

(1) Over 2,000 ...

in vain to overrun the district. Areas of Baghlan-i-Markazi where the factory land has been grabbed are insecure. Abdul Qadeem Niazi, deputy governor, confirmed the land-grab in areas where militants had a strong presence. He said the issue had been discussed with security officials. A clearing operation would purge the areas of insurgents, he said.

The factory was established back in 1941 with the help of Germany. It is the only sugar-producing factory in the country, which remained functional until 1992. However, it had since been closed because of the protracted civil war and clashes.

In 2007, the factory was rehabilitated with the assistance of Germany. But now it has been functioning occasionally to produce sugar -- a commodity that Afghanistan imports from neighbouring countries. (Pajhwok)

(2) Azizi Bank ...

the financial industry. Mr. Omaid, CEO Azizi Bank in his speech addressed the audience about the bank's 10 years of illustrious journey in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the bank's future growth plans. His speech was highly applauded by the audience seeing an Afghanistan Bank with such international standards and future aspirations. The gathering witnessed banking and financial industries CEOs from about 20 countries which included India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Philippines, Russia Indonesia & Singapore in addition to the other countries. Azizi Bank is the largest commercial banking group in Afghanistan and is aimed at creating a world class service experience for its customers. (PR)

(3) Watchdog Drawing...

with government departments to facilitate access to information and to be involved in sharing the information to the media," said Ainuddin Bahaduri, deputy head of the commission. Government meanwhile said it is committed to sharing information with the media.

"The president has ordered that in addition to spokespersons of government departments, three people are responsible to provide information to the media and attend discussions if needed," said Dawa Khan Menapal, deputy spokesman of the president. (Tolonews)

(4) France Quiet...

However the UN has so far not responded to the letter. "The Afghan government expects that the UN sanctions committee will soon lift its sanctions on Hizb-e-Islami leadership," said spokesman for the National Security Council Tawab Ghorzang. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has said it cannot comment on the issue. "There is the possibility that some countries would have a different perspective on the lifting of sanctions against Hizb-e-Islami leadership, but it is not clear what kind of a decision they take practically when the UNSC meets," said legal expert Abdul Wahid Farzayee. In addition, Hizb-e-Islami officials have also raised concerns over what they call a delay in lifting sanctions against Hekmatyar.

"Recently a delegation from the UN sanctions committee visited Kabul and pledged to lift sanctions on Hizb-e-Islami leadership before the Christmas holidays," said Hashmatullah Arshad, spokesman for Hizb-e-Islami. U.S, UK, France, China and Russia are the permanent members of the UN Security Council and they have the right to veto a resolution. (Tolonews)

(5) Afghanistan to ...

be used for emergency purposes," said Rashid. Afghanistan needs nearly six million tons of wheat annually. Of this, 4.5 million is from the domestic market and the remainder is imported from neighboring countries. Meanwhile, agriculture experts have asked government to forge a comprehensive strategy so that the country can become self-reliant in terms of wheat production.

"Instead of importing wheat, the government should focus on the expansion of wheat cultivation; this would help the country's economic development and will also improve the lives of the farmers," said Yasamin Farahmand, a member of the Academy of Science. "The private sector is ready to invest in the agriculture sector particularly in wheat production, but for this government needs to work with investors and resolve their problems," said Seyam Pesarlai, spokesman for the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI).

According to the ACCI, currently Afghanistan imports the majority of its food items from central Asian countries. (Tolonews)

(6) Student Enrollment ...

Samimi said a total of 1,500 teachers were needed across the province, where 500 have been hired on a contractual basis.

He said the education department had been facing a shortage of textbooks over the years. The ministry concerned provided the department one million books some years back.

Lack of infrastructure and proper buildings for schools is another issue that hampers the education sector in the province. Samimi said of the 321 operational schools, 190 had buildings and the remaining continued to operate in the open.

He lamented some of the schools did not even have tents.

He added they had asked the education ministry to construct buildings for schools, but the request was not accepted. The ministry has promised rehabilitation of only 16 schools this year.

Annoyed by the current situation, most residents want the central government to pay proper attention to the development of quality education in the province.

