

(1) Afghanistan Has ...

human smuggling and drug trafficking, Ghani said, urging the world to support Afghanistan's fight against the phenomenon. World leaders and representatives of international organisations attended the conference to discuss important issues, particularly terrorism, migrant crisis, regional stability, the future of NATO and climate change. (Pajhwok)

(2) Govt. Secretly...

confirmed the move. "Issuing passports to the Taliban commanders is a matter of concern. This move by government is giving privileges to the Taliban and will lead to further lobbying for the group," said Nahid Farid, a member of the committee. Meanwhile, a number of political analysts said that in addition to Dubai, a number of Taliban commanders had previously received passports in Qatar. "Taliban commanders have been getting passports this way for years, however, it triggered outrage only when the passports were computerized," said Jawed Kohistani, a political analyst. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) rejected the allegations as baseless. Ahmad Shekib Mustaghni, spokesman for the MoFA, declined to comment on the allegations, but said that claims of the distribution of passports to Taliban commanders in the UAE does not hold any weight. "The allegations of the distribution of passports to commanders of the Taliban are baseless, because based on laws and rules of passport distribution, no one can receive a passport without being present," he added. Experts deem the issuing of passports to the Taliban in Gulf States as dangerous, because this will enable the Taliban to roam freely in these countries and easily fund raise for the group. (Tolonews)

(3) 7,500 Civilians ...

rocket attacks, grenade attacks and airstrikes were the second leading cause of casualties among civilians. "We have expressed our concern about civilian casualties to the government and the Taliban militants," Baidar added. He called civilian casualties a humanitarian disaster and asked the warring parties to observe war and humanitarian rules and prevent civilian losses. He said it seemed casualties had increased compared to last year, saying details of the casualties would be published next month. The Afghan government says 2015 was a difficult year as Taliban and other militant groups stepped up their attacks. However, the government also claims security forces remain strong and they protected many areas from falling to insurgents. (Pajhwok)

(4) Senior Taliban...

sources as saying. In July last year, when first-ever direct talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government took place in Pakistan, the Taliban's political office in Qatar had stayed away from the process. Syed Tayyeb Agha, former head of Taliban's political office, was opposed to Pakistan-brokered talks. But Agha resigned after Mullah Akhtar Mansoor took over as Taliban's supreme leader. (Pajhwok)

(5) Zakhelwal ...

Pakistan, the US and China was held in Islamabad on Feb. 6 to finalise a roadmap to reconciliation talks between Kabul and Taliban representatives. "Even if the ongoing quest for peace fails, we should not lose all hope; we should continue our efforts," he believes, saying future will tell the level of Pakistan's sincerity in peace in Afghanistan. About the roadmap for peace, he says it is based on regulations and commitments of the four nations and will pave the way for direct talks with the insurgents. "There is need for patience for lasting peace," the diplomat reiterates, explaining the process is long and complicated.

Asked about the ambitious CASA-1000 power project, he says the scheme is ready for execution and contractor are expected to begin their work in the next few months. If security threats are addressed, CASA-1000 will be implemented in the next two years. Under the plan, electricity will be supplied from Central Asia to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Currently in urgent need of energy, Pakistan will benefit from the execution of the project, he maintains. In the next meetings with Pakistani officials, he will discuss enforcement of the transit agreement between the countries. Of the \$45 billion economic corridor project between Pakistan and China, he says the route between Gwadar port and China will also benefit Afghanistan. Beijing wants to connect with Central Asia through

Afghanistan.

About harassment of Afghan diplomats in Pakistan, the ambassador says he has not yet received such complaints. However, he has been informed of the ill-treatment of Afghan refugees, an issue he will take up with Pakistani officials.

Dr. Zakhelwal is also aware of problems of Afghan students in Pakistan. He promises urgent steps to resolve the issue on a priority basis.

