

### (1) Wolesi Jirga...

production project to create at least 100 jobs so that they can get shelter," said economic analyst Sayed Massoud. "Presidential palace is a budget unit for us, budget for it is allocated just like other government institutions, for necessities and on the basis of the budget plan," said Ajmal Hamid Abul Rahimzai, media advisor to MoF.

Economists have said that presenting an inclusive budget policy and seeking reforms in the budget plan would help government create more jobs and boost national infrastructure development. (Tolonews)

### (2) Dogharoon ...

shows Afghanistan markets' interest in Iranian products.

Since Razavi Khorasan and Afghanistan have common border and the proximity to Herat city, foodstuff, fruits and vegetables, building materials, steel and dairy products will be sent to consumers very soon, Chairman of the Industrialists Union in Herat, Hamidullah Khadem said.

The event was held with the attendance of some 15 Afghan merchants and investors aiming at boosting trade ties in exports, transit sectors, facilitating transit procedure, creating accommodations for drivers and facilitating refueling process. (IRNA)

### (3) UNSC Formally ...

year's name from the blacklist. He said the documentation to seek removal of HIA leader's name the blacklist had been prepared by the NSC.

The documents were sent to the MOFA and finally the ministry through Afghanistan's representative in the UN shared the dossier with the UNSC's sanctions committee.

Asked when Hekmatyar's name was expected to be dropped from the list, Ghorzang said it was up to the sanctions committee.

He said the Afghan government hoped all sanctions on HIA leadership could be lifted soon. According to him, the removal would be a major development towards establishment of durable peace and stability in the country.

Ghorzang said UNSC committee members had pledged complete cooperation to the Afghan government's request for lifting all sanctions against Hekmatyar, adding the request would be deeply scrutinized and would be approved soon. About the appearance of Hekmatyar in public after spending decades in hiding, Ghorzang said there was still time to answer the question.

But some sources say Hekmatyar is all set to appear in public soon. The sources say the HIA head would appear for the first time in eastern Nangarhar province and would later come to capital Kabul.

Earlier, presidential advisor Akram Khyalwak visited Nangarhar and talked with local officials about the residence and security of Hekmatyar.

Few months earlier, the Afghan government and the HIA struck a historic peace agreement after months of talks. In a ceremony held at the Presidential Palace, President Ashraf Ghani and HIA head Hekmatyar signed the historic peace agreement.

Hekmatyar also addressed the gathering attended by a large number of people. The agreement was welcomed country-wide and political leaders, civil societies, regional countries and global community asked the Taliban to follow HIA model of peace negotiations and end decade of conflict in the war-torn country. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Dozens Die ...

According to him, 73 percent of Afghanistan is cleared of mines; however, the existence of mines in more than 250 districts still pose a threat to rural residents.

"Figures from June until now show that 142 to 145 people

die on a daily basis of which 57 to 58 percent of them lose their lives as a result of mines and explosive devices," he stated. Meanwhile, the British Ambassador in Kabul Dominic Jermy signed an agreement worth seven million pounds with a number of demining organizations which will help demine 9.6 million square meters of land in Logar, Khost, Samangan, Balkh and Baghlan provinces.

"I believe demining as a critical part of building a brighter and more stable future for this great country. Land must be freed from this scourge of explosives and returned to cultivation and development and that's why the United Kingdom today is supporting such vital activity," he said.

However, a number of demining officials said insecurity was a big challenge for their mission in many parts of the country.

"I am working as a demining official for the past 21 years but nowadays insecurity is one of the main challenges for our activity," said Mohammad Osman, an official from the HALO Trust.

"I have worked for a demining mission for the past nine years. The only problem in our mission is insecurity," said Fraidoon, another demining official.

According to Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, militants have placed mines in 14 districts over the past few months which pose a new threat to people. (Tolonews)

### (5) Islamabad Admits...

Haqqanis that they should not become part of any violence or terrorism in Afghanistan; otherwise they would not be welcomed in Pakistan, the newspaper said.

