

(1) "Heart of..."

of a resumption of talks soon appeared remote given the turmoil within the Taliban. Pakistan denies being able to influence the militants who are fighting to expel foreign forces and bring down the Western-backed government in Kabul.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani will attend the second day of the conference on Wednesday.

Cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is seen as essential for improving stability in the region but hopes for warmer ties after Ghani was inaugurated were quickly dashed, largely because of a series of bomb attacks in Kabul in August. Many Afghans, including Ghani's political opponents, accuse Pakistan of backing the Taliban, restricting Ghani's efforts to improve relations with Pakistan after years of acrimony.

Pakistan denies supporting the militants and says it wants a peaceful neighbour over its western border.

On Monday, Ghani said Afghanistan and Pakistan had been fighting a 14-year-long "undeclared war".

Each nation accuses the other of supporting insurgents across their border as proxy forces.

On a more positive note, Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj will attend the Islamabad gathering.

The first visit by India's top diplomat to Pakistan in three years raises hopes that relations between the nuclear-armed rivals might improve.

Their national security advisers met on the weekend in Bangkok, three months after cancelling talks. (Reuters)

(2) Pakistan Wants...

Aziz said since the launching of Heart of Asia conference in 2011, the forum has made good progress towards realisation of its core objective of promoting durable peace and stability in the war-torn nation.

He said the key achievements include political consultation involving Afghanistan and its neighbours and the regional countries with a view to promoting mutual trust in the areas of security and economic interaction. He said the confidence building measures identified in the Istanbul process document are leading to enhanced regional engagement and cooperation of the Heart Asia countries with Afghanistan in areas of trade and economic, energy, counter terrorism, narcotics, disaster management, regional infrastructure and education.

Aziz said as the heart of Asia process is maturing, our focus should be on strengthening engagements and collaboration to effectively combat the formidable challenges facing the region in the field of security as well as promoting regional economic collaboration.

He said the theme of the conference 'Enhanced cooperation for countering security threats and promoting connectivity in the Heart of Asia' is pertinent to the needs of our region. (PTI)

(3) UN Speaks ...

"Migration to European countries is falling into a crisis ... And European countries are trying to get out of it," the minister said.

"The migrant sender countries should talk with the migration destination countries about overcoming the crisis," he added.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Palace spoke out about providing job opportunities to Afghans.

"When someone's migration application is rejected and they are sent back to the country, we will hire them based on the facilities we have on hand," said Sayed Zafar Hashemi, deputy spokesman for the president.

Delegates attending the meeting said government and the international community should make preparations to help those being repatriated. This comes after a number of European countries decided to send a large number of Afghan refugees back home. Some European countries have warned that they will cut their aid if the refugees are not repatriated. (Tolo News)

(4) Support All ...

Minister Sushma Swaraj and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

"We are pleased that Pakistan is hosting the Heart of Asia Summit. We are also encouraged that President Ghani, Indian Minister of External Affairs Swaraj, and other senior officials will be attending," the official said.

"The meeting is an opportunity for the United States and all participating countries to discuss our shared commitment to a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Afghanistan," the spokesperson said in response to a question.

Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Special US Representa-

tive for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olson will represent the US in the fifth meeting of the Heart of Asia process in Islamabad.

The US had earlier welcomed the brief meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in Paris on sidelines of the UN climate summit, saying it "always welcomes these kinds of exchanges and dialogue between India and Pakistan". (PTI)

(5) Mullah Omar ...

made by their leader in a bid to prove he was alive.

The person who claimed to be Mullah Mansour on the tape did however mention that there were differences of opinion among Taliban commanders.

"Among key members of the Emirate and those who are emirate officials the conflicts are not in that stage that they are killing each other," said the person on the tape.

He went on to say: "Be assured we are not fighting with anyone for the sake of power, we are moving in our rightful path which is the Sharia path."

But a political analyst Nazar Mohammad Mutamin said: "When military, governors and individuals associated with the Taliban stand beside one of the Taliban group it is natural that that side is more powerful."

