

### (1) President Scraps ...

also did not know about the countries the two firms belonged to, but said the contracts had been awarded to them by the Ministry of Mines and the firms would export the chromite abroad for processing.

The governor said President Ghani wanted a factory to be established in Logar for processing chromite in order to create jobs for locals and benefit more from the natural resource. He said the president believed better utilization of Afghanistan's minerals would help improve the country's security situation. During his visit, the president inspected the Mes Aynak copper mine and the recently discovered heritage sites there.

The president met security officials providing security for the mine and urged them to strengthen coordination among them and their cooperation with the provincial departments and ensure that the miners were protected.

Chinese state-owned mining giant MCC signed a US\$3 billion contract in 2007 to mine and process the copper, but is yet to start work on the project, citing security concerns. Amiri said tight security arrangements had been put in place around the copper mine and there was no such issue that hindered work at the site, one of the world's biggest.

He said 1,650 security personnel had been keeping security for the mine. But why the Chinese had stopped extraction works at the site should be asked from them, the acting governor said.

The Presidential Palace issued a statement, saying President Ghani had directed security personnel to enhance coordination among them to better secure the copper mine and allow for the extraction work to start soon.

On the surprise trip, the president was accompanied by acting Information and Culture Minister Syed Musaddiq Khalili, Deputy Mines and Petroleum Minister Amir Ahmad Javed, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Ghulam Nabi Farahi, presidential advisor on culture affairs Assadullah Ghazanfar, provincial acting governor and a number of security officials. (Pajhwok)

### (2) A Weakened ...

media," General John F Campbell, Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a Congressional hearing.

He said in his appearance before the top Senate Committee that the Taliban are in a period of transition and the insurgent group would most likely be willing to absorb considerable casualties and physical losses in order to gain psychological victories. He said that the Taliban began 2015 weakened, but not yet defeated. Politically, they have become increasingly marginalized. However, the Taliban remain a resilient, lethal force in spite of the fact that they accomplished none of their major strategic or operational objectives in 2014 and suffered considerable casualties. "The absence of Coalition combat units on the battlefield has also weakened one of the principal justifications for the Taliban armed struggle: to rid Afghanistan of "malevolent foreign influences." Now they are fighting against and killing almost exclusively their fellow Afghans," he said.

The Taliban will likely test the ANSF aggressively in 2015 as they did in 2014. "Taliban threats from indirect fire, insider attacks, and complex attacks are projected to increase in the next fighting season," the general said. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Support Needed...

turbulence, turmoil and poverty and it is high time to end such a situation. This represents the strong will of the Afghan people and the common aspiration of China, Pakistan and the rest of the international community. To resolve the Afghanistan issue, support is needed in the following four aspects, said Wang.

First of all, the effective governance of the national unity government of Afghanistan needs to be supported. The international community needs to respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and respect the development path chosen by the Afghan people in accordance with their own national conditions.

Third, we need to support the economic and social reconstruction in Afghanistan, Wang said.

To resolve the issue in Afghanistan, reconciliation is the key and reconstruction is the fundamental solution. Afghanistan will only have a new future when its economy and society developed and its people stripped off poverty. The Chinese government will earnestly deliver

its commitment for the country's reconstruction, and work along with the international community to help enhance Afghanistan's self-development capacity, Wang said.

Pakistan is an important neighbor of Afghanistan and the two countries have inseparable ties in terms of history, culture, ethnicity and religion. Because of all these, Pakistan has special leverage and irreplaceable role in resolving the issue of Afghanistan, said the Chinese foreign minister.

Looking forward, China and Pakistan will further enhance communication with Afghanistan and work with the rest of the international community to make unremitting efforts for the smooth transition of Afghanistan, he said. (Xinhua)

### (4) Pakistan Calls ...

faced by the region, including terrorism (particularly the rise of the Islamic State militant group) and others needed settlement of regional disputes through "dialogue and political accommodation".