The Pakistan top foreign official stressed the need for resolution of the ongoing conflict through negotiation, adding that there was no military solution to peace in Afghanistan and the Afghan government should hold talks with the Taliban and Haqqanis in reconciliatory manner for establishing peace there.

Chudary alleged that Afghanistan-India collusion was dangerous for the restless region and added that Pakistan was ready for establishment of peace in Afghanistan because this would also bring peace in the region.

On Sunday, President Ashraf Ghani invited the insurgents to join intra-Afghan peace dialogue during his address to a gathering in Kabul celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). (Pajhwok)

### (6) 87 Percent ...

against women.

"When you give someone an opportunity, he demonstrates his ability, so I favor women show their abilities in all sectors and that they are respected and their rights are given to them," said Mohaqeq. Both officials said that alongside men, women have equal rights.

In addition to this, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has said that lessons pertaining to the protection of human rights must be taught at schools.

Addressing a gathering marking the end of 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women, Nazari talked about events of violence which have happened to women in the country and said almost 50 percent of women in Afghanistan deal with teenage marriages which is a serious issue.

"We are edging to the end of the campaign at a time that there are women who lose their lives because of a lack of medicine and food at hospitals," said AIHRC commissioner Qadria Yazdanparast.

This comes after the Afghanistan Attorney General's Office (AGO) recently announced that it had registered around 3,000 cases of violence against wom-

en in the country this year. The 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women started on November 25 and ended on Saturday.

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is a campaign aimed at galvanizing action to end violence against women and girls around the world. (Tolonews)

### (7) IEC Prioritizes ...

an election calendar and reducing the number of election constituencies are part of the working agendas," said IEC secretary Gula Jan Abdul Badee Sayyad.

Experts meanwhile said the IEC is facing major challenges and these challenges would have implications on future polls.

"The government has been reluctant to ensure the rollout of national identity cards and also government has never shown willingness to prepare the voter list and polling centers according to the standards. Ghost centers need to be eliminated," said former IEC chief Fazel Ahmad Manavi.

"Our warning to the election commission is that we have wasted enough time, they (IEC) need to focus on this issue and the priorities which can ensure nationwide elections," said Mohammad Naem Ayoubzada, head of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA). (Tolonews)

### (8) New £7 Million...

mines and could prosper from the use of their community lands, the statement said.

This project demonstrates just one part of the UK's long-term and determined commitment to help the Afghan government make Afghanistan free of the scourge of mines by 2023. Since 2008, the UK has helped clear land in Herat, Helmand and Kandahar.

Jermy said he was extremely proud that they were launching a programme with the Afghan government and the HALO Trust to clear 9.6 million square metres of land in Afghanistan.

"This project is in addition to over 84 million square metres of land which UK support has already helped clear."

He said the new programme would not just rid the land of the scourge of past conflicts and remove horrific harm to innocent children, women and men but the development assistance would help over 100 000 Afghans once again prosper from cultivation and development of their fields.

Barmak said ensuring that the Afghan land was safe from remnants of war was an absolute priority for the Afghan Government.

"All Afghan people are extremely heartened to see this ongoing commitment from the United Kingdom to support mine clearance, risk education and development of the cleared land, in our rural communities."

"The impact it will have, not just in keeping our children free from harm, but also in increasing agricultural production and livelihoods, is enormous." (Pajhwok)

### (9) Iran Favours...

end within a short period of time, Iran reaches out to all Muslim countries for finding a settlement to regional conflicts, said the Iranian speaker. Afghanistan had been suffering from terrorism and extremism over a decade but was not mentioned in the creation of the new security alliance which may be headed by Tehran.

Last year, Saudi Arabia announced the creation of 34-nation Islamic military coalition to combat terrorism, a move welcomed by the United States which has been urging a greater regional involvement in the campaign against the militants who control swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria.

The states it listed as joining the new coalition included

Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan and several African nations.

The list did not include Shi'ite Muslim Iran, the arch rival of Sunni Saudi Arabia for influence across the Arab world. Tehran and Riyadh are ranged on opposite sides in proxy conflicts in Syria and Yemen. (Pajhwok)

### (10) No Polio Case ...

urged families to vaccinate their children.

