

(1) Obama Signs...

of the bill released by the Senate Armed Services Committee. It also extends the Afghanistan Special Immigrant Visa program for translators and other Afghans performing sensitive and trusted activities in support of the U.S. Government mission who were threatened by reprisal from the Taliban, the Islamic State in Khorasan Province, and other extremist groups.

“(It) refocuses security assistance to Pakistan on activities that directly support U.S. national security interests and conditions a significant portion of funding on a certification from the Secretary of Defense that Pakistan is taking demonstrable steps against the Haqqani Network in Pakistani territory,” the summary said.

NDAA 2017 imposes four conditions on Pakistan to be eligible for \$400 million of the \$900 million of the coalition support fund (CSF). The US Defense Secretary needed to certify to the Congress that Pakistan continued to conduct military operations that are contributing to significantly disrupting the safe haven and freedom of movement of the Haqqani Network in Pakistan and that Pakistan has taken steps to demonstrate its commitment to prevent the Haqqani Network from using any of its territory as a safe haven.

Early this year, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter refused to give a similar certification to Pakistan this year as a result of which it was not given a \$ 300 million under coalition support fund.

The bill further creates a USD1.2 billion Counter-ISIL Fund providing flexible resources to support training and equipping the properly-vetted Syrian opposition, Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga, Sunni tribal elements, and other local security forces with a national security mission such as local security forces that are committed to protecting highly vulnerable ethnic and religious communities. (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghanistan ...

considered as Russian backyard, according to a media report.

Russia special envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov had earlier said the meeting would lay the ground for a regional projects centered around Afghanistan.

Earlier, Pakistani foreign ministry official said key issues, including peace process in Afghanistan would be discussed at next week trilateral meeting. Moscow had been recently blamed for developing linkages with the Taliban. Some circles in Afghanistan blamed Kremlin of aiding the Taliban to counter Daesh, a hardcore terrorist network.

Russian and China are key members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) which was created to tackle regional security issues and drug trafficking. China is considered strong supporter of Islamabad in all issues and Russian did developed ties with Pakistan as the two had recently conducted military exercises and signed defence agreement of helicopter purchase thus the three regional countries would set on December 27 to further strengthen ties. (Pajhwok)

(3) Ministry Warns...

Education (MoHE) has warned that a number of private higher education institutions and universities are violating education regulations and that if found guilty will be held accountable.

MoHE spokesman Faisal Amin said according to documents they received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), concerns have been raised over the Swiss UMEF University in Afghanistan which claims to be affiliated to a Swiss university. “Unfortunately, there are a number of private universities which are violating regulations. We continue our efforts

to introduce such universities and institutions to the Attorney General’s Office in order to assess their cases.

“We received documents from the foreign ministry and the Afghanistan embassy in Switzerland about the UMEF University in Afghanistan. It shows that there is no (affiliate) university by this name in Switzerland,” said Faisal Amin, MoHE spokesman.

Commenting on the issue, university lecturer Nasrullah Mohseni said: “Half of the private universities in Afghanistan have been established for economic and political purposes. Meanwhile, provinces are faced with lots of problems in private higher education institutions.”

“Private universities in Afghanistan should operate legally and based on a standard quality. If they want to give an education certificate to those who have not been part of their class, this is a crime and should be investigated,” said Sayed Nadir Shah, an MP. (Tolnews)

(4) Voted out...

Hussain Murtazavi, deputy spokesman for the Presidential Palace, told Pajhwok Afghan News the Supreme Court had not informed the Presidential Palace about its decision on disqualification of ministers. He said they would share the apex court’s judgment with media upon arrival at the Presidential Palace.

Earlier, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah said the government would decide about the fate of unseated ministers following an opinion from the Supreme Court (SC). Umaid Misam, deputy spokesman for CEO, told reporters on Monday that the Apex Court was reviewing the Wolesi Jirga or lower house decision about ministers’ disqualification.

He hoped the SC would soon release its opinion about the voted out ministers by lawmakers and open the ground for the government to decide on the issue.

On November 2, the lower house summoned 16 ministers and impeached the ministers of foreign affairs, labour, public works, education, transport, communication and higher education in absentia.