Faiz Mohammad, an inhabitant of Kandahar City, blamed past officials for failing to develop the vital sector and that was why it continued facing challenges. He said that students and literacy level were the main casualty. Students, meanwhile, also complained of a shortage of textbooks, proper school buildings and classrooms. They suffered a lot during the winter season.

Lema, 12, a student at Kaka Syed Ahmad High School, said at the start of the academic year she had no books. However, she hoped she would be provided with the books. To her disappointment, that did not happen and finally went to the market to buy her books.

She, however, said most of families lacked the financial resources to buy books from the bazaar. Due to fewer classrooms, most students had to study under tents, where no heating system was available, she added.

Lema asked the Ministry of Education (MoE) to resolve education issues and provide the best possible learning environment for students. (Pajhwok)

(7) Rahmani Rejects ...

was deeply saddened about the mistranslation and misinterpretation of the New York Times article and offer an apology to all my colleagues who had been hurt by the report and wish them good health and success. I only

want a better education so I can serve my country Afghanistan and serve my oppressed people particularly my sisters and make Afghanistan proud," the letter concluded.

Rahmani was celebrated in the United States in 2015 after the US state department honored her with its annual Women of Courage Award.

She made headlines in domestic and international media when she completed her training to become Afghanistan's first female pilot in 2013 and vowed to serve in the nation's air force, in one of the world's most conservative countries.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) has accused Nilofar of telling lies to the people. "Those who legitimize the threats in Afghanistan to seek asylum in another country, this approach has no base," said MoD spokesman Mohammad Radmanish.

The Afghan government invests nearly one million dollars on each pilot to be trained.

"the young and educated cadres who are trained in advanced countries, there is a dire need for them in Afghanistan air force," said pilot trainer Daryoush Kabir. (Tolonews)

(8) Deh Yak ...

never work for our areas and never care about us", he added. Pajhwok tried to contact Deh Yak district chief Mohammad Haroon Bawar, but failed. District police chief Faiz Mohammad Topan said despite comparatively better security situation in Dehyak, no development projects had been implemented there.

"Despite a limited number of police force, security problems do not exist fortunately," he said. Topan did not comment about district officials not attending office and said officials in the provincial capital should pay urgent attention to Deh Yak.

Governor Abdul Karim Matin said he had sent Dehyak district chief on an official task. "If an official does not attend duty without a valid reason, I will fire him", he added.

He also said some construction projects would be launched in several districts of Ghazni including Dehyak in near future. He asked people to help the government implement these projects.

Matin said emergency aid would be delivered to displaced families in Deh Yak district, one of unstable towns in Ghazni, 30 kilometers east of Ghazni City. (Pajhwok)

(9) Chinese Scholar ...

On the contrary, there is much talk, especially from businessmen, about developing Gwadar on the Dubai model, which would be inclusive and open. "That is why Gwadar port will be an international hub not only for China and Pakistan, but also for Central Asia, Iran and Russia, which has historically felt the need for warm-water ports," the academic concluded. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban ...

National Police ambush." MoI further added "During this ambush, nine other armed Taliban were wounded and two rocket launchers, two PK machine guns and one vehicle seized as well."

According to the ministry, Mullah Firoz Jahadi was leading the Kunduz battle. (KP)

(11) Construction ...

studying in Bamyan schools. Juma Khan Mehdavi, a resident of Bamyan, criticised the delay in construction of schools and said such delays usually happened when contracts lacked transparency. (Pajhwok)

(12) Girls National ...

look forward and look at the future of Afghanistan's girls football. We will play differently and will have good achievements," said Shabnam Mabarz, Afghan Girls' National Football Team captain.

The tournament will start tomorrow in Bengal state of India and seven teams from south-

Asia countries will play.

In the team lineup, the Afghan football team is scheduled to play Indian and Bangladeshi teams.

In the past three years Afghan girls played in the championship, and managed to reach fourth place in 2012. (Tolonews)

(13) Afghan Cyclists ...

Rohullah Nazari won the 4th spot in the competition while Balochistan's Abdul Wahid and Muhammad Ashfaq, representing Railways secured fifth and sixth spots, respectively.

