

### (1) Terrorism was

in a two-day visit to meet Afghan officials and the American troops and assess their presence in the country.

Saying that Afghanistan's gains were the top priorities of the United States, Carter told a joint press conference with President Ashraf Ghani that the final decision regarding the withdrawal of American troops would be made by Obama and Ghani possibly next month in Washington.

"Our priority now is to make sure this progress stick, that's why President Obama is considering a number of options to reinforce our support for President Ghani's security strategy including possible changes to the timeline for our drawdown of US troops," Carter said.

In addition, Carter noted that he saw a significant progress in Afghanistan since his last visit of the country as Pentagon No 2 official. Meanwhile, Ghani said terrorism was a threat to both the countries, urging on joint efforts to curb the phenomenon.

"We respect President Obama's framework for their troops' presence in Afghanistan," Ghani said. Touching on the peace process following his accelerated efforts over the past week, Ghani said the country was now in the right track to achieve peace. However, he refrained from giving details of the efforts, calling it premature.

"Grounds for peace have never been better in the last 36 years," Ghani said. "The direction is positive but we can't make premature announcements."

It comes a day after the sources close to the government told TOLONews that the Taliban had shown a green signal to enter into, possibly unconditional, peace talks with the Afghan government.

Following his accelerated peace efforts, Ghani met with the High Peace Council (HPC) members, religious leaders and civil society groups on Friday to consult on peace parleys. (Tolonews)

### (2) No More Clemency

who have hands in attacks on security officials will be deprived of commutation on special days." He hoped the decision would help bringing down attacks ratio on country's security forces. Separately, unidentified gunmen kidnapped a doctor in northern Jawzjan province. Police detained an individual and recovered 38 kilograms of heroin and 11 kilograms of hashish from his possession, the deputy police chief said.

Col. Sayyed Zamanuddin Husaini said Dr. Taj Mohammad was abducted by two bike riders from the Qochin village in Shiberghan, the provincial capital. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Operations in

to not handle the operations in Sangin district of southern Helmand in a hurried manner.

MP Abdul Hai Akhonzada, member of internal security committee of House of Representatives, criticized the government for what he said temporary operations in Helmand helping insurgents return back after the exit of security forces from the cleared areas.

"The problem is that when the security forces leave an area after the operations, the insurgents return back to that area," Akhonzada said, urging the security institutions to protect their achievements during the operations.

According to the provincial authorities, about 60 insurgents have been killed so far during the Sangin operations named "Zulfiqar."

"So far only two citizens have been killed and four others wounded during these operations," said Mohammad Jan Rassoul-Yar, deputy acting governor of Helmand. "None of our forces have been killed, only some of them have been injured as a result of mines." According to the authorities, mines planted by the insurgents were hindering the operations. However, the residents, most of them fled the area, complain of the situation, demanding the government to ensure their security.

"We are tired of this situation," Abdul Rahman, resident of Sangin said. "Daily ambulances come to the district and transport dead and injured people."

Another resident, Ghulam Mohammad, said, "We are fed up with this situation because in the days, the roads are controlled by the government while in the nights, they are controlled by the Taliban."

Sangin is one of the most insecure

districts of Helmand. The district is also a major route for narcotics and drug trade, providing funding for insurgency. Due to its strategic location, insecurities in Sangin could potentially damage the security in its neighboring provinces. (Tolonews)

### (4) Pak, US Agree

and continue regular US-Pakistani engagement," said Bernadette Meehan, Spokesperson of the National Security Council.

During the meeting at the White House, the two officials discussed way to mutually support regional stability in the near term and work together as partners against the threat of terrorism, she said.

Rice commended the role played by Pakistan's delegation, which Minister Khan led, at the White House-hosted Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. "They agreed to continue working together as partners against the threat of terrorism," Meehan said. Rice appreciated the sacrifices and commitment of Pakistan in the fight against terrorism and extremism, the Pak Embassy said in a statement. She commended the resolve of the leadership and people of Pakistan to deal with terrorism in a comprehensive manner.

Rice assured the Interior Minister of the continued US support for Pakistan's efforts to eliminate terrorism, the statement said. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Talks with Taliban

with regard to peace process from various sources. I hope durable peace will be established soon throughout the country."

Earlier in the day, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani during a news conference with the visiting US defence secretary, said: "Ground has been paved for result-oriented peace talks, which are in the interests of Afghans."

Also a presidential palace statement said that President Ghani appreciated Pakistan's recent efforts in paving the ground for peace and reconciliation. "We welcome the recent position Pakistan has taken in pronouncing Afghanistan's enemy as Pakistan's," the statement added. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Iran Major

economic sanctions.

Terrorism is an ultra-national issue and all governments are required to fight the threats posed by terrorism to the international community and avoid extremism in their foreign policy.