In protest, the Cabinet referred the issue to the SC after an extraordinary meeting and asked the unseated ministers to continue in their job until the apex court’s ruling.

The ministers were disqualified one and a half month back, but the SC is yet to decide on the matter. (Pajhwok)

(5) Taliban Visits...

who heads the Afghanistan Salvage Party which has started efforts at reviving peace talks between Taliban and the Afghan government, was talking to Pajhwok Afghan News during a visit to eastern Nangarhar province.

Agha said they started the peace mission three years ago and had visited all provinces to muster support of tribal elders, influential figures and religious scholars.

He said they organized a big gathering in Kabul about a week ago to practically start work on the advises and opinions so far collected from elders, influential figures and religious leaders about peace making.

The former justice minister said all individuals in their group had no connection with both the warring sides and people had trust in them.

He said ending the war was dependent on the nation as if the nation stood and worked for peace, the conflict would resolve.

The former Guantanamo Bay detainee said they had talked to both the Taliban and the government about their proposals and both the sides had expressed their willingness to attend transparent talks.

To a question about Taliban’s latest contacts with Iran and Russia, Akbar Agha said the

rebels had the right to maintain political ties with foreign countries. However, he did not believe the Taliban had established contacts with Russia and Iran. (Pajhwok)

(6) Probe Finds ...

of their organization is against the constitution.

The fuel and gas sector is estimated to be worth about \$4 billion USD a year but half of this is believed to be money made and spent through illegal channels.

Walid Tamim, head of the Fuel Corporation, said one part of the sector spends and generates more than \$2 billion USD a year and that “they conduct their deals through money exchangers and buy fuel from [local] markets.”

He said when appointed to the position his mandate was to change the corporation to a fuel importing company.

“Over the past two decades, the corporation’s activity and its statute was reviewed only once during the Taliban regime and a few articles were added to it,” Tamim said.

“The corporation should be dissolved. No doubt, both government and the private sector want this. But now it is a good step if they want to change the corporation. If they want to change it, then they should change it in a better way,” said Azraksh Hafizi, head of Fuel Importers Union.

However, a number of investors said the plan to change the corporation to a fuel importing company will be a move to monopolize the industry.

“This will affect and damage the free market and will suppress private companies,” said Zabi-hullah Naseeri, an investor.

Meanwhile, the TOLONews report indicates that the issue of privatizing the corporation has been an ongoing problem for 10 years; but was recently dealt with at a high level.

The Fuel Corporation director said the two organizations – the corporation and the Commerce Ministry – should further discuss the issue in order to recognize and overcome the issues.

“The duty of Fuel and Gas Department has not progressed; all has been mere-lip service. Let’s send a delegation there and investigate. I have documents on hand which are accurate and reveal that the work of the Fuel Corporation is dwindling,” said Shekiba Hashemi, a member of the Economic Commission of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament).

The TOLONews investigation found that of the 1,000 registered fuel and oil trading companies in the country, more than 100 are operational.

“There is no experience in the world which shows government-owned corporations provide better services than the private sector. Experience shows that the private sector can act better and provide better service – given that it is organized and managed properly,” said Sayed Ikram Afzali, head of Integrity Watch Afghanistan. (Tolnews)

(7) MPs Summon ...

conducted political consultations with China, Turkey, Sweden and Denmark [this year]. Also, the ministry has designed Afghanistan’s foreign policy’s outlook which will facilitate diplomatic relations with world countries,” Deputy Foreign Minister Nasir Ahmad Andisha said.

“We have developed a work policy this year which for the first was made available for Afghans and it is a big achievement,” said Ahmad Shah Salehi, deputy of MoLSAMD. (Tolnews)

(8) Afghanistan ...

who replaces Col. Wali Khan Shinwari, said he would act in accordance with the law.

He vowed to implement on the law on himself first before asking his subordinates to do so. (Pajhwok)

(9) China Provides...

also expressed gratitude to China for its cooperation with the government and the people of Afghanistan. (Agencies)

(10) Talks Ongoing ...

the party in the talks.

