

**(1) Ghani Seeks...**

mentation of security mechanisms. He said terrorism was not an indigenous problem in Afghanistan, but was a regional and international issue.

The president also stressed enhanced security of intelligence officials and issued directives for presenting a special policy in this regard to the National Security Council.

He said the intelligence service had enough capacity but the sector needed increased investment. The president asked the intelligence officials to treat all Afghans equally irrespective of their tribal, ethnic and political affiliations.

National Directorate of Security chief Mohammad Masoom Stanikzai said different topics particularly measures against perceived threats next year, crimes, terrorism and mafia groups.

He said people's cooperation particularly of religious scholars, civil society groups and the media was also discussed at the gathering. (Pajhwok)

**(2) India to Attend...**

Delhi told reporters on Friday: "We are happy to accept the invitation of Russia for consultations to be held in Moscow on Afghanistan."

The Hindu quoted Vikas Swarup as saying: "We look forward to the valuable opportunity to discuss with other regional countries all aspects of the situation in Afghanistan."

On Thursday, US commander Gen. Nicholson told the Senate Armed Services Committee Russia and Iran were aiding the Taliban. He alleged Iran was directly involved in providing support to the militants. (Pajhwok)

**(3) Astana Backs...**

strengthening relations between the two countries, his country was committed to supporting Afghanistan in its quest for becoming a SCO full member.

He said his country also supported Afghanistan's position in the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Conference (OIC). He hoped relations between the two nations would further improve in various fields.

Omirtay also conferred the Supreme Kazakhstan President's State medal on Abdullah on the occasion of the country's 25th Independence. Afghanistan always saw Kazakhstan as a good neighbor, Abdullah said, desiring improved bilateral relations between the two countries in areas of business and transit trade.

He said Afghanistan's membership of the SCO would not only help improve security in the country but would also boost commercial and transit relations in the region.

Abdullah went on to say joint sessions of the Afghanistan-Kazakhstan commission had already paved the way for expanding relations between the countries and there was a need for only conducting and pursuing the meetings.

He also spoke about experience and joint cooperation between the two countries to fight against terrorism and extremism and called joint efforts as vital and fundamental. (Pajhwok)

**(4) Hundreds ...**

claimed by the Taliban killed at least eight people, including five Afghan army soldiers, in the capital of Afghanistan's Helmand province, according to local and government officials. (EBL NEWS)

**(5) ICRC won't ...**

ICRC has been working in Afghanistan to protect civilians, defend prisoners' human rights, and provide health services to people.

Cooperating with emergency sections of hospitals, providing drinking water, transferring injured from war grounds to hospitals and cooperating with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) are part of ICRC programs.

Ahmad Ramin Ayaz, ICRC spokesman, expressed concern about security of humanitarian workers in Afghanistan and said the organization had currently suspended all its operations, except orthopedic services, in the country.

Talking to Pajhwok Afghan News, Ayaz said the ICRC was committed to supporting the Afghan people as it was providing humanitarian services to them over the past 30 years. However, he said: "The ICRC would not resume its operations until the nature, motive and reason for the attack on our workers in Jawzjan are provided and because protection of our staff is our high priority."

He said it remained unclear what prompted the attack and who were behind it. There was also no information about the two ICRC members who had gone missing, Ayaz added. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Ghani Leaves ...**

statement said. The statement also mentioned that Ghani will pass on his condolences to the people and government of the UAE following the death of their diplomats in an explosion in Kandahar last month.

According to the statement, Ghani is accompanied by the National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar, the head of the National Directorate of Security Mohammad Masoom Stanikzai and the head of the Presidential Palace Administrative Office Abdul Salam Rahimi. (Tolnews)

**(7) Civil Society ...**

security, good governance, fighting corruption, creating jobs, improving the conditions of women and bringing reforms were the most important, said activists.

The assessment results show that the NUG leaders have not achieved much in terms of bringing electoral reforms.