The top six winners of the competition received cash reward as well as trophies by the chief guest ADCG Sahiwal Mr. Rizwan Nazeer.

He also distributed shields to officials of the race. (KP)

(14) Doctor Gunned...

made so far in connection of doctor killing, he added.

Family member of the slain doctor on the condition of anonymity said they had no enmity with anyone.

No group has yet taken responsibility for the incident. (Pajhwok)

(15) Taliban Militants ...

was beheaded by irresponsible gunmen.

In the meantime, Arzoo said the Taliban insurgents beheaded the woman after she started a verbal clash with them.

This comes as the Taliban insurgents executed at least two people including a woman in northern Jawzjan province of Afghanistan late last month.

Earlier, at least three women were shot dead by unknown gunmen who were riding a motorcycle in western Herat province of Afghanistan around two weeks ago.

The officials said the main motive behind the murder is not clear and search operation is underway to arrest the perpetrators.

Another woman shot by her in-law's family after she attempted to elope with her love in Ghor province of Afghanistan. (KP)

(16) Israel Hits...

vowed to exact from countries which supported the historic motion. The vote, passed by a 14-0 majority, with the United States abstaining, demands Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem." (Xinhua)

(17) Balkan Countries...

when they were taken off the bus by a police or army unit that tore their documents," said Gordan Paunovic of the Info Park group that provides help to refugees. (AFP)

(18) Turkey Says ...

YPG as "reliable" partners in the fight against IS in Syria, even though it also designates the PKK as a terrorist organization. (Xinhua)

(19) Russia Hunts....

depth of 27 metres (89 ft), the RIA news agency said, but strong currents and deep water were complicating the search. Major-General Igor Konashenkov, a Defence Ministry spokesman, said 11 bodies had been recovered. The ministry denied a RIA report that some of the dead passengers had been wearing life jackets.

He said the sea and air search operation, already involving around 3,500 people, was being expanded. (Reuters)

(20) 870 Moroccans ...

been reduced in the past few years.

In 2016, there were a total of three people who tried to join the Islamic State (IS) group in Libya and Syria, but were arrested. (Xinhua)

(21) Hungarian Priest...

hall. "I'm not a hero, it was simply my duty as a committed Christian to help," the bespectacled and portly 61-year-old told AFP in the parish house next door where he lives.

But Nemeth calls his stance a "lonely" one in a country led by the fiercely anti-migrant Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

In 2015 Orban built fences on Hungary's borders to keep out migrants, and changed laws enabling the expulsion and jailing of "illegal border crossers". (AFP)

(22) Iran Launches ...

radar, missile, artillery, communication and electronic surveillance systems, were scrambled to designated positions, according to Press TV.

The exercises, which include around 17,000 military personnel members, simulate intense and large-scale electronic warfare.

Domestic and foreign planes have been cautioned stay away from the drill zone. (Xinhua)

(23) NAP Made...

However, the report noted that terrorism in Karachi decreased by 80 per cent, whereas a significant decrease was also seen in incidents of robberies, murders and target killing in the city. (Monitoring Desk)

(24) Presidential...

Orazov. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has been elected twice as the country's president. During the presidential election in 2012, 97.4 percent of voters cast their ballots for Berdimuhamedov. Turkmen president is elected for a period of seven years, according to new amendments to the country's Constitution. (Trend)

(25) Mirziyoyev Plans...

reports. At the negotiations the parties indicated enhancement of cooperation on a wide spectrum of directions and declared about growing mutual trust, respect and understanding. The parties have discussed the prospects of joint projects performance in the field of border and interregional cooperation. (Agencies)

At Least 30 Civilians Killed by IS in Northern Syria

ANKARA - At least 30 civilians, who made an attempt to escape from Syria's al-Bab in Northern Syria on Dec. 25, were killed by Islamic State (IS) terrorist attack with mines and hand-made explosives, Turkish military source told Anadolu Agency on Monday. IS has been threatening civilians in al-Bab and trying to push them to stay in the city, where the roads and streets have been blocked by the terror group's barricades. Meanwhile, A Turkish soldier injured in Al-Bab during the clash with IS died on Dec.26 while being treated in Gaziantep province, adding the death toll of Turkish soldiers killed in northern Syria in last week to 17, Dogan News Agency reported. 16 Turkish soldiers were killed in an IS attack on Dec. 21 in Al-Bab, as Turkish troops and Ankara-backed Syrian rebels battle to take the town from jihadists, Turkish Defense Minister Fikri Isik said on Dec. 22.

