

**(1) 'Heart of...**

New Delhi. The foreign minister is accompanied by a 38-member delegation from Iran's Chamber of Commerce, 15 Iranian knowledge-based companies and 8 trade banks. (IRNA)

**(2) 400 HIA ...**

HIA has prepared a list of 2,600 prisoners, but the release of 2,000 eligible prisoners was likely to become fixed, Karim told Pajhwok Afghan News on Saturday.

He said the HIA was going to present a list of 600 prisoners to the government on Saturday or Sunday.

He said the 600 prisoners affiliated with HIA had committed no crime and no one had filed lawsuit against them, and it had been proved.

He hoped cases of 400 prisoners would be reviewed and released from jail in a week because the government had promised to do so.

"We hope, Inshallah, 400 prisoners will be released if the government delegation shows seriousness in this regard."

He said the 400 inmates would be set free from Pul-i-Charkhi Jail in Kabul and Bagram Jail in Parwan with media coverage. Mohammad Akram Khpalwak, advisor to the president on political affairs, said judicial and security organs were busy collecting comprehensive information about the prisoners listed by HIA. He said the list of prisoners who were eligible for release based on the agreement would be sent to Ghani for approval. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Ghani-Modi ...** attendance, according to The Hindu. As part military aid, India has already delivered seven helicopters to Afghanistan. A trilateral framework with Russia is being developed on supplying spares and conducting repairs on other aircraft in Afghanistan. A statement from the Ministry of External Affairs said Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai and India's Finance Minister Arun Jaitley would give a joint media briefing on Sunday.

The Hindu reported Iran Foreign Minister Javed Zarif might make a presentation on the benefits of Chabahar for Afghanistan. India plans a big "reach-out event" to lure more countries to the port project.

The planned event in Chabahar will likely involve not merely the governments and experts, as well as industry representatives. It would highlight benefit from enhanced connectivity through Chabahar for other nations. (Pajhwok)

**(4) New Commissioners..** setting out electoral zones and also has to present the list of IEC secretariat candidates to the president. "If other government departments cooperate with us, we in cooperation with the ministry of interior and the central statistics organization will prepare the list of voters and will specify electoral zones," he added. The institutions overseeing the election process meanwhile said doing all the necessary work and bringing electoral reforms will not happen soon. "First reforms should be brought in the IEC. The commissioners may carry out the duties, but it is very difficult for them as they do not have experience," said Habib ul-Rahman Nang, a member of the Afghan Civil Society and Elections Network (ACSEN).

The ambassadors of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) met with the IEC members in the last few days and insisted on bringing reforms in the IEC.

The ambassadors to Afghanistan promised the IEC members they would support parliamentary and district council elections. (Tolonews)

**(5) Malign Influence...** Afghan government going forward," he remarked. He asked Afghan partners and members of the political oppo-

sition not to allow the political process to undermine security gains they had made this year at a great cost.

One possible risk of political instability was a fracture, but they had not seen this happen within security forces, he noted.

"Second concern would be the malign influence of external actors and particularly Pakistan, Russia and Iran. We are concerned about the external enablement of the insurgent or terrorist groups inside Afghanistan, in particular where they enjoy sanctuary or support from outside governments," Nicholson said.

The US is also concerned about the convergence of terrorist groups. "Of the 20 groups, 13 are in Afghanistan and seven in Pakistan. The morphing of these groups into more virulent strains or the fact that sometimes they cooperate and then the hole becomes greater than the sum of the parts," he said. Nicholson said the Afghan security forces held approximately 64 percent of the population. This is down slightly from 68 percent that he talked about in September.

"The decrease has not meant more control to the Taliban. We see them still holding less than 10 percent of the population. More of the country -- slightly more is now contested. They still hold roughly two-thirds of the population," he said. Since the start of the Taliban's campaign in April, Afghan security forces had prevented them from accomplishing their strategic objectives, he said, adding the rebels had been unable to mass because of Afghan and coalition airpower.