"Electoral reforms are not made. Even holding elections in the next year is doubtful," said Shah Mahmoud Mal, a member of Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

The increase of women employees in government institutions was one of the commitments made by the NUG, but the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) noted that the harassment of women in government departments has resulted in numerous women leaving.

"Most harassment against women happens in Kabul. We had a report of a girl who left her job after only two months," said Spoghmai Wardak, deputy minister of MoWA.

Some parliament members meanwhile said civil society organizations have also not monitored government's activities closely.

"Unfortunately civil society organizations have, like other departments, changed into political institutions and some civil society organizations work for government," Fawzia Kofi, MP said.

Farkhunda Zahra Nadiri, an advisor to the president, however had a different view of the NUG's activities.

"Government is not only one person. One person cannot lead a nation toward success even if he uses all his energy," she said. (Tolnews)

**(8) Balkh Activists ...**

said Najib Paikan, a Balkh civil society activist.

The activists said that in order to prevent terrorist activities the government must strictly monitor security officials and other officials in the districts and provinces. (Tolnews)

**(9) Explosion in ...**

Numerous other incidents involving magnetic bombing in civilian vehicles have also been reported in Kabul city during the recent months.

The militants also occasionally carry out major attacks and bombings in the city.

In the latest deadly attack in capital Kabul, at least 21 people were killed and more than 40 others were wounded after a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the entrance of Supreme Court compound last week. (KP)

**(10) Pub Rep ...**

bombardment of the home of a civilian named Fida Mohammad. Omar Zwak, the governor spokesman, verified the 20 civilian death in air raids by foreign troops. He said a delegation was tasked by the governor to investigate the incident.

However, 215th Military Corps spokesman Lt. Col. Rasool Zazai spurned the Taliban claim and said the area was a war zone, where no had civilian lived for two years.

Due to insecurity and fighting, residents had left the area and during Thursday night's air strike, casualties were inflicted on the Taliban. RS spokesman Lt. Gen. Cleveland Charles told Pajhwok Afghan News US forces conducted an airstrike in Sangin district in past 24 hours to support and defend Afghan forces.

"We're aware of the allegations of civilian casualties and we take every allegation very seriously. We'll work with our Afghan partners to review all related material," he said.

Cleveland referred this scribe to Helmand's civilian and military authorities for more information. However, he vehemently rejected the involvement of B52 fighter jets. (Pajhwok)

**(11) Karzai Calls ...**

added "Second, by seeking the cooperation of Russia, China and India. Mainly, especially Russia here, because Russians are very suspicious now of what is going on." The remarks by Karzai came as the top US commander in Afghanistan General John Nicholson said the

Taliban and Haqqani network leaders are enjoying freedom of action within Pakistan safe havens.

"The Taliban and Haqqani network are the greatest threats to security in Afghanistan. Their senior leaders remain insulated from pressure and enjoy freedom of action within Pakistan safe havens," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday.

The Afghan officials have long been criticizing Islamabad for remaining reckless to act against the Afghan militant leaders using the Pakistani soil for planning and coordinating attacks in Afghanistan. (KP)

**(12) Tax Issues, ...**

they met the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the finance minister, who had promised resolving their problems.

Samim Khpalkwak, the governor's spokesman, said Kandahar-based businessmen and entrepreneurs had been invited to the governor's house for discussions on their problems. Steps for dealing with the existing issues were discussed with the officials concerned.

Revenue Director Mohammad Zahir Ibad revealed a new plan for tax collection had been devised by the central government and they were just implementing it. He promised sharing the issues of traders with the central government and finding solutions to them.

But Customs Director Eng. Saleh Mohammad Nekzad said they were busy working on a scheme, whose implementation would eliminate delays in handing goods over to their owners.

Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) in charge in the south, Mohammad Naem Akbari, said the issues in transferring money to foreign countries' banks were because of the banks' recent strict conditions in this regard. He recalled they were making all out efforts to find a way of solution to the problem.

Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirkat (DABS) chief for Kandahar, Eng. Sayed Rasool, called power shortages the main issue. Immediate resolution of the problem was impossible, he acknowledged, saying they were trying to ensure power supply to the industrial park.

