

(1) Landmines...

he asked the international community to cooperate with Afghanistan in implementing the plan. United Nations (UN)'s deputy special representative for Afghanistan, Mark Bogdan, who also represents the demining programme in the country, told the ceremony that demining programmes had been successful in Afghanistan during the past two and a half decades.

He promised UN's continued cooperation with the demining programmes. Calling insecurity one of the major obstacles to the demining process, the UN envoy said that the Afghan forces should ensure security of demining workers during their operations. (Pajhwok)

(2) Italy Pledges...

in the past had donated 30 million Euros for the railway project and the new aid package would be spent on supervision of the project and protection of the railway tracks.

Construction work the railroad has been slow going due to the absence of financial sources, the statement added.

Herat governor Rahimi appreciated Italy's cooperation towards the project and said people's economic and industrial situation would get improve in Herat with completion of the railway line. (Pajhwok)

(3) New Parliamentary...

interests alone, so we created this group for the protection of national interests," Haris said, adding other objectives of the grouping was to defend people's rights and cooperate with the house administrative board.

He said Senator Mohammad Alam Ezidyar from central Panjsher province had been elected as the group chairman, Amina Afzalli from western Herat province as deputy chairperson, Taib Ata from eastern Kunar province as second deputy chairman, Anar Kali Hunaryar from southeastern Khost as secretary. (Pajhwok)

(4) Govt. Asked...

officials. We ask the government to fill these vacancies as soon as possible," Mujaddedi said.

On peace talks, he said "peace is a need, so we welcome any positive step for peace. The council also welcomes Hekmatyar-led HIA's willingness to enter peace talks with the government. (Pajhwok)

(5) I Can't be ...

in a show of strength over the removal of billboard photographs of VP and the governor.

It was a conspiracy to disrupt peace in this city. I don't want to boast about my achievements, but this is the only province in the country that is doing great in terms of security, development, reconstruction and so on. They could not accept this and want to ruin it. ...

Noor told NYT he was required to resign, "we decide what to do next and who should become governor here. They cannot remove me by force -- I am with my people." While denying cutting a deal with Ghani on standing down, the governor said they had twice discussed changes. Noor said he had informed the president he did not want to be governor forever.

"I gave an example that if still water is left in one place too long, it will start to stink. But I also told him, "I don't want to be a victim of your campaign slogans," he explained.

The last presidential election was the most rigged vote in the world, he alleged, saying the sitting government had been installed based on a political accord between Ghani and CEO Abdullah.

The two-year agreement will remain effective for four more months, according to Noor, who alleged a mockery had been made of the government and the people's will.

"Although our team is in government, unfortunately they don't listen to us. The political agreement is not being implemented, unfortunately."

He regretted that apart from the creation of the cabinet, nothing other parts of the deal had been implemented yet. The CEO was not taken into confidence on decisions at the national level, Noor complained. (Pajhwok)

(6) South Korean ...

which to rehabilitate forests. Meanwhile, Afghan Foreign Minister Rabbani offered his appre-

ciation to South Korea for their contribution to Afghanistan in various spheres such as security, health, higher education and capacity building programs. Rabbani expressed hope that South Korea will also help Afghanistan in natural science fields and in the technology sector. (Tolonews)

(7) Afghan Air ...

are preparing for night operations.

We are ready to give any kind of help to the ground military operations."

Meanwhile, an Air Force commander, Sayed Sulaiman Shah, said: "We have not reached that level yet to launch air strikes all over Afghanistan but we are ready to defend the country."

The Afghan Air Force is reportedly faced with a lack of equipment along with other challenges but despite this they have played a sound role in defeating militants on the battle fields. (Tolonews)

(8) Peace Can't...

Muslimyar said.

"I am optimistic about the peace talks with the HIA. But the war will continue even if the group reconciles with the government because Pakistan's intelligence interference is ongoing."

Muslimyar said if Al Qaeda was not rooted out; there would be only security in areas under HIA influence. He said peace was the only option to end the war and peace could not be established through the war.

"Get the vote of people like us and share your ideas with us," he told the HIA members, while asking the government to continue peace talks until peace was restored countrywide. (Pajhwok)

(9) Terror Threat...

Karzai said the mechanism could play an important role in maintaining security in the region.

He wanted increasing terrorist and other armed groups' activities posed a serious threat to the region. Afghanistan was the biggest victim of terrorism that could be defeated through joint cooperation, he added.