The Afghan embassy plans to hire a competent lawyer to argue the cases of thousands of Afghan prisoners in Pakistan jails. The envoy will officially ask for the release of the Afghans. (Pajhwok)

(6) MoD to ...

did not say how it obtained the clip. A member of the MoD investigation team, Col. Musa Khan, told reporters here that their investigation showed the hospital staff had committed no negligence, but the patient was brought late to the hospital by her spouse.

Col. Aziz, the woman's husband, also denied if the hospital staff had committed any negligence, saying he could not take his wife to the hospital in-time. If the hospital staff hadn't help the mother, she or the newborn son could have died, he said.

"It is a matter of my honour. I ask the defence minister to identify the person and punish him who shared the video with media," he said. Maj. Gen. Abdul Razaq Syawash, health section chief at MoD, they were investigating the issue and there were two suspected persons who might have shared the clip with media.

He said people who shared the video clip would be punished "for dishonoring the family" and not keeping secret the clips of security cameras. (Pajhwok)

(7) ANSF Need ...

northeastern Badakhshan province. He alleged some circles during former president Hamid Karzai's government wanted to pave the ground for militants to advance. Speaking in Faizabad, the provincial capital, Massoud said some circles in the current government pursued the same policy of Karzai's government. "These circles do not want a fight against Taliban, but they want peace on the condition that the Taliban accept the country's Constitution," he added.

Massoud did not name anyone, but said: "Terrorists always commit destructive activities that create problems for people, they do not believe in civil life and civic values, they pressures the government by their destructive activities to achieve their goals by force."

He said former mujahideen should launch operations against terrorists and create opposition councils, something he called "the need of the hour."

"Afghan forces with their current capacity are in huge problems in their fight against militants, we should nationalise the war on militants, we can end the current war by creating opposition councils for supporting Afghan forces, otherwise the war would continue," Massoud added.

About the parliamentary and district council elections, he said the elections would not be conducted until peace was established.

People believed holding the elections was impossible in the face of the ongoing insecurity in most parts of the country, including Badakhshan province, he said.

Few months ago, the Taliban captured Warduj and Yamgan districts of Badakhshan from Afghan forces. Some parts of Joram and Raghistan districts are also under rebels' control. Badakhshan Governor Ahmad Faisal Baigzad told the gathering that Badakhshan people even during Taliban's regime did not allow them to enter the province. "Badakhshan people are still standing beside the Afghan forces," he said.

Baigzad suggested that small airports built in Nusi, Karan Wa Mangjan, Sheghnan and Khwahan districts during last king Mohammad Zahir Shah and former prime minister Mohammad Daud Khan should be repaired and reconstructed.

"Most of the policemen and Afghan National Army (ANA) personnel embracing martyrdom in other provinces are transferred to Faizabad, but the bodies could not be taken to their families on time. This problem can be resolved with the reconstruction of the airports," he said.

On the other hand, provincial council head Bashir Ahmad Samim said that the construction process of Shurabak power dam in Faizabad had been suspended due to technical problems over the past three months. He said the Ministry of Public Works planned to cancel the dam project

and instead produce power from coal which was unacceptable for Badakhshan people.

Massoud said suggestions provided by Badakhshan people would be shared with the government for implementation.

He said the aim of his trip to Badakhshan was to assess the situation of people and evaluate the law enforcement and governance. (Pajhwok)

(8) MoE Inattention...

operating in Kandahar, he said. However, he said only 192 of the operational 318 schools had buildings and the rest had no buildings, posing a great challenge to the education process.

He said only one of the 38 seminaries had building of its own and the rest were operated from rented houses where proper education environment did not exist.

Piwaston criticised the Education Ministry for paying no attention to these problems over the past two years. He said students of many schools were taught under the open skies in extreme cold and hot weather conditions.

The education director said they had launched efforts to resolve such issues on local level.

With the help of the Governor's House, he said, they had talked to district administrative chiefs and development councils to spend funds of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) on constructing buildings for schools.

The NSP funds are used to construct bridges, culverts, roads and others. The Kandahar education director said construction work on six buildings for schools was underway in Zheri district with NSP money and a total of 12 buildings would be constructed until the end of the year in other districts.

