

(1) Loya Jirga...

been done and the second is parliamentary and district council election, a process under work," he said. However, he said two committees had been created to work with the international community to resolve insecurity problem during elections. (Pajhwok)

(2) High Level...

about the commission's financial, legal and technical developments as well as consultations with political parties about the elections.

The president urged the IEC to organize the election schedule and requirements of the commission so its operations proceeded without any interruption.

"The IEC should organize its plans and procurements in a way to be cost-effective and stable," the statement quoted the president as saying.

Ghani suggested creation of an information technology committee in the IEC to ensure transparent elections. He also stressed prevention of mistakes made in the past elections and said the capacity of human resources should be effectively used in the upcoming elections.

The president also stressed overall transparency of elections and said anyone who attempted fraud and corruption in elections would be taken to justice under the new election law.

"The government is committed to providing \$30 million fund for the procurement of upcoming elections," he said. Abdullah on the occasion also said the government had strong will for holding the elections. He stressed organizational reforms in the IEC.

Foreign envoys welcomed the government's stance on the upcoming elections and pledged support to the democratic process.

They suggested the creation of a permanent committee to work in different electoral areas, particularly finance, security and technical.

The president said standards and foundations should be defined and used in the 2017 and 2019 elections.

The statement said Second Vice-President Sarwar Danish, Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi, IEC commissioners, and ambassadors of the US, the UK, EU, Norway, Japan and Germany as well as NATO's RS mission representative also participated in the meeting. (Pajhwok)

(3) Russia, Iran...

we have with the Afghans in the region," Nicholson alleged.

"The Russian involvement (in Afghanistan), this year, has become more difficult. They (Russians) have begun to publicly legitimise the Taliban. This narrative that they promote is that the Taliban are fighting Islamic State and the Afghan government is not as fighting Islamic State and that therefore there could be spillover of this group into the region. This is a false narrative," he said. Senator John McCain, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee alleged that both Russia and Iran were meddling in Afghanistan.

"Iran is reportedly arming and funding the Taliban. And, as if the situation were not complicated enough, Russia is now meddling in Afghanistan in apparent attempt to prop up the Taliban and in undermine the United States," he said. (Pajhwok)

(4) Trump Speaks...

Strategic Partnership and his support for Ghani's government, which is faced with an emboldened Taliban-led insurgency that is still gaining ground after more than 15 years of war.

The Afghan Embassy in Washington said Trump and Ghani had spoken on Dec. 3, but Thursday's call was their first since Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20. Hours before the call, General John Nicholson, the commander of U.S. and international troops in Afghanistan, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washington he did not have enough troops to adequately advise Afghan forces on the ground.

Nicholson said he had enough U.S. troops to carry out counterterrorism operations against the Taliban, al Qaeda and other insurgents but also acknowledged gains made by the Taliban over the past year. "We have a shortfall of a few thousand," Nicholson said.

Trump has so far offered little clarity about whether he might approve more forces for Afghanistan.

About 8,400 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, well down from their peak of about 100,000 in 2011. Nicholson said extra forces need not all come from the United States and could also be drawn from other allies. The focus of the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan has narrowed considerably to training Afghan forces and conducting counterterrorism missions since a significant drawdown began under Democratic former U.S. President Barack Obama. Obama was often criticized by Republicans in Congress for focusing too much on driving down U.S. troop numbers in an attempt to force Afghan soldiers to become more self-sufficient. Nicholson said U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis would speak with allies soon and suggested Mattis might also visit Afghanistan, which might help him prepare his own recommendations for Republican Trump.

He also spoke of security in Afghanistan

in terms of the often-difficult U.S. relationship with Pakistan, long seen as a haven for insurgents from the Taliban, the Haqqani network and other militant Islamist groups.

"Our complex relationship with Pakistan is best assessed through a holistic review," Nicholson said. Addressing U.S. concerns about Pakistan was at the top of his list of priorities with the Trump administration, he said.

The Afghan Embassy in Washington said Trump and Ghani had also discussed regional security issues, "as well as the joint fight against terrorism and countries that sponsor it." (Reuters)

(5) Russia Offers ...

Afghan problem. "If you look at it in a general context, the current period is far from the best timing for a withdrawal of foreign troops, including the U.S. units, from Afghanistan," Kabulov stated.