United Nations (UN) Special Envoy to Afghanistan Nicholas Haysom also said security threats were on the rise in the region. He agreed eliminating the threat needed regional cooperation.

Besides pursuing peace talks, the Afghan government was also fighting against militant groups, Haysom said, calling for the implementation of the agreements reached at last year's Heart of Asia Conference in Islamabad.

The fifth Heart of Asia Conference, attended by foreign ministers from member countries, was held in the Pakistani capital on December 9. The next conference is scheduled to be organised in India.

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the UAE are part of the initiative launched in 2011.

The 14 countries have been pursuing confidence-building measures since 2013 in areas of disaster management, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, trade and investment, regional infrastructure and education. (Pajhwok)

(10) Farmers, ...

Some of the money would be directly given to 3000 farmers by the FMFB and the rest spent on purchasing agricultural equipment and machinery by the ARFC. The assistance has been provided by the Agricultural Development Fund (ADF) of the USAID.

Since 2010, with the cooperation of ADF, the ministry has extended loans worth more than 4.4 billion afghanis to 35,000 farmers and agriculturists in 33 provinces of the country, Zamir said. (Pajhwok)

(11) HIA Supports ...

"The HIA is against cultural restrictions imposed on females and Western values. We want to give women all their right offered by Islam."

While firmly committed to providing women every right, the HIA was against the exploitation of females in the name of culture and tradition, Amin said, opposing women wearing indecent dress and walking the streets of Kabul.

Karim answered a volley of questions from women rights activists. Most of the questions pertained to women's role in politics, peace talks and girls' education. He articulated offered the HIA view on the subjects.

Meanwhile, Kabul University teacher Shahla Farid said Afghan women had experienced multiple woes during the Soviet invasion of the country and under the Taliban regime. They had been deprived of their basic rights, she alleged.

She claimed the constitution had been approved in haste and there was room for amendments to it. Women's rights should be discussed and paid more attention during peace talks, the academic stressed.

Amin observed: "HIA favours women's role in the political, economic and social spheres, but not to the extent that their presence becomes a source of moral corruption."

He insisted the party honestly desired peace, national solidarity and justice across Afghanistan. He alleged some foreign and internal elements were against peace and stability, creating hurdles in the way of negotiations.

The HIA believes if peace talks with the government succeeded, most of its members in Taliban ranks will join mainstream politics and renounce violence. Most of such individuals are followers of the Taliban's splinter group led by Mullah Rassoul.

Another member of the HIA team, Attiqullah Sapi, said the party was running eight schools, including four for girls, in the Nasrat Mena camp on the outskirts of Peshawar, the capital of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. (Pajhwok)

(12) Minister of...

employees of her ministry and to fighting drugs.

"We recorded a 19 percent decrease in the opium cultivation, established four strategic communication programs, established a 1,500 bed complex building for addicts in Kabul and achieved tens of other achievements in other spheres during 1394," she said.

She said that almost 90 projects had been done by the ministry during 1394 and work is ongoing on a number of other projects related to the ministry of counter narcotics.

"We are struggling to achieve more success in capacity building programs, do more cooperation for alternative cultivation, increase awareness about the harms of drugs and undertake more comprehensive programs which are helpful to get out of the problems," she added. (Tolonews)

(13) Construction ...

security of the road. Residents of the area welcomed this move by government, but said the road should not be left incomplete. (Tolonews)

(14) Car-Truck...

into a truck in GardiKas area of Qarghayee district at around 6am. He said two people were killed and three others injured in the collision. The wounded men were evacuated to Nangarhar hospitals after receiving preliminary treatment.

Mirwais, a passenger, said: "We saw the Corolla that ploughed into the truck on reaching the accident area. The trucker fled and two people died and three others were injured."

Traffic officials said that the accident was caused by the car driver's carelessness.

Two days earlier, 11 people were killed and seven others injured in a traffic accident in western Herat province. (Pajhwok)

(15) MP Rejects ...

certain people are trying to damage his image.

Ahmadzai, who represents Kuchis at the Wolesi Jirga or Lower House of the Parliament, criticized local media for publishing the news without consulting him for comments.

He said those who have published the news need to apologize.

The news broke out in a number of local and foreign media on Friday stating that a dancing girl has registered rape case against Shir Ali in Peshawar.

The report further stated that the dancing girl was invited for performance but later subjected to rape.

Media reports also stated that police raided the house of Shir Ali in Hayatabad Phase II but he had already escaped leaving a passport and other documents behind.