He believed the Ministry of Education could not carry out these projects during the next 10 years.

Piwaston mentioned the lack of textbook another major problem. He said they began the ongoing academic year at a time when students from class seven to nine had no books, an issue he had repeatedly shared with the ministry, but to no avail.

The official asked the Ministry of Education to resolve the mentioned problems, saying the ministry's job was not confined only to giving salaries.

Another key issue he mentioned was the lack of teaching staff, saying the Ministry of Education had not appointed a single teacher during the past two years.

The education director said 132 schools had been closed due to insecurity and other problems.

He said in some districts schools had been established but in areas where no one lived in a distance of five kilometers.

He said foreigners had also built a number of schools in uninhabited areas, making them useless.

As an example, he said foreigners had built a school near a river in Pashmol area of Zheri district, but there was no home in five kilometers to send children to the school.

He said the lack of teachers was one of the reasons behind the closure of schools. "There are schools in many areas, which are not functional due to the lack of teachers."

Piwaston said they were working on a plan to shift the closed schools to areas on the outskirts of Kandahar City where need for schools was felt.

He said if the plan was not accepted, then the closed schools would be declared dissolved.

To a question, the education director admitted that the education standard had been low in districts, saying professional teachers were reluctant to perform duty in insecure districts against a meager salary. However, he said this issue would be gradually resolved.

He recalled 10 years ago it was difficult to find a high school graduate to teach at schools in Kandahar City, but currently university graduates were teaching in most of schools, leaving no place for a 12th grader.

He said the standard of education had been improved in nearby Arghandab, Dand and Daman districts and the process would be gradually extended to far-off districts.

From these three districts, he said, 30 to 40 students completed high schools each year, but students in other districts came to Kandahar City for completing high school.

He said they had arranged classes in some districts to keep the education affairs running. As an example, he said, they had arranged two classes in Nish district and the students were taught by two local teachers. He said these classes would be converted into schools once financial resources were made available.

About corruption in the education sector, Piwaston said the provincial

governor had created a mini-jirga tasked with preventing corruption and improving the standard of education.

The number of students in Kandahar currently reaches 271,000 including 80,000 girls taught by 5,278 teachers, including 900 females. (Pajhwok)

(9) KP Traders ...

to meeting the growing demand for energy, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KPCCI) president, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, said on Friday.

At a meeting with Tajikistan's Ambassador Jononov Sherali, the KPCCI president said the Pak-Afghan transit trade mechanism be simplified. "Other hurdles should also be done away with," he said.

Zulfiqar added CASA-1000 was a significant power generation project, which could not only promote trade relations with Tajikistan, but would also help cope with the growing energy crisis in the country.

"KP is a golden-gate into Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries," Zulfiqar remarked, demanding the removal of impediments to the growth of regional trade.

The ambassador invited KP investors to participate in an upcoming festival, to be held from April 7 to 11 in Dushanbe. (Pajhwok)

(10) US, Coalition...

police headquarters level. The reduction of US and coalition troops in Afghanistan makes it unlikely Afghan forces can effectively counter anticipated attacks by the Taliban in the year ahead, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko told Congress on Friday.

"The drawdown of troops has imperiled the US ability to monitor and mentor the ANDSF [Afghan National Defense and Security Force]," Sopko told the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Sopko noted that US military advisors and their coalition partners have little or no direct contact with the ANDSF units below the army headquarters and regional police headquarters level.

"This provokes the obvious question: Is the current level of US military personnel in Afghanistan adequate to ensure that the ANDSF do not fail their mission," he added.

US Marines and Gunnary Sergeant Nate Cosby (R), Staff Sergeant Josh Lacey (2nd R) and Navy Hospitalman 2 Daniel Holmberg (L) from Border Adviser Team (BAT) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) 1st and 2nd Marine Division (Forward) walk through opium poppy field at Maranj village in Helmand province on April 25, 2011 as they take patrol with their team and Afghanistan National Police

Sopko also noted that the strength of Afghan security is questionable, in part because of the presence of ghost soldiers on payrolls. In addition, the United States has too few resources to accurately assess the capability of Afghan forces. President Barack Obama has scaled back plans to reduce US forces below the present level of less than 10,000. Moreover, the president has abandoned his goal of ending the nation's military involvement in Afghanistan by the end of his presidency.