"This did not succeed in causing any cities to fall. They have also conducted high-profile attacks that have resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties, but the overall number of high-profile attacks is lower than last year," he said. He said the Haqqani network continued to pose the greatest threat to US troops in Afghanistan. "The Haqqanis hold five American citizens hostage right now. I think this is worth remembering as we think about the network. They remain a principal concern of ours. And they do enjoy sanctuary inside Pakistan," Nicholson concluded. (Pajhwok)

**(6) India, Afghanistan ..** prospects of its fruit and carpet industries while it battles a deadly Taliban insurgency. Afghan director general for macro fiscal policies Khalid Payenda said the potential for trade with India, the largest market in the region, was far greater than allowed by land and so the two countries had decided to use the air route.

"That would be air cargo between Afghanistan and India. We have a lot of potential for trade on both sides. On our side, it's mostly fruit and dried fruit and potentially through India to other places for products like carpets and others."

He said that a joint venture involving an Afghan and an Indian cargo firm would be set up and that the two governments were working to set up infrastructure at Kabul and Delhi airports. An Indian government source attending the meeting in Amritsar said air cargo route details were still being worked out and could include Kandahar as a point of origin for shipping fruit directly to India.

Indian foreign ministry official Gopal Baglay, who oversees Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, said several proposals were being discussed to improve Afghanistan's trade and transport links. "There have been very many ideas on how to enhance connectivity, overcome current challenges and also expand the trade basket," he said. Pakistan's top foreign policy adviser, Sartaj Aziz, will be attending the conference on Sunday. (Reuters)

**(7) 3 Former MoI ...** were banned from travelling abroad as part of the Attorney

General Office investigation.

All other officials of MoI public protection department's procurement section have been suspended and referred to the Attorney General Office.

The presidential order's clause first states all officials who have been serving in the procurement department over the past 10 years are being removed and replaced with committed, expert and honest individuals through competitive exam. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Review of ...**

problem in Islamic subjects, but in some mosques, people and some teachers. "Ulema should talk knowingly."

He said his ministry planned to create an institute for better management of prayer leaders and appointment of professional clerics in mosques.

Osmani added only highly educated scholars would be allowed to preach and low level educated scholars would be given subject for preaching and third level scholars would be given subject and complete text of sermon in mosques for Friday prayers.

Most people carrying out suicide attacks in Afghanistan had been trained in Pakistan, he alleged, adding there were no madrasas in Afghanistan that trained suicide bombers.

Deputy higher education minister, Barai Seddiqi, said Islamic subjects taught at universities would be reviewed and problems in this regard solved. However, he did not provide more details.

"Any university which uses Islamic subject as propaganda tool against the government should be reported so such practices are prevented in future," he said.

Seddiqi said a commission had been tasked to assess Islamic subjects in universities because some lecturers talked to students out of the topic.

The Ministry of Higher Education was committed to preventing extremist ideology in higher education institutes, he added.

Mohammad Shafiq Samim, deputy education minister, said curriculum for madaris had been prepared few years ago, but reviewed every year.

He said seminaries under the Ministry of Education framework did not propagate against the government. MoE would not let anyone spread hate against the government, he added.

A number of lawmakers criticized some media outlets and said some television channels aired 'erotic' drama serials.

Deputy Information and Culture Minister Muzhgan Mustafawi said: "The law on media has problems. Ulema have no contact with media. We have no domestically produced dramas and dramas produced in other countries are in conflict with our culture, unfortunately responsibilities of the media are not defined in the law."

Mustafawi stressed a review of the media law and urged lawmakers to do so. She also criticized social media networks for creating tribal differences.

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said Afghanistan was an Islamic country and Islamic subjects were part of education curriculum. He hoped officials concerned would pay more attention to Islamic education.

He said spreading extremism was a crime and those involved should be brought to justice. (Pajhwok)

**(9) 30 Percent of ...**

they were working in a residential house. "We have rented a small house based on our budget limit. Workers always complain the house is not a proper place." Sangar urged higher-ups in Kabul also pay due attention to their departments in other provinces and resolve their problems.

Refugee and Repatriation Affairs Director Noor Ahmad Salehi also complained about the absence of a building for his department. "Many people visit us daily, but our current office is not a proper duty place."