During his speech, Aziz mentioned specifically his country's challenging ties with the three immediate neighbours, including Afghanistan, Iran and India.

He claimed Islamabad's ties with Tehran were on path to improvement while developments in Afghanistan and improvements in socio-economic indicators have been promising.

He called for an end to external interference in Afghanistan, continuous international economic and financial support and avoidance of the mistakes of the past for safeguarding the "precious moment of hope and optimism in Afghanistan".

He mentioned rise in insurgent activities, narcotics' production and trafficking and corruption and governance as the continuing challenges in Afghanistan.

"Indian leadership's threats of disproportionate use of force portend India's dangerous desire to create a space for war," he noted.

Pakistan, the adviser said, would not get involved in arms race in the region, but would staunchly protect its interests, besides maintaining credible deterrence capability. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Afghanistan Rules ...

enhanced cooperation and coordination between the two countries in the common fight against terrorism."

The statement from the Presidential Palace in Kabul reiterated that only Afghan security forces would conduct operations on Afghanistan soil and Afghan forces were not carrying out joint operations with Pakistani military. Afghans have full confidence on their valiant and professional security forces to meet all challenges effectively. Marked improvement has been seen in Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations following Afghanistan new President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani sworn in. (Pajhwok)

### (6) US Wasted \$20...

eight incinerators. US spent \$81.9 million on 23 incinerator systems for nine DOD installations in Afghanistan, the report said adding that in August 2010, CENTCOM reported that there were 251 active open-air burn pits in the country.

It is disturbing that SIGAR inspections showed that prohibited items—such as tires and batteries—continued to be disposed of in open-air burn pits even after Congress passed legislation to restrict that practice, the report said.

It also expressed concern that the Department of Defense paid the full contract amount for incinerators that were never used because they contained deficiencies that were not corrected.

It is disturbing that US military personnel and others were exposed to the emissions from open-air burn pits that could have lasting negative health consequences, the report said. SIGAR said the US Central Command (CENTCOM) did not develop a regulation addressing the use of open-air burn pits until 2009—about eight years after US contingency operations began in Afghanistan—despite the health risks associated with burn pits. (Pajhwok)

### (7) US Officials ...

Afghanistan, that would allow for flexibility in responding to conditions on the ground.

The combat mission of the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan officially came to an end in December of 2014, though about 13,000 foreign troops, mostly Americans, remain and continue on in a training, advising and assisting capacity for the Afghan security forces. Previously, the White House and Congress have indicated that all U.S. troops would be out of

Afghanistan by then end of 2016.

A spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD), Dawlat Waziri, responded positively to the news out of Washington, and expressed hope that security support from the U.S. and its allies would continue beyond the next year. "We are still in need of equipment, training and advising from the international community, and it would be good if this aid continues," he said.

Mirza Mohammad Yarmand, a former Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Interior (MoI), was more explicit in his support for the continued presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. "With the high level of threats, the government of Afghanistan should benefit from the presence of U.S. troops and ask them for help with air support, intelligence and logistics," he said.

President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah are expected to leave Kabul for a trip to meet with leaders in Washington D.C. next month. (Tolonews)

### (8) PCMs Protest ...

According to Sharifa Sherzad, a member of the Kabul Provincial Council, the local leadership councils and their constituents are being disenfranchised because of political differences between the national unity government and Parliament. "Unfortunately, as with all efforts that maintain the Provincial Councils and the people's vote, they are becoming victims of differences between government and Parliament," Sherzad said.

A member of the provincial council of the northern Takhar, Esmatullah Qurbani, expressed support for President Ashraf Ghani's policy for the Provincial Councils. "We want [President] Ghani's plan, and they should accept our demands and send it back to Parliament, then we will accept it," he said.

The protest were launched on Thursday directly following Provincial Council leaders and officials from the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) met to iron out an agreement clarifying a framework of authorities.

When asked by TOLONews, IDLG officials said they would not take note of the protests, and added that the Provincial Council members have been asked to submit proposals for amendments or additions to the plan.