According to the United Nations, the Taliban now control more territory than at any time since 2001. (Sputnik)

(11) ANSF Launch...

intelligence agency staff in Achin district, Nangarhar province," the ministry said in a statement.

The security forces would help pro-government militiamen to deploy security checkpoints in the surrounding areas of the district and the operation will continue before the area is cleared from IS militants, it added. "The army air force will also provide air support to the local anti-IS uprising groups," the statement noted.

The Achin district, located in the southern part of provincial capital of Jalalabad, has been regarded as the IS militants' stronghold. Several dozens of IS militants have been killed after Afghan army helicopters and drones of U.S. forces carried out airstrikes in Achin bordering Pakistan over the past couple of months. (Xinhua)

(12) Former Governor ...

considered as an influential governor as he was very close to former President Karzai and he also served as acting governor for months during Ghani's government.

The Afghan ambassador in Islamabad, Omar Zakhilwal, was serious concerned over the incident and had been in touch with Pakistani authorities, an embassy source said. (Xinhua)

(13) Afghanistan...

kidnappers and securing the release of Wahidi," the Afghan Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal, Afghan ambassador in Islamabad, has expressed serious concern over the incident and was in touch with Pakistani authorities shortly after the kidnapping, according to sources.

Wahidi reportedly went to a restaurant along with his 12-year-old grandson when he was taken away by gunmen.

No one has claimed responsibility for the incident. (Xinhua)

(14) NATO ...

Ghaffari added the Taliban, including Chechen and Pakistani fighters, had come from Faryab, Kunduz and Badakhshan provinces to Baghlan. "NATO forces should help eliminate the militants, who may threaten all northern provinces."

At a press conference, the CSN released a statement that said NATO forces should cooperate with Afghan forces in the operation codenamed Khurshid 10. It added Afghan forces could not fight all militants independently.

The ongoing offensive was launched by the Afghan National Army (ANA) on January 30. Governor Abdul Sattar Barez has said 135 militants including foreign fighters have been killed and 95 others wounded during the operation.

On the other hand, provincial police spokesman Zabihullah Shuja said Kokchenar and Qaisarkhel areas of Baghlan-i-Markazi district had been cleared of militants during the operation over the past two days.

He said 27 rebels were killed and 28 others wounded. A house-to-house search is ongoing. So far five roadside bombs planted by the Taliban had been defused, Shuja claimed.

However, the Taliban claimed their casualties were less than Afghan forces'.

Mohammad Rassoul, head of the CSN, said the government should utilise all available resources to reconstruct the power pylons blown up in the Dand-i-Shahabuddin locality of Baghlan.

Breshna Sherkat (power utility) Director, Ghulam Hussain Haider said electricity supply was yet to be restored. He had no idea when the security situation would improve in the area. (Pajhwok)

(15) 24 Militants...

added. The ministry also confirmed the loss of five army personnel during clashes and separate attacks across the country over the same period.

The Taliban militant group has yet to make comments. (Xinhua)

(16) Nangarhar ..

the past six years. "We want historical sites to be rehabilitated by government. Relevant organizations should keep an open eye on saving such areas otherwise we will lose them gradually," said Nangarhar provincial council member Nasir Kamawal.

"The Siraj al-Amara Garden is in a bad situation. We want its rehabilitation and also we want a big library to be established in Nangarhar," said Daud Shah Jalalzai, a poet and writer in the province.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) confirmed that a number of historical sites are on the verge of disappearing in Nangarhar and said some of the areas have been grabbed by powerful figures. (Tolonews)

(17) 6 Afghan ...

equipped with suicide vests were shot and killed by security forces. Mohammad Rasoul Zazi, an army spokesman in Helmand, said one soldier was killed and another was wounded in the attack.