He said he had sent letters to all imams in districts to support vaccinators and encourage people to vaccinate their children.

Eight polio cases were registered in Afghanistan last year, with four surfacing in Nangarhar alone. (Pajhwok)

### (11) Badakhshan: ...

Works Director, said his department had devised programmes based on the annual plan provided by the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW). The programmes included safety and maintenance of roads especially during winter season, he added.

He said private companies and local council had been awarded contracts to keep tunnels cleared of snow in order to allow vehicular movement.

However, Ghani believed the snow-capped roads to the five districts would possibly remain blocked until April, 2017 due to continued snowfall. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Buzkashi ...

"since the majority of Bamyani residents are of the same ethnicity this helps ensure peace."

Bamyani is a Hazara-dominant province, the third largest group in multi-ethnic Afghanistan.

A trip around Bamyani will demonstrate the fact claimed by its people regarding its safety, as there are no armed people roaming the streets, even in its far-flung villages.

Even at security checkpoints armed security personnel are absent and this makes Bamyani different from other parts of Afghanistan.

Peaceful surroundings, a handful of newly-constructed hotels, hardworking and hospitable people are also luring countless local and foreign tourists annually to Bamyani, according to locals.

Enjoying the Buzkashi here on Friday, half a dozen foreigners joined the hundreds of on-lookers on the side of hilltop in the Khuchkak Valley, without needing any security escort.

Availing themselves of the peaceful environment, scores of vendors have established temporary shops to serve fast food and cold drinks to the horse riders and spectators during Buzkashi which lasts for around two hours.

"Since my childhood I have been fond of Buzkashi, it is a traditional game and I love it. I have won first place more than eight times over the past couple of years in several competitions," Ibrahim, one of the horse riders, said happily. (Xinhua)

### (13) Residents Worried ...

with robberies in the past few days--and referred to judicial organs.

Recently a group of muggers has entered Kunduz city, he said, adding three of them had been detained so far. "We assure Kunduz people that we will prevent robbers and criminals and we are making all-out efforts to fully enforce law and ensure security."

The uptick in robberies comes in Kunduz as the residents already suffered from heavy incidents of violent insurgency being waged by the Taliban in the strategic Kunduz province. (Pajhwok)

### (14) Kandahar ...

officials and security personnel, civilians also suffer casualties.

Meanwhile, insurgents opened fire at two individuals in Kharpoor of Kandahar city, the

provincial capital, late on Sunday night. The two men succumbed to their injuries on way to hospital.

A security source said the rebels attacked a policeman and his uncle in Nish district, killing both of them. (Pajhwok)

### (15) High-Ranking ...

The Taliban group has not commented on the reports yet. Afghanistan is in a state of political and social turmoil, with Taliban insurgents and other extremist factions such as the Daesh jihadist group, outlawed in Russia and many other countries, taking advantage of the instability in the country. (Sputnik)

### (16) New Bilateral...

Brexit on the British economy is likely to be replicated, or even magnified, for the Irish economy. (Xinhua)

### (17) Turkish Police...

rounded up were suspected of direct involvement in two bombings outside and near a stadium in Istanbul on Saturday night that killed 44 people and wounded more than 149 others, according to the latest tally. (AP)

### (18) IS Retakes

army has withdrawn from the city. The IS started its offensive on Palmyra on Thursday, after bringing in hundreds of fighters for taking the city, according to the Observatory. (Xinhua)

### (19) Turkey Ambassador...

in the wake of the Saturday deadly bomb attack, which killed at least 44 people. (Xinhua)

### (20) EU Agrees...

second attack of its kind in recent weeks. Militant groups based in the north have extended their campaign into central and southern regions, complicating international efforts at peace. (Reuters)

### (21) Pakistan PM...

scholars to reestablish the link between Islam and peace by taking guidance from the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet," he said. (Xinhua)

### (22) Iran will...

groups inside the Iraqi territory and it is crucial that certain regional countries do not transfer their problems onto Iraq," Zarif said. (Presstv)

### (23) Turkmenistan...

news agency of Turkmenistan said.