Since Parliament approved the election law articles dissolving the monitoring authorities of Provincial Councils, most of them have closed their doors and been inactive. (Tolonews)

### (9) UN Calls for ...

victims of, witness to and forced participants in acts of unspeakable brutality.

Situations in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Syria are of particular concern.

"Investing in ways to keep children away from the frontlines, including through education and economic support, is absolutely critical to their future and the future of their societies," Brandt said.

The International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers is observed annually on Feb. 12 since 2002, when the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict entered into force, aiming to protect children from recruitment and use in hostilities. At present, 158 countries have ratified the protocol. (Xinhua)

### (10) Major Portion...

programs that would create specialized governmental hospitals and private sector in the next two years, and retain at least 50 percent of what is spent abroad for cure inside the country, but emphasized that in the first three months in office he would work toward standardizing the emergency sectors of hospitals.

Feroz adds that the ministry has begun a survey to find what the needs of people are. Construction of new health centers and hospitals, expansion of current health centers in far reaching areas, encouraging doctors and nurses to work in rural areas, systemization of government and private hospitals, overseeing of private sectors, standardization of doctors' fees and the prevention of smuggling low quality medicine are among the priorities for Feroz as the Minister of MoPH. (Tolonews)

### (11) Pak Army ...

Bajwa said the army had taken 12 people in custody in relation to the attack, which involved 27 people and was led by a commander, Hajji Kamran.

Before the assault, the attackers based themselves in the Khyber tribal district before dividing into two groups that hid at a mosque and a

house in Peshawar on the eve of the attack, the general said.

The military has since arrested a cleric associated with the Taliban cell, and is offering a \$25,000 reward for the capture of Hazrat Ali, another militant linked to the violence. But, he added, the assault had been masterminded by the Taliban leader, Fazlullah, from his base in Afghanistan.

"He is a known terrorist. His capture and handover to Pakistan are being discussed with the Afghan leadership," General Bajwa said. "We are hopeful that we will hear a quick response from them in this regard."

Also present on the occasion was Pakistan's foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz, who also announced Chinese President Xi Jinping would visit Pakistan "at an early date this year".

Last month the Taliban said they had sent a delegation to China, in an English-language statement posted on their website. The militants insisted the visit was not for the purposes of mediation. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Afghanistan up...

that includes media pluralism and independence, respect for the safety and freedom of journalists, and the legislative, institutional and infrastructural environment in which the media operate."

Based on the index, Finland has been still in first place securing the position for five consecutive years followed by Norway and Denmark. While on the other hand, Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea were in the last places as the worst performers.

The United States was ranked 49th (down three places), Japan 61st (down two places) and Russia is ranked 152 (down four places).

Two-thirds of the 180 countries surveyed for the 2015 Index was found performing less well than the previous year, it said, reporting a 10 percent increase in the annual global indicator measuring the overall level of violations of freedom of information around the world. (Tolonews)

### (13) Ghazanfar Claims...

fuel shortages and hamper their ability to conduct much needed operations around the country.

"This was a rushed decision, you can imagine for yourself that canceling these contracts would result in the ANSF having to stop their operations in different parts of the country, because the MoD does not have fuel to use in situations like this," MP Muhammad Anwar Saadat said.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Palace has maintained the original decision to freeze the contracts was made with care and precision. At the time, there was boiling public controversy and outrage over revelations that the bidding process for fuel contracts had been corrupted and in turn wasted precious public funds.

The committee assigned to investigate the MoD's fuel contract bidding is also investigating seven other contracts for legal and technical concerns raised in the past three weeks. The findings of the investigations are expected to be presented to the president once complete.

The contract that Ghazanfar Group signed with the MoD was valued at 900 million USD. (Tolonews)

### (14) Helmand Gets ...

strategically situated Helmand province had been ignored in terms of security.