Meanwhile, another policeman was killed and four others wounded when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in the southern Uruzgan province, said Rahimullah Khaliqi, the district administration chief.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attacks in Helmand and Uruzgan. The Taliban have stepped up attacks on Afghan security forces in the past year, waging offensives across the country.

Also Saturday, the Afghan power company said it repaired some power supply cables from Tajikistan that were damaged during fights between Afghan security forces and insurgents. (AP)

(18) No Clue to...

ducted when he go out of a bathroom in Zaranj, the source said. The whereabouts of the man are yet to be known. Custom officials in Nimroz said around 200 trucks of commercial goods were imported from Iran on a daily basis, with 40 percent transport-

ed by Iranian vehicles.

Mohammad Nader, a tribal elder said the fate of another Iranian driver kidnapped three weeks ago in Zaranj was yet to be known.

However, police said they were aware of the abduction of only one Iranian driver.

Mohammad Noorzai, a resident of Zaranj, said kidnappings had recently increased in the city but the government remained unconcerned.. (Pajhwok)

(19) 35 Injured ...

incident. The injured were reshed to nearby hospitals, he said.

Police are interrogating the officials of the Siddiqui Transport Company, owning the bus, regarding the accident. The bus driver fled the area. However, a doctor on duty in Mirwais Hospital said 40 injured people had been evacuated to the hospital. Some of them were discharged from hospital after treatment. (Pajhwok)

(20) Syrian Army...

tured the town of Tamura on Saturday, overseeing thus the entire rebel-held town of Hayan and the northwestern parts of the town of Andan. Separately, the Observatory, which relies on a network of activists on ground, placed the death toll among Syrian soldiers who were ambushed last week near the capital Damascus to 76. (Xinhua)

(21) Sadr Calls ...

the government after the end of the war against terrorism.

Sadr warned that if the government failed to implement his proposal, it "would be a betrayal to Iraq and its people, and would be disappointed to our hopes and the hopes of the poor and oppressed people of Iraq, and then our withdrawal from the political process and politics as whole would be a duty," he said in his address. (Xinhua)

(22) UK Needs...

to "continue to play that outsized role on the global stage that it does because of its moral standing and its historical standing," he was quoted as saying. "It's important that the military power matches that standing and so we're very supportive of it. We depend upon the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom depends on us, that's part of the special relationship."

While most lawmakers in Cameron's party support keeping nuclear weapons, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, a veteran left-wing and anti-war activist, supports unilateral disarmament and is holding a review of the party's policy. (Reuters)

(23) India, UAE...

by states, to use religion to justify, support and sponsor terrorism against other countries, or to use terrorism as instrument of state policy." (Xinhua)

(24) French PM ...

that should be welcomed. But it needs to be materialized. "Only the facts matter," he reiterated. In addition, Valls said that more than 1,000 French citizens or people living in France are now part of jihadist groups that are related to IS, and thousands people have been influenced by the ideology.

Even a certain number of women as well are taking part in these networks. (Xinhua)

(25) Russia Warns ...

Implementation of a deal agreed in Minsk a year ago, which would allow for the lifting of sanctions on Russia, and a lull in violence late last year raised hopes that the conflict that has killed more than 9,000 people could be resolved quickly. But Lamberto Zannier, who heads the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring eastern Ukraine, said the situation had "become difficult again. (Reuters)

(26) U.S. Commander ...

group Islamic State, which now has a base in Libya.

"(The hotel attacks) raised the profile of the group and will help the group do a (few) things," said Colonel Bob Wilson, Third Special Forces Group Commander, in an interview with Reuters and The New York Times in Dakar this week. (Reuters)

(27) German FM ...

in EU instead of drifting apart in light of challenges." On Jan. 1, 2016, Germany assumed the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as whose Chairperson-in-Office Steinmeier said, Germany would make developing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security in the region as priorities for OSCE this year. (Xinhua)