Isik said on Dec. 23 that he had information that three Turkish soldiers were abducted by IS militants in northern Syria but added that other "comments" beyond this information were not confirmed. On Aug. 24, the Turkish Armed Forces launched the Euphrates Shield Operation against IS and the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the military wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD). (Xinhua)

Dozens of ISIS Fighters Killed in Mosul Battles

BIRUT - The militants were killed in three separate incidents, the Iraqi military said in a statement. In one incident, ISIS fighters tried to advance near a federal police position, south of Mosul, before Iraqi forces detonated two vehicle-borne IEDs and killed 21 "terrorists", the military said.

In a second incident, the military said it killed 51 ISIS fighters and injured a number of others after the militant group -- using vehicle-borne IEDs and suicide bombers -- tried to launch attacks on Iraqi military positions in the neighborhoods of Intisar, al Salam and al Shaimaa' in southeastern Mosul.

Separately, aircraft belonging to the coalition forces carried out airstrikes on an ISIS gathering in al Wahda neighborhood in eastern Mosul, killing 25 terrorists, the military said.

Mosul, Iraq's second-most populous city, is ISIS' last major stronghold in Iraq and the terror group is well entrenched there.

Massively outnumbered by the advancing coalition -- a 90,000-strong force of Iraqi government troops, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and irregular militia soldiers -- ISIS relies on asymmetric warfare tactics to inflict damage on its opponents, and terrorize long-suffering civilian populations. (AP)

Outgoing UN Chief Reclaims Top Spot in S.Korean Presidential Polls

SEOUL - Ban Ki-moon, outgoing UN Secretary General, whose second five-year term is set to end by the end of this year, reclaimed the top spot in recent South Korean presidential polls, local survey showed on Monday.

According to a survey of 2,528 voters nationwide conducted by local pollster Realmeter between Dec. 19 and 23, support for Ban as the country's next leader was 23.3 percent, up 2.8 percentage points from the previous week.

His main support base was the North Gyeongsang province, a traditional home turf for impeached President Park Geun-hye and the ruling Saenuri Party, in which Ban garnered 35.8 percent in approval scores, up 9.3 percentage points from a week earlier.

As there is no competitive presidential contender found in the ruling bloc, Ban is seen as the last remaining hope for conservative voters. Ban has not officially declared his run for president in his homeland, but local media outlets speculated that he had already indicated his candidacy in recent press conference with South Korean journalists in New York. (Xinhua)

Turkish Authorities Detained 1,682 People Last Week over Militant Links: Ministry

ISTANBUL - Turkish authorities last week detained 1,682 people for questioning over suspected links to militant organisations and arrested 516 of them, the interior ministry said on Monday. People suspected of links to the Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who Ankara says orchestrated an attempted coup in July, made up the biggest number, with 1,096 detained and 426 of those arrested. A total of 508 people were detained for links with Kurdish militants and 78 of those arrested, the ministry said. Authorities detained 78 people for links to Islamic State and arrested 12, it said. (Reuters)

CPEC to Usher in 'New Era of Development': COAS Bajwa

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Monday expressed the hope that timely completion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would usher in a new era of development in the region.

He was addressing the passing out parade of newly recruited Baloch personnel of the Pakistan Army in Quetta. He said Balochistan is an integral part of Pakistan and its resources would in future open new paths of progress for the people of Balochistan.

Development in Balochistan would ensure peace and stability in the country, the army chief added.

"That is why our enemies want to hinder Balochistan's bright future. "I am extremely pleased that the people of Balochistan... have rejected all anti-Pakistan elements."

Gen Bajwa said Pakistan's "doors are open for those brothers who have been misguided by the enemy". He said the betterment of law and order in Balochistan is the "foremost priority of the government" and in this respect, the Pakistan Army is assisting with the training and capacity building of police and other law enforcement agencies. (Monitoring Desk)