At times, the owner asks the department for vacating the building. "Our location is not per-

manent and we shift our office from one place to another; it is a problem for visitors to search our new office."

The Kharwar district chief, Samar Gul Rashid, said they were working in a fort. "We are not alone in the fort. The police headquarters and the Afghan National Army (ANA) battalion are also located there," he said, asking the officials concerned to resolve their problems as soon as possible.

Provincial council chairman, Mohammad Nasir Ghairat, confirmed many departments lacked buildings. Of 16 government departments, representatives of 10 told Pajhwok their offices were sans buildings.

Syed Mubarak Shah, an inhabitant of the Kolangar area of Pul-i-Alam, the capital of Logar, said: "I know many government offices are housed in rented houses, frequently changing their locations."

Obaidullah, a resident of the Zaomkhel village of Baraki Barak district, said he had visited the refugee and repatriation department, which had no building of its own. The visitors had to stand outside on the road.

Vehicles plying the road trouble the people visiting the department of refugees, he said, adding it was a shame for the government that its departments had been without buildings.

But Governor Fidayee explained efforts were underway to construct buildings for all government departments. "I have sent my recommendations to Kabul-based officials, who will allocate funds for the construction of new buildings."

He said government departments in Logar remained without buildings due to negligence of previous administrations. Government departments in other provinces of the country also lack buildings. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Infant and...**

women will also become more dangerous. The pressures that result from the explosions, have a negative impact on people, especially on pregnant women," said Mariam, a doctor at Bost hospital.

Bost Hospital officials have said that the closure of roads and a surge in violence in the province has also led to the increase in the maternal and infant mortality rate.

"The number of pregnant women increased in the hospital. Even two pregnant women affected by the war have lost their newborns. Any kind of challenges, especially war, has lots of negative effects on women and their babies," said Nisar Barak, head of Bost hospital. (Tolonews)

**(11) Govt. Criticized...**

central government. They said he [Eshchi] will be released today [Saturday]. Let's see what happens," said Babur Eshchi, son of Eshchi.

Eshchi was allegedly beaten up and taken into custody by Dostum's guards last Friday in Jawzjan. During the course of the week, it emerged he was being held in NDS custody. (Tolonews)

**(12) Three Zabul..**

the two other vehicles had been travelling ahead of them and only when their vehicle passed the IED was it detonated.

Abdul Samad Durani, Shahr-e-Safa district governor, and security forces in Zabul confirmed the incident and said they have taken the journalists to the district hospital.

This came after unknown gunmen shot dead a journalist, Yaqoub Sharafat, in Zabul about two months ago. Sharafat had worked for Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) network.

Officials said that he was with his family at the time of the shooting. (Tolonews)

**(13) Afghan Taliban...**

The Afghan interior ministry confirmed the execution and said they had launched an investigation "to arrest and punish the perpetrators of this criminal act".

Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, said they were investigating the case.

Since their ouster in 2001, the Taliban have executed people they accuse of spying for foreign or Afghan forces, and have staged public stoning or lashings of those found to have committed adultery, or had sex outside marriage. (Reuters)

**(14) 5 Soldiers, 8 ...**

were killed and two others captured by Taliban. However, had no information about the militants' casualties.

The militants claimed capturing an army check-post and inflicting casualties on 31 soldiers. At least four ANA tanks were destroyed in the battle, the militant movement said in a statement. (Pajhwok)

**(15) Civilians Suffer ...**

between 1 January and 30 September, representing a one per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2015. Ground engagements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, followed by suicide and complex attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). "Increased fighting in densely populated areas makes it imperative for parties to take immediate steps to ensure all feasible precautions are being taken to spare civilians from harm," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan.

UNAMA further added that the anti-Government Elements caused 61 per cent of civilian casualties - 1,569 civilian deaths and 3,574 injured (5,143 total civilian casualties). (KP)

**(16) UNEP Urges...**

by 70 percent, Solheim stated political forces should stand together.