But so far a number of clashes have broken out between the two factions and analysts believe that with each passing day disputes increase among the Taliban groups. (Tolo News)

(6) China Urges...

services center and injured several others. According to local police, "some degree of planning" was involved in the shooting spree.

During a Sunday night address, Obama said the two shooters were "self-radicalized," as no evidence had been found of links between the couple and any terrorist groups. (Xinhua)

(7) Russia Carefully ...

Air Force aerial fires capability. However, the Afghan Air Force officials are saying that the helicopters have proved to be insufficient to meet their demands considering the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan and the effective range of the helicopters.

Russian-made helicopters have a long history in Afghanistan and are preferred due to their low prices, durability and simplicity. (KP)

(8) US Congress ...

number of U.S. staff to live at the embassy.

The task force also came under fire in November when a SIGAR report found that it spent \$43 million on a gas station in Afghanistan that should have cost about \$300,000. In that instance, the Pentagon was unable to provide any answers on why the costs increased so much.

"There are few things in this job that literally make my jaw drop," Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said in a press release. "It's hard to imagine a more outrageous waste of money than building an alternative fuel station in a war-torn country that costs 8,000 percent more than it should and is too dangerous for a watchdog to verify whether it is even operational." (Agencies)

(9) TAPI Project...

Turkmenistan media said the government expects the gas link, with an annual capacity of 33 billion cubic metres, to be fully operational by the end of 2018.

The TAPI project could help ease growing energy deficits of Asian giants Pakistan and India.

The project is politically complex, requiring cooperating governments, and logistically challenging, as the pipeline would pass through areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan plagued by Taliban and separatist insurgents. (IANS)

(10) Election Delay...

which assembly will the president inaugurate next spring? The illegal assembly?"

Senator Nader Baloch said: "right now the lower house is working illegally and the upper house is also lacking its one-thirds members."

The one-thirds Senate members are selected from among district council members, but the district council elections have taken place in Afghanistan so far.

Muslimyar said: "It's the duty of government to facilitate elections and announce the dates soon." (Pajhwok)

(11) 6 Afghan...

hoping to make it to the island of Chios from the resort of Cesme despite bad weather. The boat sank after wooden reinforcements used to fortify the boat came apart in the sea,

causing the boat to take in water and sink, Anadolu said.

More than 700,000 migrants have crossed into Greece this year, many fleeing conflict in Syria or Iraq. Nearly all have entered the country from Turkey, paying large fees to smuggling gangs who arrange their crossings in small, overcrowded boats. Hundreds of people have drowned this year in the Aegean Sea, including dozens of children.

Turkey has stepped up efforts to stop migrants from leaving for Greece by sea, and last week, authorities rounded up around 3,000 migrants and asylum-seekers from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria in the town of Ayvacik "north of Cesme" which is a main crossing point to the Greek island of Lesbos.

The sweep came after Turkey and EU leaders agreed to re-energize Turkey's long-stalled bid to join the 28-nation bloc and bolster their resolve to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis, although authorities wouldn't say if the detentions were directly related to the Turkish commitment to help contain the flow of migrants.

The human rights group, Amnesty International, criticized last week's detentions, calling them "alarming." (AP)

(12) American Muslims...

States from Egypt in 1980 with a degree in agricultural engineering and today runs a travel agency.

Also director of The Islamic Center of Jersey City, he spoke to AFP at a mosque, accusing Trump of provoking hate and violence.

"I'm asking him, I'm begging him. It has to stop -- all these accusations. Look at the Muslim community as part of the American mosaic and we are part of America. We are not going anywhere."

Muslim Americans say they are afraid. They talk about women wearing the hijab being spat on, a Muslim taxi driver being shot in the back on Thanksgiving and a pig's head found outside a Philadelphia mosque.

