhanda and everyone facing a security problem could use the Farkhanda app to convey his/her message to the authorities concerned for an early action.

Farkhanda, a 27-year-old woman, was lynched by a mob of men exactly a week ago in the heart of Kabul after a cleric accused her of burning a copy of the Quran.

But investigations later revealed no incident of a Quran's burning had taken place in the area. (Pajhwok)

(23) 3 Senior...

told reporters tribal elders involved in the sordid episode had been referred to judicial organs. The action had been taken on the basis of a litany of public complaints.

On the other hand, dozens of tribal elders and social council members from the district rallied in Lashkargah against the decision. They alleged the governor and some MPs from Helmand, seeking to further their personal interests, were behind the dismissals.

Omari, the sacked district head, told Pajhwok Afghan News, challenged the authorities to produce evidence substantiating their claim. He asked since his appointment had been made in line with people's demand, how he could ask them for bribes. (Pajhwok)

(24) Growers in ...

serious issue and the provincial government - concerned about it - had been trying to resolve it.

The official said market access had a direct impact on the quality of products. Around 500 metric tonnes of refined seeds have been distributed to farmers. (Pajhwok)

(25) Mob Justice...

Akbar." Shocking videos that immediately went viral on social media show the vulnerable woman, despite being kicked and punched, wanted to stand on her feet, but was thrown back repeatedly down to the ground. With messy hair and bleeding face, she screamed for help, trying to say something in her defence, but nobody gave her a chance.

The blows, kicks and strikes did not satisfy the angry mob and soon some started hitting her with stones and bricks. Others jumped on her legs and kicked her in the stomach. All these went on, according to some witnesses, for hours.

But she could still stand up as some took her to the roof of the shrine and pushed her back to the ground. This happened in full view of many police officers. All her efforts and pleas to find help and a way out did not succeed. She then was dragged into the street and was driven over on the chest by a red Toyota Corolla. The mob then dragged her half-naked bleeding body up to 200 metres and threw her into the Kabul River where the water has dried up. (Pajhwok)

(26) Some Civil ...

lower house member from Khost, Osuli claimed corruption had reached its height in many provincial departments, including judiciary, due to interferences from some senior government officials. (Pajhwok)

(27) Rebel Groups

provincial peace committee secretary, said the illegal armed group had been active in Jalgi district.

The peace committee's director, Abdul Samad Stanikzai, said so far more than 1,200 insurgents had renounced violence and joined the peace process in Baghlan since 2011. Most of them have been provided with job opportunities, he added. (Pajhwok)

(28) Norway Taliban-

Clark her opinion of the Scandinavian country's latest move.

"Having face-to-face interaction in a neutral venue with interesting content on the agenda is generally useful. Moreover, 2014 was the most violent year on record since 2001. There is an urgency to finding ways to end the war." According to her, an average of about 55 Afghans are either injured or killed each day, with 800,000 people now displaced internally.

"The invite to both sides to the training course move is a small step in a possibly larger dance, but it is an interesting step, nonetheless," says Kate Clark. (AAN)

(29) Essential...

rice at 1,800afs and a 16-kg tin of ghee at 980afs. Moneychanger Ahmad Shah Salehi said the buying rate of one US dollar was 57.90afs, while 1,000 Pakistani rupees accounted for 563afs. Last week's exchange value of the dollar stood at 57.89afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 564afs. (Pajhwok)

(30) 10 Taliban ...

News the offensive was launched at 3:30am when the fighters were meeting in the village. Three Afghan National Police (ANP) personnel also suffered slight injuries in the operation, the official said, adding the wounded were currently under medical treatment. Arms and ammunition were seized by security forces during the intelligence-driven offensive, Khawar said. The Taliban have not yet comment. (Pajhwok)