“Anyone opposed to the talks or against Noor’s representation of the party is his/her own view.”

He said the talks should be allowed to continue because the talks were in the national interest and were aimed at steering Afghanistan out of its crises.

He said the talks were launched after Abdullah failed in implementing the unity agreement deal and the party leadership decided to begin talks with the president in the interest of Afghanistan.

Earlier, a lower house member from northern Balkh province and a close aide of Noor, Farhad Azimi, told reporters that implementation of the unity government deal would be the main point of discussion between governor Noor and President Ashraf Ghani.

He said Noor began talks with the president after Abdullah failed to fulfill the government’s and Jamiat’s pledges.

Advisor to Abdullah, Syed Aqa Hussain Sanchakari, said Noor was meeting the president regarding his personal issues. Governor Noor is head of the Jamiat-i-Islami party executive council. (Pajhwok)

(11) 3 Taliban ...

killed and three others including tribal elder Mohammad Nabi, wounded in the Taliban attack in Qaisar district, the town’s administrative chief said.

Nabi migrated to Sherin Tagab district from Qaisar after being threatened by the Taliban. He wanted to return to his home when came under attack, he added.

The injured had been delivered to Afghan-Turk hospital in Maimana. (Pajhwok)

(12) Mullah Zaeef

did not come out of home to go to the mosque, the gunmen attacked his home.”

Another friend of Zaeef, Nazar Mohammad Mutmaen, in a statement to Pajhwok Afghan News said Zaeef had been warned by various sources to be careful about his movement. He said the attackers wanted to target him by surprise and in isolation.” (Pajhwok)

(13) Militants....

launched a major attack to take control of the strategic Tarinkot city earlier in September.

Scores of additional forces including Special Forces of the Afghan national army were deployed to the area as the group managed to take the war in the outskirts of the city. (KP)

(14) Kidnappers ...

now being investigated by intelligence officials.

Mahmood Afkhmi Rashidi, the Iranian consulate general, thanked Afghan security forces for their efforts at releasing his countryman and said abduction incidents that involved Iranians had recently increased. He said despite efforts, two Iranian nationals were yet to be rescued from their captors. (Pajhwok)

(15) Policemen...

policemen in the check point were killed and 3 other policemen were injured during Friday night attack on the check-post.

On the other hand, Taliban claim attacking two police check points in Shamalgah area, killing 11 policemen and injuring two others. (Pajhwok)

(16) Woman Found...

confirmed a woman in their village had been killed. He named her husband as Farhad. The couple has two small children, the resident said, but he had no further information. (Pajhwok)

(17) Would-be ...

of Kabul, from an expected tragedy. The Taliban has yet to make comments. (Xinhua)

(18) Dor Baba ...

facilities for youth in the district. Ashab Wali Muslim, the pro-

vincial council member, acknowledged the residents of Dor Baba district faced multiple issues, adding they conveyed the issue faced by the people to provincial officials often.

He said the residents helped establish security, but government did not provided them basic facilities such as education, health and others.

District Chief Hamesha Gul Muslim also confirmed the problems and issues existed in the district. He said the government did not paid attention to the development of the district in the past 15-years.

He said every governor promised to them to resolve their issue, but the pledges could not be materialised.

Mohammad Asif Shinwari, spokesman for the education department, acknowledged infrastructure related issues of the education sector in Dor Baba, but claimed to had been resolved the lack teachers.

He said recently 45 qualified teachers hailing from the same district had been appointed in different schools.

Governor Spokesman Attaullah Khogyani said newly appointed Governor Gulab Mangal had chalked out a plan through which all issues of Dor Baba district would be resolved.

He said the governor would visit the district soon and would take all concerned officials with him to address the issues local people.

It is worth mentioning that other district of Nangarhar face similar issues but officials often complained that insecurity was the main hurdle in the way to resolved public issues. (Pajhwok)

(19) Afghan Child...

a team of two doctors at the crossing area for examining Afghan patients arriving without legal documents.

Recently, Pakistan’s interior ministry in his visit to Torkham announced that Pakistan will issue entry visas to Afghan patients in the area itself.