He said work on installing Kajaki Dam's third turbine, which was launched on August 6, 2016, ended recently. Previously, the two turbines had the capacity to produce 33MW of power, with the third one adding 18.5MW. The dam is now able to generate 51.5MW of power.

There was a 68-day halt to power supply to Kandahar and Helmand due to work on the third turbine. Now electricity is being supplied to the provinces on a trial basis for about two months back.

Besides snapping of power transmission lines as a result of fighting, the water level in the Kajaki Dam has also gone down. The generation level of each of the turbines, which earlier produced up to 16.5MW of power, fell to 10MW each.

Ibadi said the water level had a direct link with the quantity of power generation. When the water level slumps in the winter season, power production also falls.

Power supply to the industrial park is a top priority for the utility; but technical faults, late delivery of fuel and other irritants disrupt the process, according to the official.

USAID was supposed to establish a solar power plant at a cost of \$15million for the Kandahar industrial park. The centre was to be functional by summer, but work on it is yet to be initiated.

The agency has asked DABS to provide land for the solar power plant and extend transmission lines from the centre to the industrial park.

DABS has also met certain other requirements, including the acquisition of 80 acres of land, making a sketch and establishing 135 pylons and extending power transmission cables.

Despite the work done by DABS, the USAID had not kept its promise of launching work on the project, the official alleged.

Electricity is far from enough for Kandahar, which needs more than 150MW. There are blackouts for days and at times for weeks in the province. (Pajhwok)

**(13) UK Drops ...**

stop such abuse of our legal system from happening again," he added. The report by the Defense Select Committee in the House of Commons said that many allegations of abuse did not have any credible evidence.

The report said IHAT investigators had used "intimidatory tactics" and spied on war veterans.

"IHAT has operated without any regard to its impact on the UK military which has directly harmed their reputation across the world," the report added.

But Amnesty International criti-

cised the decision to hand over the remaining cases to the Royal Navy police, calling instead for an independent investigation to be conducted.

"The UK's military reputation is on the line -- any credible allegations of abuses by UK forces in Iraq and Afghanistan should be independently investigated, which must mean by a body that is separate from the military itself," the rights group said in a statement.

Many of the claims concern physical, sexual and religious abuse during interrogation of suspects.

Former US president George W. Bush, along with strong UK backing, launched the Iraq war in 2003 under false pretenses.

The war resulted in a protracted conflict and the deaths of more than one million Iraqis. It also plunged Iraq into chaos, resulting in years of deadly violence and the rise of terrorist groups like ISIL.

The US and UK also invaded Afghanistan in October 2001.

IHAT was set up by the former Labour government to assess claims of abuse by Iraqi civilians. It started out with 165 claims but the caseload skyrocketed and eventually grew to more than 3,500. (FNA)

**(14) 60 Taliban ...**

homes into the district centre and the homes were full of explosives which might be detonated in the air raid, inflicting casualties on civilians. He said there was a need for investigation.

Deputy provincial council head, Abdul Majid Akhundzada, said the air raids in Chinari and Mata Lakra areas struck two civilian houses of Bacha and Fida, killing 25 people, including women and children, and six others were wounded. He didn't know whether Taliban insurgents existed in the houses.

A resident of Mata Lakra area, Majnoon, said his brother Bacha's house situated five kilometers from the bazaar was bombed. Twelve of his family members were killed, he said.

The dead included three women, four girls and five boys, he said, demanding immediate justice. Another Manjoon's brother had died in a landmine explosion about two years back.

Former district chief of Nad Ali and resident of Sangin, Mullah Qasim, said besides that 13 people, including women and children, were killed during the bombardment of the home of a civilian named Fida Mohammad. Five others were injured in the raid.

The airstrikes in Sangin followed insurgent attacks on the Sangin district centre with each side claiming to have inflicted casualties on the other.

Meanwhile, NATO's resolute support mission said they were aware of the allegations of civilian casualties. "We take every allegation very seriously. We'll work with our Afghan partners to review all related material," RS spokesman Lt. Gen. Cleveland Charles said.