Police claimed that he also had a citizenship card for Pakistan. (KP)

(16) Pistachio, ...

anti-epileptic, contraceptive or

abortifacien and could be used as antidote for opium.

It is for the first time that the medicinal plant has been grown in Samangan where 43,000 hectares of pistachio plants are cultivated. (Pajhwok)

(17) Taliban ...

heavy machineguns, two Kalashnikovs, 28 rocket shells, military uniforms and magazines during the riad.

The forces also recovered six textbooks which were about recruitment, administration and military commission activities of insurgents.

Elsewhere, unknown gunmen shot dead a man and injured two others in eastern Laghman province.

Sarhadi Zwak, the governor's spokesman, said the gunmen opened fire at three motorcyclists in Mehtarlam, the provincial capital, killing one and injuring two.

The injured have been shifted to Mehtarlam civil hospital and their condition was stated to be stable, he said. (Pajhwok)

(18) Islamabad ...

Pakistan does not have full control over the Taliban. They said that Pakistan can only put pressure on the militant group.

"Afghan government thinks that Pakistan has full influence over the Taliban and can do everything. It is not true. Pakistan can only put pressure on the Taliban and this way Taliban will be compelled to join the peace process," said Mahmood Shah, a retired Pakistan military officer.

"Yes, Pakistan's government can put pressure on the Taliban, because families of the leaders of the group are living in Pakistan and this pressure will compel them to talk peace," said Fakhar Kakakhel, a Pakistani journalist.

These allegations come at a time that Islamabad has long been accused of supporting Taliban militants.

Pakistan however pledged to bring the group to the negotiation table last month, but it did not deliver on its promise. (Tolonews)

(19) Nimroz ...

of evidence of their involvement in the kidnap-slaying incident, Ahmad continued.

He explained the decision of the primary court was not final and the accused could appeal it in the appellate court.

Abdul Qayyum, grandfather of the child, praised the primary court verdict, urging its implementation at the earliest possible. He said the decision's enforcement would discourage kidnappers and their ensure protection of children.

Maulvi Bashir Ahmad, a religious scholar, said: "We want the implementation of the court's decision and request judicial organisations to punish the kidnappers." The kidnappers had demanded 500,000 afghanis in ransom. (Pajhwok)

(20) Women among ...

said. Exact casualty figures and financial losses are yet to be ascertained, but disaster management teams will arrive soon in the affected areas to assess the situation. He said dozens of passengers traveling from Shahrastan district to Nieli were in trouble as a key bridge was destroyed by floods in Sangsar area.

Healthcare teams and aid organisations had reached the district to help resolve residents' problems, the official concluded. (Pajhwok)

(21) Syria ...

United States are discussing with Moscow," Assad's long-time ally, said Kodmani.

"We are awaiting confirmation that the USA are maintaining their position to refuse to rehabilitate Assad," she told French media. (Agencies)

(22) Iran Plans...

its ships to foreign firms after the cancellation of sanctions," he added.

Iran owns the world's largest fleet of oil supertankers consisting of 42 VLCCs (very large crude carriers), each able to carry 2 million barrels of oil. (PressTV)

(23) Uncertainty ...

Turkey's interior minister, EkanAla, was quoted by the pro-government newspaper Akşam as saying 500 people were expected in Turkey from Greece on Monday. Afghans, Iraqis and Pakistanis would be deported to their countries, he said. (Reuters)

(24) Flights Resume...

of the attacks loomed large.

Two big white tents were serving as temporary check-in facilities to replace the blast-hit departure hall, and passengers were asked to come three hours before departure to allow time for tight new security checks. (AFP)

(25) 22 Militants ...

part of the town.

But the troops have been advancing slowly in order to give opportunity to thousands of civilians trapped between the troops' lines and the IS militants in downtown Heet to flee their homes, the source said.

Meanwhile, teams of explosive experts are defusing dozens of roadside bombs and booby-trapped vehicles and buildings planted earlier by IS militants on the roads leading to central the town, the source added. (Xinhua)

(26) Execution...

close by. At that point, the soldier - who cannot be named because of a gag order - approached Al Sharif, aimed his gun at the young man's head and pulled the trigger. (Agencies)

(27) Fire Engulfs...

over 3,500 square meters (37,670 square feet) by the late afternoon. At least one firefighter was hospitalized.

The Defense Ministry moved to a new headquarters on the Moskva River in 2014 but still kept the old building near the Kremlin.