He added: "The situation in the sphere of security there is degenerating and a whole set of factors makes the Afghan national security forces incapable of putting up resistance to the armed opposition on their own." "Given this situation, a hasty pullout of foreign military may bring about unpredictable aftermaths and destroy whatever encouraging achievements of the past few years," Kabulov said. This comes after Gen. John Nicholson, Commander of NATO's Resolute Support Mission and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, in a U.S. Senate session on Thursday said Russia's involvement has deepened in the country - and with the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

Foreign envoys welcomed the government's stance on the upcoming elections and pledged support to the democratic process.

They suggested the creation of a permanent committee to work in different electoral areas, particularly finance, security and technical.

(6) Ghani Calls ...

we come to a conclusion that it is worth to call him the father of historians in Afghanistan. His writings will benefit the next generations either," he stated.

Ghani authorized certain institutions to design a new medal under the name of Faiz Mohammad Katib.

"I direct that a memorial monument should be built at tomb of Allahmah Katib. Second, the Ministry of Justice should take necessary steps to create a medal of honor after Allahmah Faiz Mohammad Kateb and refer it to the cabinet for approval in order to honor the services of this great personality from the viewpoint of the nation and the government," Ghani added.

Faiz Mohammad Katib was serving as Afghan court chronicler and secretary to the Amir Abdul Rahman Khan and then his son Amir Habibullah Khan. His job was to write government's official letters and order.

"Katib besides being a court chronicler was a brave and a skilled intellectual. He never sacrificed the truth for the sake of the expediency of interest and always preferred the interests of the nation to the personal interests," Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish said.

"When modern schools were established in Afghanistan, he wrote a book known as Aman-ul-Insha which was teaching students about methodology of correct writing," said writer Sarwar Maulayee.

"He had a deep sense of nationalism. His was that the plight of oppressed people should not be forgotten in the history," said writer Habibullah Rafi.

Katib was born in 1862 in Zard Sang village of Qarabagh district of Ghazni province of Afghanistan. He spent a part of his life in Nahor, another district of Ghazni and died in Kabul in March 3, 1931. He was an ethnic and was of Mohammad Khuwaja clan. He was Afghan court chronicler, a skilled calligrapher and secretary to Emir Habib Ullah Khan from 1901 to 1919.

Katib pursued education in Iraq's holy city of Najaf, India, Lahore and Peshawar. Besides the monumental Siraj al-Tawrih, Faiz Mohammad wrote the following works:

- Tuhfatul Habib' Afghan History (1747-1880), in two volumes.
- Takkeratul Enqilaab accounts of the days of Habibullah, Bacha-e Saqaw
- History of Ancient Prophets/Rulers, from Adam to Jesus
- Hidayat-i kish-t-i gul-ha wa qalamah-ha va ububut va ghayrah (1921-1922)
- Jughrafiya-yi ab-i va Afriqa
- Tarikh-e Hokama-ye Motaqad-dem, compiled while he was working at the Ministry of Education;
- Fayz al-Foyuzat, a fragment of which, called Afghan treaties and agreements (ahd wa misaq-e afghan) was published in Sayyed Mahdi Farrokh's Tarikh-e Siasi-ye Afghanistan (Tehran, 1314 S./1935) and which, in tune with the times, was a sharp critique of the Abdul Rahman's relations with the British;
- Faqarat-e Shar-iya, which is not known to have survived;
- Nasab-nama-ye Tawa'ef-e afghena wa ta'addod-e nofus-e ishan, also known as Nijhad-nama-ye Afghan, a description of Afghan tribes and non-Afghans residing in Afghanistan.

The Nijhad-nama was published in Persia in 1933 from a manuscript thought to be the autograph and held in the Kitab Khana-ye Milli-ye Malik in Tehran. (Tolnews)

(7) Both Republicans...

him both Democrat and Republican parties were supportive of Afghanistan

Kaine promised pursuing in Congress plans of State and Defense Departments to equip Afghan forces. (Pajhwok)

(8) IEC States ...

spring. The commission is taking preparations and the outline for holding elections is almost final," Sayyad said. President Ashraf Ghani, and CEO Abdullah Abdullah, stressed in the meeting that the NUG has a strong will to hold elections, he said.

"The election commission has been assigned to share the election schedule, its plans and needs with government, and the international community, media and people," Shahhussain Murtaazawi, spokesman for the president said. Meanwhile, UNAMA released a statement on Friday in which it said the agency welcomes the NUG leaders' decision for holding a fair and transparent election. "The momentum towards holding credible elections is now taking clear form. The UN is looking to do all it can to support electoral reform and elections seen as fair by the Afghan people," the statement read.