He informed that Baghran and Dishu districts were overrun by rebels for the past few years. There was dire need, he noted to ensure peace in the province. (Pajhwok)

### (15) Hakimi Vows ...

on key projects in the province had come to a halt since long and the contractors were yet to be made payments. The affected projects included Omar Jamia Mosque, a 16.5 km road from Kandahar City to Kandahar Airfield and the construction of a 350-bed hospital, he explained.

The official said the previous cabinet had authorized first grade provinces to plan and execute projects costing up to 40 million afghanis, but that decision had not been enforced.

He said the Kandahar Governor's House, which is housed in ancient Ahmad Shah Baba Fort, needed renovation and half a million US dollars allocated for the purpose could not be released so far.

The minister said currently 45 percent of the budget was composed of revenues collected through customs departments and for the remaining budget, they stretched hands to foreign countries.

He said aid-giving countries had put limits on their assistance and their condition was transparency in revenue collections. He said all problems would be resolved gradually. (Pajhwok)

### (16) 1,410 ANA ...

would undergo another phase of two more months' professional exercise after that they would be deputed to their concerned corps for duties, he remarked.

The morale of the ANA service members, he noted had considerably up in comparison of past years and the force was now able to carry out operations without foreign troops. In addition, the people of the country had great confidence on their forces, he observed.

He stressed upon the newly trained force to utilize all their capacity to serve the nation and country and thwart the evil design of the enemy of Afghans.

Col. Shah Wali Zazai who is the commander of the training centre expressed satisfaction over the training of the soldiers and lauded the hard work of teachers. He said that soldiers from different parts of the country took part in the training. Lt. Nasib Gul said he completed initial training course and he was interested to learn more in the next phase of training. (Pajhwok)

### (17) Father Marries...

of Balkh, this marriage is not against any religious doctrines, adding that the couple agreed on the matrimony because of personal interest.

"This man has done nothing against Sharia Law, hence he is not bound to go to prison," Head of the Balkh Ulema Council Mawlawi Mohammad Shah Adil said. "If this man is arrested, the Ulema council will not leave the case until he is released."

"I did not know she was a small girl," Azizullah said. "I did not see her. I performed the ceremony according to the testimony of the two witnesses."

Just this year, five cases of underage marriage have been registered involving girls between the ages of five and ten years. (Tolonews)

### (18) Flood Affected...

village in Khwaja Duko district, said the level of water close to the district increases during rain or snowfalls which could cause more catastrophes.

He demanded the officials concerned to embank the riversides and construct a concrete wall up to 1 meter high to counter the floods in future.

"The floods will start again and the population can be affected if the government fails to adopt preemptive measures," he warned. (Pajhwok)

### (19) ISIS Has ...

communications. They may not even know that that's going on. But again, it has come up quite a bit here in the last 45 to 50 days," he said.

"President Ghani has talked to the Afghan people about it. He's talked to the Afghan Security Forces about it. I've made it a, what I call a, PIR, Party Information Requirement, for my forces. So we'll continue to work hard with our Afghan partners here to make sure we understand this network," the American General said.

Responding to question, Campbell said the Taliban are a resilient force. "They have issues, but they continue to hang on in certain areas. They have changed their approach a little bit inside of Kabul. Some of the remote areas outside the cities, where it's very, very hard to have the Afghan security forces," he said. (Pajhwok)

### (20) Residents Want...

protest said that some people were issued their driver license without appearing for driving test while others should face problems despite the fact that they would qualify for the license.

"We want demand the government to remove the traffic department director and replace him with a professional and competent officer," he said. But traffic director Maj. Rahmatullah Ibrahim ruled out corruption in his office. He said his men were trying to implement established traffic rules. (Pajhwok)

### (21) Petroleum ...

proper rate in Kabul. However, he said a team of the ministry would look into some areas where the commodity was sold for a high rate of 42afs.