The ministry said the fire will not affect its core operations since the military departments have long moved to the new headquarters. It said the old building on Znamenka Street houses the departments in charge of procurement and services.

There were no immediate reports about the cause of the fire. (AP)

(28) Nigeria ...

The military spokesperson said that at no time did soldiers block the convoy of the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 7 Division, Brig-Gen. Vincent Ezugwu, who visited the troops in the Alagarno forest.

Usman said though the troops had experienced some logistics challenges, they never behaved in the manner reported by the on-line medium.

"While acknowledging that indeed troops that captured the strategic forest of Alagarno experienced some logistics problem that included water shortage, which is normal in war situation, it is not true that the troops behaved in the manner reported," he said. (Xinhua)

(29) Saudi-Led ...

al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) seized the coastal city of Mukalla and used several government compounds and military bases as training centers for new recruits.

Yemen, an impoverished Arab country, has been gripped by one of the most active regional al-Qaida insurgencies in the Middle East.

The AQAP, also known locally as Ansar al-Sharia, emerged in January 2009. It had claimed responsibility for a number of attacks on Yemen's army and government institutions. (Xinhua)

At Least 45 Killed as Torrential Rains Flood Parts of KP, Azad Kashmir

PESHAWAR/MUZAFFARABAD - At least 45 people were killed and more than 30 injured as heavy rains inundated various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir on Sunday, government officials said.

KP government spokesman Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani confirmed 37 casualties in the province and said "most of the damage was caused by land sliding and incidents of roof collapse". Deputy Commissioner Neelam District Abdul Majeed Kiyani said that rescue teams recovered eight bodies buried under the rubble.

"Rescue officials, with the help of locals, recovered five women and three children buried under the rubble," said Kiyani. Ghani said that KP government has initiated relief work and the government machinery is working round the clock to carry out rescue and relief activities.

The worst-hit area was Kohistan

where 12 deaths were reported, followed by Shangla district where rains and landslides killed 10 people, The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) official said. Two people died in Swat while one person each in Malakand, Mansehra, Upper Dir, Charsadda and Chitral. (Agencies)

EU Program for Inactive Young People Draws Mixed Reactions in Italy

ROME - The implementation of a program funded by the European Union (EU) which aimed at bringing inactive Italian young people close to the labor system has sparked mixed reactions in the country.

Young people are the age group most affected by the employment crisis in Italy. The inactive ones refer to those who do not have jobs, neither study nor actively look for work.

Since the end of 2014, the "Youth Guarantee" program has offered inactive people aged between 15 and 29 opportunities of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship.

However, among over 1 million people enrolled in the program, only slightly more than 30,000 have obtained labor contracts. The slice of success was too small, according to la Stampa daily which dedicated an analysis on this.

Several people who have joined the program told Xinhua that they were let down.

"I enrolled in the program almost a year ago," said a girl who lives near Bari, a city in southern Italy.

The girl who asked to be anonymous, said the only offer for her was an unsuccessful interview with a company. She got "a thousand excuses that the funds had been blocked," thus the company said it was not able to pay her the expected 450 euros per month. (Xinhua)

Several Explosions Rock Industrial Zone in Southwestern France

PARIS - Three consecutive explosions rocked an industrial zone near the southwestern French city of Bordeaux early Sunday, local media reported.

There were no immediate reports of casualties and damage.

The blasts, along with strong fire, broke out at around 6:40 local time (0440 GMT) in a company specializing in chemical products transportation at the industrial zone in Bassens, near Bordeaux, French radio France Bleu Gironde reported on its Twitter.

Firefighters had already been on the scene to conduct rescue operations.

"The situation seems under control," Mayor of Bassens Jean-Pierre Turon told news channel iTele, adding that two firefighters were slight injured in the rescue operations.

The outbreak of a fire may have caused the explosion of two or three tankers filled with gas, he said. (Xinhua)

Islamic State Executes 15 of its own Near Raqqa, Syria: Monitor

BEIRUT - Islamic State has killed 15 of its members in the largest execution of the militant group's security services so far in Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Sunday.

The killings followed the arrest of 35 members on Saturday in Raqqa, according to Britain-based Observatory, which monitors the five-year-old Syrian conflict through a network of sources on the ground.

The members were killed in connection with the assassination of senior Islamic State figure Abu Hija al-Tunisi, who died on Wednesday in an air strike, the Observatory said.

Reuters could not independently verify this information. (Reuters)