Institutions overseeing the election process however said a transparent and fair election is closely tied with electoral reforms and a list of the voters should be drawn up. "If IEC process the work at its current speed, the electoral reforms will not happen in the next year and elections will not be held," said Rahmatullah Salehi, spokesman of Free and Fair Election Foundation. Insecurity and the increase of insurgency in the next spring, however, is said to be the main obstacle in the way of holding elections.

According to a report released recently by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Afghan government only has control over 58 percent of the total soil of the country, which is concerning. (Tolnews)

(9) Snowfall to...

Defence and Interior ministries, natural disaster committee and the Afghanistan Red Crescent Committee (RCC).

The justice minister presented a draft law for the approval of a new state medal after Amir Ali Sher Nawai. The draft law was developed in six months and approved by special committees that keep close a watch on laws.

It also endorsed five agreements, including one between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Afghanistan on fighting against illegal trade, narcotics and related products.

A pact with Sweden on migration, a Memorandum of Understanding and the European Union on migration and similar accords with Germany and Finland were also okayed.

The cabinet also decided to provide scholarships for military officers fighting in the line of fire and tasked the interior and defence ministries to implement the cabinet decision in this regard.

The cabinet tasked the work and social affairs ministry to designate a day in March as Afghan Security Forces Day and dubbed a week in November as domestic handicraft week and name the coming solar year as youth year.

According to the source, finance and administration in-charge at Kabul municipality submitted a request of adjustment of parking and road verges along eastern side of the Hamid Karzai International Airport road into residential-commercial area, which is set to be established by private sector. (Pajhwok)

(10) Pakistan Army ...

military has made in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and expressed appreciation for the Pakistani military's recent support for efforts to defeat ISIS-Khorasan Province," he said. "Both leaders reaffirmed the importance of the bilateral military-to-military relationship, and highlighted the importance of continuing to work together on counterterrorism and regional stability," Davis said.

Earlier in the day, top US Senators and General John Nicholson, Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan expressed concern over continuation of terrorist safe havens inside Pakistan. "Pakistani support for extremist groups operating in Afghanistan, whether it is passive or deliberate, must end if we and Afghanistan are to achieve necessary levels of security," Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee said during a Congressional hearing.

"It's very difficult to succeed on the battlefield when your enemy enjoys external support and safe haven. I think we need to continue to work closely with Pakistan," Nicholson acknowledged.

"We need to do a holistic review of our Pakistan policy. And sit down Pakistan leaders. Of course, we have an opportunity for such a review; given the new administration and the new chain of command. We have many areas where we could be working together and our mutual benefit. I think this is a key to the future," Nicholson responded.

"I'm personally committed to this and working with my Pakistani counterparts. (Afghan) President *Ashraf Ghani wants to work with Pakistan towards a peaceful resolution. And, in my initial conversations with my chain of command, this is a high priority for all of us," he said as Senator King encouraged the general to draw some connection

between US aid to Pakistan and its actions against terrorist networks.

Senator Richard Blumenthal called for more pressure on Pakistan. "Are we doing enough to bring pressure to bear on the Pakistani government to be more aggressive and active because my understanding is that the materials for IEDs, a lot of the other kind of support for our adversaries in Afghanistan continue to come from that area of Pakistan?" he asked. (Pajhwok)

(11) Taliban Leaders ...

lately became more assertive, overtly lending legitimacy to the Taliban to undermine NATO efforts and bolster belligerents using the false narrative that only the Taliban were fighting the Islamic State, Khorasan region (ISIL-K). The general also accused Iran of providing support to Taliban while also engaging the Afghan government over issues of water rights, trade, and security.

"Our primary mission remains to protect the homeland by preventing Afghanistan from being used again as a safe haven for terrorists to attack the United States or our allies," the American general said.

In his testimony, Nicholson assessed Afghanistan's current security situation in a stalemate where the equilibrium favors the government. "Leadership and countering corruption are two areas in which the Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) must improve to reduce casualties and increase military capability," he noted.

Senator John McCain, chairman of the committee, said the risk to American and Afghan forces had only grown worse as the terrorist threat had intensified.

"The Taliban have grown more lethal, expanded its territorial control and inflicted heavy casualties on Afghan forces," he rued.

In October, the senator said the Taliban launched multiple concurrent offensives that seriously threatened four provincial capitals. "While Afghan forces with US support successfully defended those capitals, the Taliban seized the initiative, kept the pressure on Afghan forces and captured new ground."

McCain said Al Qaeda and the Haqqani network continued to threaten American interest in Afghanistan and beyond. "ISIS is trying to carve out another safe haven from which it can plan and execute attacks."