According to Solheim, if political forces are allowed to divide humanity, lofty goals will fail and tourism, environment, and biodiversity will all suffer. (Xinhua)

**(17) UNHCR Steps...**

northern Iraqi city, the last major Islamic State (IS) stronghold in Iraq.

Mosul, some 400 km north of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, has been under IS control since June 2014, when Iraqi government forces abandoned their weapons and fled, enabling IS militants to take control of parts of Iraq's northern and western regions. (Xinhua)

**(18) May's Brexit**

power of the state? We do not have a written constitution to tell us the answer. But I doubt whether many written constitutions would tell us the answer either."

If May wins, she can proceed with her plans to invoke Article 50 by the end of March.

But if she loses, parliament could in theory block Brexit as most lawmakers (MPs) supported staying in the EU in a referendum in June, though few observers expect such an outcome. Even so, lawmaker approval could open the process to greater scrutiny and delay. (Reuters)

**(19) UN Warns ....**

emerged of the detention of people crossing into government-held areas, while 45 civilians were reportedly killed by shelling on Nov. 30 as they attempted to cross into west Aleppo.

"With the onset of winter and the possibility of thousands more people fleeing the eastern part of the city in the coming days, insufficient and inadequate shelter space is a major concern," he said. "Some sites hosting internally displaced people are already filled to capacity and other sites are not properly winterized and are only suitable shelter for a few days." (Xinhua)

**(20) Hungary FM...**

a long time ago, given that Macedonia is playing a vital role as regards NATO activities, according to media reports. (Xinhua)

**(21) Syrian Army...**

unleash to end the rebel presence in Aleppo city.

The advance in the southern rim of eastern Aleppo comes a few days after the army fully controlled the northern part, capturing over 50 percent of the rebel-held areas there.

Meanwhile, civilians continued to flee eastern Aleppo toward government-controlled areas.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said over 30,000 people evacuated eastern Aleppo toward government areas in western Aleppo over the past few days.

In a statement, the ICRC said the civilians must be guaranteed protection and safe passage.

"We at the ICRC are ready to help, but it is up to those who are involved in the fighting to protect civilians," it added. (Xinhua)

**(22) Idea of Inclusive ...**

the global economy, increase investment in Africa and develop digital economy.

Germany took over the G20 presidency from China earlier this month. German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble thanked China. "The excellent work carried out by China means that we are starting out from a good base," he noted. (Xinhua)

**(23) Xi Says Military...**

weapons such as stealth jets. Speaking at a two-day meeting on military reform, Xi said militaries must never stick to their old ways and need to change with the times.

"Otherwise, armed forces that were strong will become outdated, or even collapse at a single blow," Xi said in comments carried by the official Xinhua news agency.

"History and reality tells us that a military, if it falls behind the times on scale and strength, it will fall behind on war ideology and developments in waging war, maybe forfeiting strategy and right to initiate war," he added.

China's military needs to put more focus on technology rather than force of numbers, Xi said. (Reuters)

**(24) Pakistan Sending...**

is a very important visit as much has happened in Washington since the Nov 8 elections," Mr Jilani said.

The visit follows a telephone conversation between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Mr Trump on Wednesday during which the US leader expressed his desire to continue a productive relationship with Pakistan. The Trump-Sharif conversation has generated much interest in the US capital where the opposition Democrats and the media are both criticising the president-elect for "talking to foreign leaders... without consulting US officials". (Monitoring Desk)

**(25) UAE Focuses...**

cooperation on the basis of exchange of knowledge and mutually beneficial joint projects, he said.

Diplomatic relations between Turkmenistan and the UAE were established in October 1995. The UAE companies successfully operate on the local energy market. One of such companies - Dragon Oil has been operating in the Turkmen sector of Caspian Sea since 1999 as part of the Production Sharing Agreement (PSA). The company is one of the largest foreign investors in Turkmenistan. (Trend)

**(26) Pre-Election ...**

actively participate in the presidential elections. It was previously reported that Uzbek presidential candidates completed their campaigning. All candidates were provided with equal opportunities for free campaigning in the media. The candidates and their authorized representatives held about 1,000 meetings with voters in all regions of Uzbekistan. (Trend)