However, the Taliban claimed only civilians were killed in the bombardment. (Pajhwok)

**(15) Badakhshan...**

He added the killers were yet to be identified; they managed to flee the area. A police probe had been launched into the incident, he continued.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Naveed Frotan, Badakhshan governor's spokesman, said an overnight avalanche in Yavan district wounded four people -- two critically. (Pajhwok)

**(16) Terrorists ...**

Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack.

The army statement did not say anything about casualties.

Spokesman for the TTP JA group Asad Mansoor said two of its fighters were killed and three injured in clashes with the Pakistani troops. (Xinhua)

**(17) Suicide...**

bomber hit a military vehicle with his explosives-laden car outside the bank, said the spokesman.

The Taliban insurgency controls most of the province and often claims suicide and other bombings against Afghan security forces.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said Saturday it is looking into reports of civilian casualties from American airstrikes in another district of Helmand.

Residents and Taliban insurgents in Sangin, the district centre, alleged that the airstrikes Thursday night killed at least 20 civilians and wounded several others.

Provincial Governor Hayatullah Hayyat, accompanied by military and police commanders, told a joint news conference Saturday in Lashkar Gah that claims of civilian casu-

alties were untrue.

He said the U.S. strikes targeted insurgent positions and killed nearly 60 Taliban fighters. Hayyat asked for proof from those claiming the attack caused civilian casualties.

A U.S. military spokesman on Friday confirmed it carried out air raids against Taliban positions in the area, and it was looking into allegations of civilian casualties in the strikes.

"We are aware of the allegations of civilian casualties, and take every allegation very seriously," a statement quoted the spokesman as saying. (VoA)

**(18) Kandahar...**

"initial process has been done and the construction will start in the near future," he said.

Security officials who also use the alternate route said they face lots of difficulties.

"Our military vehicles were stuck there and the route was closed (due to the recent bad weather). People do not benefit from this road," said Bacha, police chief of Shah Wali Kot district of Kandahar province. (Tolnews)

**(19) Gas Cylinder ...**

engineering team later found it was a gas cylinder explosion.

However, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the fighters had hit the MoD main gate with a bomb. He claimed four workers of the ministry suffered casualties in the incident. (Pajhwok)

**(20) 2 ALP Officials...**

pick-ups from Khwaja Ghar district to Taloqan, the provincial capital. He said National Directorate of Security (NDS) agents had a brief clash with the smugglers, resulted in injuries to one intelligence operative.

Timor added after the exchange of fire between the two sides, drivers of the vehicles -- both ALP personnel -- were detained. As many as 1,500 bottles of alcohol, recently smuggled from Tajikistan, were seized.

Khwaja Ghar district chief Mohammad Omar confirmed the incident, saying the alcohol had been smuggled into Tajikistan. They would crack down on the illicit business, he promised.

Some days back, Governor Mohammad Yasin Zia had warned drug smuggling, if not prevented, could make the province a hub of crime. The illegal commerce had bad effects on the security situation, he said. (Pajhwok)

**(21) Taliban's IED...**

weapon of their choice to target the security forces and government officials but in majority of such attacks the ordinary civilians are targeted.

The UN mission said last week that it documented 11,418 civilian casualties between 1st January 2016 to 31st December, 2016.

According to the report, 61 percent of all civilian casualties were incurred through attacks by the anti-government elements which includes a total of 6,994 civilian casualties (2,131 deaths and 4,863 injured). (KP)

**(22) Germany to ...**

find a conservative of presidential stature willing to run for the job. He has long been one of Germany's most popular politicians.

The presidential vote is likely to be one of the last moments of coalition unity ahead of a parliamentary election in September in which Merkel is seeking a fourth term and both sides hope to end the "grand coalition."

The Social Democrats are currently enjoying a poll boost from their surprise nomination as former challenger of Martin Schulz, a former European Parliament president.