The prospects of cooperation in line with the innovative part of the economic strategy of Turkmenistan were considered during the meeting.

The Turkmen leader and his guest emphasized the importance of the projects on modernization of the power system of Turkmenistan, which would contribute to ensuring reliable and stable power supply throughout the country and increasing the export of electricity to neighbouring states. (AKI Press)

## UN Voices Deep Concerns at Safety, Security of Civilians in Syria's Aleppo

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations remains deeply concerned about the safety and security of civilians in Aleppo in north Syria as intense fighting continues, resulting in loss of lives and injuries, a UN spokesman told reporters here Monday.

"Heavy clashes, aerial bombardment and shelling continued over the weekend, placing thousands of civilians in Aleppo in the line of fire," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

"The UN urgently calls for a pause in fighting to allow civilians to voluntarily and safely leave the areas affected by fighting, to urgently evacuate the critically ill and most vulnerable people and provide assistance," he said.

"The UN continues to receive reports of thousands of civilians

displaced from east Aleppo over the weekend due to intense fighting, but these figures remain unverified," the spokesman said.

The United Nations has information that more than 40,000 people have been displaced from east Aleppo and recorded as having passed through designated collective shelters under government control as of Dec. 9.

"An estimated third of them continue to reside in collective shelters, while others have moved on," he said.

"The two main humanitarian concerns are protection of civilians and shelter for internally displaced people as winter arrived," he said. "It is critical that the UN obtains blanket approval from the Syrian authorities and security guarantees, including from non-state armed groups, to go anywhere in Aleppo where people are in need of humanitarian assistance."

The United Nations is actively working with all parties to that effect and continues to respond to the needs of the displaced wherever it has access or through partners, principally the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, he said. "The response includes medical care, hot meals, essential nutrition services for children and lactating women and winter clothing."

Aleppo is witnessing the most intense shelling and clashes since the conflict began there four years ago, following a major offensive the rebels had waged in late October.

The Syrian army has laid a siege on rebel-held areas in Aleppo in recent months, urging the rebels to surrender themselves or leave eastern Aleppo to other rebel-held areas in the north-western province of Idlib.

The rebels didn't comply with the military repeated requests. The Syrian government accused the rebels of preventing the civilians, around 250,000, from leaving.

## U.S. Congressional Leaders Support Bipartisan Hacking Probe During Election Despite Trump's Opposition

WASHINGTON - Bipartisan leaders in the U.S. Congress on Monday supported an investigation into Russia's alleged interference in the U.S. election despite U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's strong dismissal of such accusation.

Calling resistance from some Republicans to an investigation "defies belief", Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, said he supported an inquiry of alleged Russian hacking during the 2016 U.S. election.

"This simply cannot be a partisan issue," said McConnell here at a press conference, before adding that the Senate Intelligence Committee "is more than capable of conducting a complete review of this matter."

McConnell also said that Senator John McCain, 2008 Republican presidential nominee and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, would be conducting his own review within his committee of the cyber attack threat.

Also on Monday morning, Senator Charles Schumer, the incoming Democratic Senate leader, and McCain appeared on CBS News one day after the two men issued a joint statement calling for a congressional probe in to alleged Russian meddling in the U.S. election. "It's gotten worse, and a bipartisan investigation that's not aimed at one specific instance but looks at the broad scope of this is just what's needed," said Schumer during the interview with CBS News.

According to the U.S. daily The Hill, Jason Miller, spokesman for Trump, on Monday dismissed bipartisan push for investigating alleged Russian interference as coming from people "who are bitter their candidate lost."

"This overall narrative, this is clearly an attempt to delegitimize Trump's win," said Miller.

After calling the allegations by the U.S. intelligence agencies that the Russian government helped him win the White House via election-related cyberattacks as "ridiculous" on Sunday, Trump again on Monday expressed his disagreement on twitter. (Xinhua)