The outgoing week did not notice any change in the price of firewood as 560 kilograms of unpeeled oak was sold for 6,800afs, the same price as last week's, said stall owner, Khan Mohammad, in Charahi Shahiq area. Among food items, the price of only sugar decreased. Fazal Rahman, food traders union head, said the price of a 50-kg bag of sugar declined from 1,640afs to 1,540afs.

A 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice cost 1,550afs, a 50-kg sack of Pakistani flour 1,250afs, 16 liters of Momin ghee 1,000afs, a kilogram of black Af-

rican tea 210afs and the same amount of green Vietnamese tea 180afs, the same prices as last week's.

Moneychanger Ahmad Shah said the buying rate of one US dollar was 57.40afs, while 1,000 Pakistani rupees ac-counted for 564afs. Last week's exchange value of the dollar stood at 57.30afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 565afs. (Pajhwok)

### (22) 19 Dead, 50 ...

incident to hit the country in nearly two years.

Provincial Information Minister Mushtaq Ghani confirmed 19 people have been killed in the attack. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Mamnoon Hussain condemned the incident in strongest terms.

The blast on Peshawar's imambar-gah comes as Pakistan is attempting to implement the National Action Plan to combat and root out terrorism from the country, an initiative that was set in motion after the Dec 16 attack on Peshawar's Army Public School in December 2014. (Pajhwok)

### (23) Addicted Man ...

icted in drugs and his brothers and nephews of Ehsanullah were among those killed in the attack.

Around 1.6 million Afghans are drug addicts, according to estimates as Afghanistan produces some 90 per cent of the world's illicit opiates, with the number of poppy-free provinces being 15 out of 34.

Afghanistan registered record levels of opium poppy cultivation last year, with the illicit crop being cultivated in an estimated 224,000 hectares of land, according to UN report released late last year. (KP)

### (24) Killer, Robbers ...

chief Brig. Gen. Mohammad Zaman Mamoza told Pajhwok Afghan News.

The pair had hidden the banned fertilizer in firewood they carried in the vehicle en route to central Panjsher province from Kabul, he said, adding the agriculture input was allegedly used in making bombs.

He said police had seized the fertilizer two days back in Gulbahar area of the Jablun Siraj district and the two detainees were on Thursday handed over to the Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups Programme (DIAG) officials. (Pajhwok)

### (25) Illinois Troops ...

briefly train in Texas before heading to Afghanistan, where they will help with logistics and the drawdown of U.S. forces.

A deployment ceremony is scheduled for Feb. 17 at Camp Lincoln.

The soldiers are a part of the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, which is based in Springfield. Camp Lincoln is home to the Illinois National Guard headquarters and the Illinois National Guard Military Academy. (AP)

### (26) Explosives,

Afghan News the explosive were recovered Wednesday night by the special police force in the Mata Khan district. Azizullah Karwan, a police official said the explosive were being transferred to Ghazni province for carrying out subversive acts.

A month ago, police impounded an explosive-laden car in the district. However, the driver managed to escape. (Pajhwok)

### (27) Climate Pact ...

year's official UN climate agenda, was tasked with "streamlining" the Lima document. Instead, the text more than doubled since Sunday until all countries were satisfied their views were included. "The first step before you can get to addressing those is to have a common picture of what the agreement is going to look like in terms of what the outline is, what the elements are in it. They have it now." (AFP)

### (28) Fighting Rages ...

were killed and six wounded when a shell hit a cafe in the Kiev-controlled town of Shchastya near rebel-held Luhansk in eastern Ukraine, a local official said, adding that other shells had struck elsewhere in the town.

Sanctions by the EU and United States have piled intense economic pressure on Russia's economy, which has also been hit by a collapse in oil prices. (Reuters)

### (29) Europe Warns ...

annexation of Crimea in March 2014 but adopted tougher economic measures after the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine in July.

European Council President Donald Tusk said Poroshenko had given EU leaders a "sobering assessment" of the deal, and said the 28-member bloc was ready "to take the necessary steps" to keep up the pressure on Russia. (AFP)