He said Iran was reportedly arming and funding the Taliban. "And, as if the situation were not complicated enough, Russia is now meddling in Afghanistan in apparent attempt to prop up the Taliban and in undermine the United States," McCain said. (Pajhwok)

(12) Pakistan to ...

million, including funds for upgrading Afghan universities.

At present 156 universities were functional in Afghanistan, 36 in the public sector and 120 in the private sector, the HEC chairman told the newspaper.

Also on Wednesday, Pakistan launched a programme for capacity building of universities in Afghanistan and awarded 3,000 scholarships to Afghan students. (Pajhwok)

(13) Different...

of the two countries would decide about the deployment of more foreign soldiers. He said terrorism was a global fight and the international community must help Afghanistan in war against terrorism. (Pajhwok)

(14) Afghan Military ...

counterterrorism cooperation and economic development, officials said. Afghan defense ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said more international troops would be a "good step" towards countering militant groups in Afghanistan. "The Afghan defense ministry supports any decision taken between the Afghan and American governments," he said. "This is a joint battle against terrorism and we support any possible way to tackle terrorism in the country." The focus of the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan has narrowed considerably to training Afghan forces and conducting counterterrorism missions since a significant drawdown under former U.S. President Barack Obama. About 8,400 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, well down from their peak of about 100,000 in 2011.

Waziri said the Afghan military had asked the U.S. government for more equipment and training for its forces. (Reuters)

(15) Snowfall, ...

attention to improving their living conditions. Ghubar, head of a seven-member family, said that he escaped the war in home district Batkot in the eastern Nangarhar province 10 years ago and shifted to the capital city Kabul with the hope to find a better life.

"Winter or summer makes no difference for us," whispered Ghubar. "The snowfall and chilly climate in winter makes us sick and our children usually suffer from respiratory diseases; while in summer different kinds of flies including mosquitoes and even malaria bring variety of illness to us including to our children." Asked about his income, Ghubar murmured that he works in

fruit market and can earn on average 300 afghanis (around 4.5 U.S. dollars) a day. That money is "too little to properly support" the seven-member family, especially if someone gets ill.

Some 750 internally displaced families have been living in the kind of makeshift camps as Ghubar, head of the camp Ziaullah, 35, said. (Xinhua)

(16) UNAMA Welcomes...

The Mission also emphasised the need for electoral management bodies to build trust and support across the entire political spectrum. "We urge the electoral commissions to make decisions collegially and act with independence and impartiality," the statement said. (Pajhwok)

(17) Govt. to...

UN sanctions committee announced that it had removed Hekmatyar's name from the UN sanctions list, one of the conditions set by the Hizb-e-Islami when signing the peace deal with government.

The National Unity Government (NUG) and Hizb-e-Islami are also in negotiations about freeing Hizb-e-Islami prisoners. (Tolnews)

(18) Taliban Urges...

Afghanistan deserved humanitarian assistance more than any other nation, they Taliban said, asking ICRC to resume its operation in Afghanistan. Taliban reaffirmed they would take every possible step for the security and safety of ICRC staff-members in areas of their control. (Pajhwok)

(19) Baghlan Public...

occurred in broad daylight inside the provincial capital.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. (Pajhwok)

(20) Paktia Police...

transferred to hospital after he experienced the initial signs of the attack, but he succumbed in the hospital.

Zadran had taken charge as police chief of Paktia about a year back. (Pajhwok)

(21) Senior IS ...

ment. However, the statement did not provide details about the identity of the targeted militant and the raid, saying the operation launched on Feb. 1 was authorized by Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani.

The killed militant was responsible for atrocities against local residents in Achin district of eastern Nangarhar province, and was involved in organizing several bombings, including suicide bombings against a mosque and a demonstration in capital Kabul last year, the statement noted. (Xinhua)

(22) Kapisa, Paktika...

placed due to insecurity and natural disasters, said a statement

The aid items included 20,000 Afghanis cash, tent, appliances, blankets and others.

The provincial government had been trying to provide assistance to similar families in the future, the statement said. (Pajhwok)

(23) Bomb Attack ...

a term referring to the Taliban militant group, for the attack.

More than 3,498 civilians were killed and over 7,920 others injured in conflict-related incidents across Afghanistan last year, according to the UN mission in the country.

The IED attacks are the third largest cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, following ground engagement and suicide attacks. (Xinhua)

(24) Work on 100-...

be completed in two-years. Its work had already been kicked off.