Just hours before the Republican frontrunner's call for an end to Muslim immigration, community leaders from New Jersey met prosecutors asking them to take seriously alleged hate crimes against Muslims.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim civil liberties group in the country, says it has documented a wave of abuse, vandalism and acts of discrimination in the last month.

"It is reckless and simply un-American. Donald Trump sounds more like a leader of a lynch mob than a great nation like ours," CAIR executive director Nihad Awad told a news conference in Washington, DC.

Although data is hard to pin down, the Muslim American community is drawn largely from immigrants, many of whom have prospered since leaving Asia and the Middle East in search of a better life.

A survey by the Pew Research Center in 2011 estimated there were 2.75 million Muslims in the United States, although members of the community put the number anywhere from six to 12 million.

After the California killings, President Barack Obama called on Americans not to discriminate against Muslims and on the Muslim community to do more to "confront, without excuse" extremist ideology.

Shedeed said the speech made him proud to be American after Trump insisted so bitterly, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary that Arab Americans in Jersey City celebrated the 9/11 attacks.

"We were in agony, we were in fear. We were in tears," he said.

"We were scared of people like him. If Mr Trump was active at 9/11 and he was doing the same talk, I'm sure a lot of us would be hurt."

Meanwhile, a senior White House aide on Monday branded Donald Trump's proposal to ban Muslims from entering the United States as "totally contrary to our values as Americans."

"We have, in our Bill of Rights, respect for the freedom of religion," one of President Barack Obama's top foreign policy aides, Ben Rhodes, told CNN. (Agencies)

(13) Nawaz Discusses...

related matters.

Lt Gen (r) Nasir Janjua also briefed the attendees about progress on the stalled NSA talks between India and Pakistan and about talks held with his Indian counterpart in Bangkok.

Later, PM Nawaz and COAS Gen Raheel Sharif met one-on-one to discuss security-related matters, said a release by the PM Office.

The Heart of Asia conference, which will be attended by representatives from ten different countries, is being hosted by Pakistan for the first time in its history. (Monitoring Desk)

(14) Over 80 ...

statement posted on the ministry's website reads.

It was noted in the statement that police also confiscated stocks of light and heavy ammunition during the operations.

The security situation in Afghanistan has significantly worsened in the last months, with the violent Islamist group the Taliban carrying out offensives on the country's big cities. In late September, the militants briefly captured the provincial capital, Kunduz, home to some 300,000 people, and attempted to seize the city of Ghazni, south of Kabul, in October. (Sputnik)

(15) Turkey Threatens...

annual licenses for 2016 granted to Turkish cargo transporters by road to 2,000 with a prospect of canceling them altogether.

Meanwhile, according to the resolution, Turkish citizens without a labor contract or a civil contract signed before Dec. 31, 2015 won't be allowed to work on the territory of Russia from Jan. 1, 2016.

Bilateral agreement on visa-free travel is also suspended, together with charter flights between the two countries except those meant to repatriate Russian tourists from Turkey.

TENSIONS WITH IRAQ

While engaging with Russia in a war of words, Turkey has also been wrangling with Iraq over sending troops into the war-torn country with informing the central government in Baghdad.

On Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tanju Bilgic said Turkey sent additional forces to Bashiqa camp due to increasing clashes with the Islamic State (IS) in Mosul.

He also said that Turkish military has trained 2441 people for Mosul National Guards in Bashiqa camp of Northern Iraq, adding that the training mission has been in coordination with the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government and Iraqi authorities.

Ankara has halted the deployment of additional troops to northern Iraq for now but will not withdraw those already there, he said, hoping to calm the tensions.

Turkey deployed troops to Iraq since 2014 and trained 2038 Peshmerga forces of Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government in Diyala region and the training mission in Bashiqa camps has been carried on since March 2015 is part of efforts to defeat Islamic State in Iraq, the spokesperson said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu had a phone conversation with his Iraqi counterpart late Monday and reiterated Turkey's respect for Iraq's territorial integrity, Bilgic told reporters.

Meanwhile, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Tuesday that he wanted to visit Baghdad as soon as possible.