Unlike Gauck, who has no party affiliation, Steinmeier has had a long career in German politics. As former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's chief of staff, he was one of the main architects of Schroeder's 2003 package of economic reforms and welfare-state cuts, which has been credited with making the German economy more robust. (AP)

**(23) Assad Denies...**

happened between 2011 and 2015, said the report, adding that most of those slain are civilians opposed to the Syrian government. They were taken out of their cells "in the middle of the night and in total secrecy."

In his interview, the president said "that doesn't mean anything."

He continued that Amnesty International didn't visit Syria, "and they have made their reports based on allegations, they could bring any person, regardless of whom he is, you can forge anything these days, and we are living in the era of fake news, as you know, and thus we should not rely on that." (Xinhua)

**(24) UN Chief ...**

representation at Geneva talks. In his discussions with Erdogan about Iraq, Guterres stressed that the ongoing operations to retake Mosul and other areas from the Islamic State should not exacerbate sectarianism "but instead be a symbol of national reconciliation." (Xinhua)

**(25) Syrian Opposition...**

invited to the Kazakh capital Astana, where indirect talks between government and rebel delegates were held last month.

Moscow and Ankara brokered a shaky nationwide ceasefire in December between the Syrian government and rebel groups opposed to President Bashar al-Assad. (Reuters)

**(26) NATO Deputy ...**

do more." During talks with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for children and armed conflict, Leila Zerrougui, Gottmoeller highlighted NATO's work with the UN in this field.

"Over the years, NATO and its operational partners have learned important lessons about how to guard against civilian casualties -- and specifically how to mitigate dangers posed to children in conflict areas," Gottmoeller said. (Xinhua)

**(27) Iraqi PM...**

Iraqi citizens, according to the channel.

"The prime minister stressed the necessity of reviewing the decision and lifting Iraq from the list of countries mentioned in Trump's executive order," it said.

Iraq is one of seven Muslim countries whose citizens are barred from entering the U.S. for 90 days under an executive order Trump signed last month, allegedly in an attempt to protect U.S. from terrorist attacks. (Xinhua)

**(28) Turkish Forces...**

until recently when the Syrian army clashed with the Euphrates Shield rebels near al-Bab, during which the Russian artillery "accidentally" fired and killed three Turkish soldiers and wounded 11 others. (Xinhua)

**(29) India Successfully...**

Development Organisation for the successful testfiring of the missile. "Today our scientists have made a missile that could attack an incoming missile in the sky, only 4-5 countries in the world have done this," he tweeted. (Xinhua)

**(30) Heads of UN...**

are generally inhuman. They are exposed to malnutrition, extortion, torture, sexual violence and other abuses," they said.

The four principals stressed the need for close cooperation at the regional and international level, and the need to look at the drivers of migrant and refugee flows while simultaneously improving regular pathways.

They also called for international solidarity to address this crisis, with not only Libya involved but also countries of origin, transit and destination.

They welcomed in this respect initiatives aimed at enhancing the protection of the human rights of migrants and refugees, saving lives at sea and addressing the reasons why individuals are undertaking irregular and precarious migration. (Xinhua)

**(31) Iran, Sweden...**

prohibited such prospect. Rouhani also hailed Sweden's "moderate" approach vis-à-vis Iran, which he said was maintained even when Tehran was under sanctions over its nuclear work. (Presstv)

**(32) Turkmenistan's...**

and mandating all schoolchildren read his book of philosophical musings.

Some of Niyazov's more notoriously odd initiatives, such as banning opera and gold teeth, also were rolled back. Notably, Berdymukhamedov expanded public access to the internet and increased compulsory education from nine years to 12.

Under Berdymukhamedov, a law was adopted to allow non-government parties, although these parties are strictly vetted. The candidates nominally competing with Berdymukhamedov have been allowed to meet with voters in theaters and cultural centers, but the encounters were not televised and no debates were held. (AP)

**(33) Uzbekistan's...**

the provision of quality raw material for the country's silk industry and to the creation of new jobs for the region's people. (Monitoring Desk)