After the completion of bridge distance between the Qarghyio district centre and Mehterlan, the provincial capital would reduce to 16-kilometre from current distance of 45-kilometre. In addition the residents of locality would be facilitated in terms of transportation and commuting. (Pajhwok)

(25) Returnee Says ...

Then the family had just six members and now their number has reached dozens. One of the family members, Shah Sawar Khan, said they were actual residents of Watapur district of eastern Kunar province, but they had been living in northern Kunduz before migrating to Pakistan. The 65-year-old, Shah Sawar Khan, was newlywed when his family, including his four unmarried brothers, migrated to Pakistan and rented a home in Mardan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Later the family moved to a refugee camp and built a mud-made home there.

Shah Sawar Khan returned to Afghanistan at a time when his three sons have married and have children, with number of the entire family reaching 23. His four brothers are also now grandfathers.

In an interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, Shah Sawar Khan said: (In Pakistan) we would do hard labour, but our life was good because everything was affordable there. There was work every day. But here my sons rarely find work."

Khan said all his grandchildren and the

youngest son would go to school in Pakistan, but now all were out of school. The children go a religious school only. (Pajhwok)

(26) Kabul Addicts ...

the dogs carry diseases.

The chairman of the Kabul drug rehabilitation center said they are working on plans to round up the addicts in the city. The Ministry of Public Health said recently that in conjunction with the Kabul Police Department they picked up a number of addicts recently and took them to rehabilitation centers. (Tolnews)

(27) 6,500 Rounds ...

Taliban group and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group are attempting to expand their foothold in this province. Reports emerged earlier last year suggesting that the loyalists of ISIS group are attempting to turn Nangarhar into their regional operational base by consolidating operations with the terror group in Syria and Iraq. (KP)

(28) Xi, Trump...

can complement each other and promote each other, and the two countries are totally capable of becoming good cooperative partners, said the Chinese president.

Xi said that building a sound China-U.S. relationship is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples, and it is also the responsibility China and the United States need to assume as the world's major countries. (Xinhua)

(29) Spanish Parties...

leader, but also renounce his seat in Congress.

Iglesias has been the public face of Podemos since its foundation in March 2014, and wants the party to maintain its traditional close links to community groups. (Xinhua)

(30) Russia, US...

framework of the Syrian settlement." Lavrov insisted that "only Syrian people can determine its future without interference from the outside world." (Xinhua)

(31) Talks to...

in Syria and the allegations of Russia hacking of the Democrats in the U.S. presidential election. The Kremlin has welcomed President Donald Trump's promise to mend the broken ties. (AP)

(32) Erdogan Approves...

submitted a proposed bill to Parliament for ratification.

The parliament passed the constitutional amendment on Jan. 21 in two rounds of voting for 18 articles. A total of 339 deputies voted in favor of the amendment, exceeding the 330-vote threshold to bring it to a referendum. (Xinhua)

(33) Brexit Court...

bill giving May authority to trigger article 50 must now be passed by the unelected House of Lords.

It was revealed Thursday by officials at Westminster that Lord Pannick was one of 140 peers in the upper chamber wanting to speak in the debate later this month. (Xinhua)

(34) German President

coordinate their position, including on Britain's planned exit from the bloc.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid said: "We can be proud of having a country like Germany in the Baltic Sea region," adding the EU project has to be made stronger. (Xinhua)

(35) Trump, Senior

smart and start winning again!" he added. The strong words were directed at McCain's previous remarks on the deadly mission, saying he "would not describe any operation that results in the loss of American life as a success."

U.S. Navy's "Sea, Air, and Land" (SEAL) Team officer William "Ryan" Owens died during a raid on Al-Qaida in Yemen on Jan. 29, which killed around 10 Al-Qaida militants and at least 25 civilians. (Xinhua)

(36) China Ready...

and biopharmaceuticals, among others.

In light of the current international situation, China and New Zealand should not only advocate an open world economy. (Xinhua)

(37) Pakistan PM ...

but also provide connectivity to Central Asia," he further said. Talking about Pakistan's economy, he said international economic agencies are upgrading ratings for the financial and economic stability of the country. (Xinhua)

(38) Uzbekistan...

discussed during the visit were: support to the private sector, in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises; cooperation on improving the business environment in the country; and other areas of mutual interest. Uzbekistan has been a shareholder and country of operations of the EBRD since 1992. (AKI)

(39) Rahmon Orders...

State Committee on Emergency Situations Kokhir Rasulzoda briefed the participants on the report on elimination of the consequences of the natural disasters. (AKI)