Turkey deployed more soldiers in the camp on Thursday, making total number of Turkish troops 600, saying that the move was made in a bid to protect the training mission from the Islamic State that control Mosul province.

Earlier, the Iraqi government demanded the withdrawal of Turkish troops deployed near the city of Mosul, saying the move was not approved by Baghdad.

"A battalion of tanks and artillery entered the Iraqi territory specifically, in Nineveh province under the pretext of training Iraqi groups without the request or authorization from the Iraqi federal authorities," Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's office said in a statement posted on his website. (Xinhua)

(16) ISIS Releases ...

released under the brand of Wilayat Khurasan (Khurasan province) which the terror group claims to be part of the Islamic covering the swaths of Afghanistan, Pakistan and surrounding areas.

Khurasan is a historic name of the territory covering modern-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and some other regional countries. (KP)

(17) 54 Killed...

Ehsanullah Hayat, a police spokesman in Herat, said 54 insurgents had been killed and around 40 wounded in the fighting between commanders loyal to Mullah Mansour and his rival Mullah Mohammad Rasool Akhund, which he said was continuing. The clashes follow days of confusion over the fate of Mullah Mansour. Reports that he had been seriously wounded in a shootout with other Taliban commanders were rebutted in an audio recording purporting to show he was still alive.

It was not immediately possible to obtain a comment from the Taliban about the latest fighting.

Separately, a video apparently from

an Afghan member of the Islamic State movement accused the Taliban of operating under the control of Pakistani intelligence services and ignoring sharia, as well as allying itself with Iran.

The message, from a militant identified as Abdu Yasir al-Afghani, highlighted the growing rivalry between supporters of Islamic State and the Taliban, and came on the same day regional powers began a conference in Islamabad to discuss how to stabilize Afghanistan.

"So my brothers, our biggest objection to the Islamic Emirate (Taliban) is their relations with Pakistan and their cooperation with ISI (Pakistani intelligence), which is the basis for their action," the video message says. (Reuters)

(18) U.S Doctor ...

spirits in them, then often the [unborn] child and mother dies," Mujadadi said.

"In Jaghori when a boy is born they call the villagers together before cutting the baby's umbilical cord but this wait can lead to the child's death," Mujadadi said.

Officials from the Shohada Foundation, that founded the hospital in Jaghori, praised Mujadadi for his work and said he has carried out 20 surgeries at their facility.

Head of the foundation, Abdul Raouf Nawid said: "The residents had lots of problems and when the doctor came, more than 400 patients came to visit him and the doctor also performed 23 surgeries and trained the Jaghori hospital doctors." He said the doctors at Jaghori are talented and learnt quickly from Mujadadi. (Tolo News)

(19) Lecturers...

youngest lecturers on campus. He said because he has no Master's degree he will not be able to carry on working as a lecturer.

"I have worked for three years as a lecturer and was due to get a promotion in 10 days, but today they take the opportunity away from us and they say we should have a Master degree," Amiri said.

Lecturers have said that until this law has been reviewed and necessary adjustments made, they will continue with their protest.

One lecturer, Dr Rahman, from Kabul medical university said: "We want our rights and the law should be rejected, we will not accept new laws where rights and authority of students and lecturers are not included."

Another lecturer, Dr Rashedi, from Kabul university said: "The protest by lecturers will get bigger and even non-government university lecturers will join us."

Meanwhile the Ministry of Higher Education said they have called on the Presidential Palace, the CEO's office and parliament to address the lecturers' demands.

Safullah Jalalzai, from the ministry said: "A number of Afghanistan higher education laws would need to be changed to meet the demands made by lecturers and the ministry has sent the demands to the Presidential palace, CEO office and national council so the demands can be dealt with legally."

In addition, Ghani has ruled that university lecturers will be forced to retire at the age of 65. (Tolo News)

(20) 2 Militants...

police official said that three militants were involved in the attack and one militant fled the scene under cover of darkness.