Pakistan has decided to issue entry visas to Afghan nationals who want to visit the country for medical treatment, said Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan during a visit to Torkham recently. (Pajhwok)

(20) Trump Suggests...

with NBC on Friday, Trump’s incoming White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer declined that Trump’s tweet on nuclear weapons on Thursday was “a shoot from the hip reaction” to Putin’s speech. (Xinhua)

(21) Putin Sees...

over 70 billion U.S. dollars.

He noted that the Russian government’s reserve fund of 100 billion dollars and the central bank’s gold and currency reserves of around 400 billion dollars provided a “good safety cushion” for the Russian economy. (Xinhua)

(22) Obama Signs ...

facilitate ongoing operations around the globe.” (Xinhua)

(23) Erdogan Says ...

city of al-Bab from the Islamic State, an operation Erdogan said on Friday was “almost” coming to an end. (Xinhua)

(24) British PM ...

must seize an historic opportunity to forge a bold new role for ourselves in the world and to unite our country as we move forward into the future.”

May said on Tuesday that she was planning to negotiate both Brexit and Britain’s future relationship with the EU by 2019 but a transition period may be required after that. (AFP)

(25) UNSC Adopts...

occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.”

Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 Mideast War. About a decade later, right-wing Israelis started to establish settlements on these lands.

The U.S. sees the settlements, which are illegal by the interna-

tional laws, as an obstacle to peace. (Xinhua)

Over 100,000 Displaced, Airport Closed as Flood Hits C. Indonesia

JAKARTA - Flooding in West Nusa Tenggara province of central Indonesia has forced evacuation of more than 100,000 people and closure of a main airport, disaster agency officials said on Saturday.

Nearly 20,000 houses, over 60 health facilities and two bridges were damaged by the flood, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of the national disaster management agency, told Xinhua.

The flood also cut communication and electricity supply which hampered emergency relief efforts, the spokesman said.

“Authorities have to apply ‘shut and open’ at our main airport,” Agung Pramujia, a senior official of provincial disaster agency, said.

An emergency period has been declared for 14 days until Jan. 4, said Sutopo.

The spokesman said the number of affected could rise as assessment of the flooding was underway.

Soldiers, police and rescuers from disaster agency office were taking part in the emergency relief operation, he said. (Xinhua)

EU to Help Improve Nutrition, Food Security in Laos

VIENTIANE - The European Union (EU) has made available 22.6 million euros and called for project proposals to improve nutrition and food security in Laos.

The move aims to help Laos accomplish the its National Nutrition Strategy 2025 and Plan of Action 2016-2020, which will help to improve food and nutrition security among rural households and create sustainable agricultural wealth at the village and household levels, the state-run Vientiane Times reported on Friday. Food and nutrition security is about ensuring that everybody is able to access sufficient, affordable and diversified nutritious food.

In Laos, access to sufficient and affordable food remains a challenge in itself. Beyond this crucial question, ensuring that food, once obtained, is being utilized and provides adequate nutrition is another key challenge, according to the EU. Nutrition is interlinked with agriculture, food security, social protection, health, education, water and sanitation. The devastating consequences of “hidden hunger” in Laos and the urgent need to scale up interventions to tackle this challenge are undeniable. In 2012, among Lao children under five, 44 percent were stunted and 27 percent were underweight. Stunting threatens the human, socio-economic development of the country and is associated with reduced years of school enrollment, reduced learning achievements, and a future productivity deficit, said the Vientiane Times. (Xinhua)

US Warns of Possible Terrorist Attack on Churches During Holidays

WASHINGTON - U.S. federal anti-terrorism agencies on Friday warned that followers of the Islamic State (IS) may target churches during the holiday season after pro-IS websites had published a publicly-available list of churches in the country.

The extreme group continues “aspirational calls for attacks on holiday gatherings, including targeting churches,” said a bulletin issued by the FBI and Department of Homeland Security. However, there are no known specific, credible threats, according to the bulletin sent to law enforcement agencies and private security companies around the United States.

The warning, which also describes the different signs of suspicious activity law enforcement should be aware of, has expanded from those in the past that warned against military and law enforcement targets during holidays, said local media reports. (Xinhua)