The Taliban militant group has claimed responsibility shortly after the attack.

The Taliban-led insurgency has been rampant since April when the militant group launched its annual rebel offensive in different parts of the country which had claimed hundreds of lives including militants, security personnel and civilians. AbdulqaharBalkhi, a purported Taliban spokesman, stated on his twitter account that the attack was part of Taliban's offensive codenamed Hamalyat-e-Azm or Resolute Operation.

Kandahar and neighboring Helmand province are notorious for poppy growing and militancy. (Xinhua)

(21) Dozen People ...

and government forces, according to observers, are doing their best to gain more grounds ahead of snowfall in the mountainous Afghanistan. (Xinhua)

(22) 9 Militants...

planting mined on Kandahar-Helmand highway and attacking security forces and military convoys.

A number of arms and ammunitions including assault rifles and walkie-talkie set were also recovered from their possessions.

Taliban militants who are active in parts of Kandahar province haven't commented. (Xinhua)

(23) No Bulgarian...

Afghanistan for participation in international missions in the past thirteen years.

Bulgarian military personnel first participated in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission and are currently involved in the Resolute Support mission, which succeeded ISAF at the beginning of this year.

The current Bulgarian contingent, which numbers 110 troops, was deployed to Afghanistan only several days ago, daily Dnevnik informs. (SNA)

(24) China, US ...

and National Committee on US-China Relations of the United States.

First held in 2009, the dialogue serves as a crucial platform for Chinese and American non-governmental organizations to boost exchanges and mutual understanding in rule of law and human rights protection. (Xinhua)

(25) Zarif, Lavrov...

including Iran, have been trying to work out a peace plan that would also include a ceasefire in the violence-torn Arab country. (PressTV)

(26) Japan ...

istry, but will be headed up by the office of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and also comprise defense ministry officials as well as the National Police Agency (NPA), along with the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office, known to be Japan's equivalent of the U.S.'s CIA.

The newly-launched Counterterrorism Unit will purportedly augment the government's abilities to crack-down on potential terrorist attacks here before they occur, by bolstering intelligence sharing with other countries, with the government's first test most likely being the upcoming Ise-Shima summit in May 2016 in Mie Prefecture that will gather leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

Abe told a ministerial meeting on Tuesday that the global threat from terrorism is extremely severe and as such Japan must do its utmost to counter potential threats here, particular as the nation will, along with the G7 summit, also be hosting the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympic Games in 2020. (Xinhua)

(27) Stance on...

certain figures have stated that European resources for such countries should be limited.

"We know that we'll open Pandora's box again, but we've committed ourselves to discussing the financial framework during our presidency. There have always been tensions between those that contribute to the budget and those that mostly profit from it. It will be a difficult debate," added Korkoc. (Xinhua)

(28) Iraqi Security

IS militants were killed in an air strike by U.S.-led coalition aircraft on an IS position in an area north of Ramadi, the source said.

The troops have been fighting for months to retake control of key cities and towns in Iraq's largest province from IS militants, who have seized most of Anbar and tried to advance toward Baghdad. (Xinhua)

(29) China, Russia ...

long-term, stable and reliable energy cooperation partner, and hopes to expand comprehensive bilateral energy cooperation including natural gas. (Xinhua)

(30) Sindh Assembly...

that while there is no disagreement on the matter of the paramilitary force's extension, procedure must be followed, and a constitutional cover is needed to be given to the process by the provincial assembly.

He stressed upon the Sindh government's commitment to the cause of law and order for which optimum security would be provided to the masses. Khuhro also lauded the Rangers' efforts in maintaining law and order in Sindh. (Agencies)

(31) Heads of ...

and shortcomings in the work. The president demanded to take urgent measures to improve the exchange activities, as well as the sale of goods and on eliminating shortcomings.

The State Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange was founded in 1994 and is the most important economic institute of the country. It serves as the main body of state regulation of export and import operations. (Agencies)