Afghanistan is currently suffering from external elements coming through borders, he said adding that as soon as the former Soviet Union pulled out troops from Afghanistan, problems from other borders entered into the country, he said.

On Iranian demand for the Afghan government cooperation to revive Hamoun lake, he said Kabul will spare no efforts to help Iran revive the lake.

Iranian government has always backed the Afghan people and Iran-Afghan relations are very deeply-rooted, he said.

Level of visits of the diplomatic, economic and cultural delegation was unprecedented in the past decade, he said.

Following the visit made by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Kabul this year, Afghan new President Ashraf Ghani is to pay an official visit to Tehran this month, he said.

He said that Afghan president is to confer with Iranian high ranking officials on expansion of mutual relations and cooperation along with regional and global developments.

The Ambassador said that expansion of relations with the neighboring states is among top priorities of Afghan government.

He said that Iran and Afghanistan are mulling a comprehensive and long term cooperation document to cover mutual and regional cooperation in the future.

Iran fulfills its pledge to render humanitarian aid to Afghan people despite the other governments which did not keep their promise, he said adding that the Islamic Republic of Iran has spent some \$350 million for reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Sheltering Afghan refugees and enrolling their children in schools and universities are among significant assistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said.

He said that the Afghan government welcomes Iran's private sector for reconstruction of the country.

The grounds for expansion of co-

operation in commerce, mining, agriculture, medical health and treatment, culture, science and technological know-how are well prepared, said Afghan ambassador.

He said that Chabahar port is designated to be an international port as joint project conducted by Iran, Afghanistan and India aiming to help bolster economic cooperation. Laying rail track between Iran and China through Afghanistan is among joint cooperation between the two countries for transit of goods, he said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is among top exporters of goods and services to Afghanistan, he said.

Trade between the two countries is very minor and Afghanistan's exports to Iran do not exceed \$50 million which should be boosted to a higher level, he said. (FNA)

### (7) Over 100

tutions had been trying to keep the capital city peaceful and the recent detention of criminals was the determination of that resolve. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Argentina-Based

close to the boundaries of the Bamiyan World Heritage site.

UNESCO teamed up with the Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan in November last year and announced a design competition to build a Cultural Center close to the boundaries of the Bamiyan World Heritage property.

Through funding from the Republic of Korea, the project activities will include design and construction of the Centre, cultural mapping of heritage resources, conservation and restoration, capacity training, and raising heritage awareness through public education.

Paolo Fontani, director of the UNESCO office in Afghanistan, has said that "this competition was an opportunity to create a new pattern for architecture, design and cultural development in Afghanistan. It is one of our objectives to make sure that the Afghan people recognize themselves in the design concept."

The Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has also reportedly endorsed the winning design and acknowledged UNESCO's competitive selection process.

President Ghani has voiced his dedication to protect Afghanistan's cultural heritage and it is expected that the Afghan government will set up a major national culture program whose aim sole will be to value the country's rich cultural diversity. (KP)

### (9) Violence against

against illegal demands of their husbands.

She said that the women department, attorney office, police headquarters and the anti-violence high commission have registered 448 cases in the past nine months.

"Of 448 cases, 34 of them were cases of women murder committed by their husbands or close relatives. At least 280 cases included harassing and beating, 16 cases of sexual abuse and other violence cases," she added.

Jamshidi said that her department has plan to implement public awareness programs for to reduce the violence. But she said the misery would not end if judicial organs failed to take serious actions against perpetrators of violence. (Pajhwok)

### (10) Policeman,

large number of weapons of different brands recovered from the rebels, he added.

Muhammad Sharif, a resident of the district, said Taliban went into hiding toward the mountainous areas to dodge the operation.

"Taliban were forcing people to provide them with food and shelter. Now people of my area had a sigh of relief after the anti-militants offensive," he added.

But Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said five policemen had been killed and a number of others wounded in clashes with militants. (Pajhwok)

### (11) IS Men in Logar

under leadership of man introducing himself as Amarati who threatened residents and Taliban to join the group.

Kamal had no information about the exact numbers of IS members but said the group was busy attracting new members. (Pajhwok)

### (12) 55 Insurgents

after NATO forces ended its combat role in Afghanistan on 31 December 2014.

NATO now runs Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan which is aimed at Training, Advising and supporting the Afghan National Security Forces. (KP)

### (13) Foreign Soap, Drama

with guns. As a result, one of the boys shot the other dead with a pistol.

The kids watched these serials at night and in the morning they were trying to copy the scenes. The young kid was injured and succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital." He said it was necessary to ban such shows.

Mohammad Naser, another resident in Azadi Meena, expressed frustration over these serials and said it was having bad impact on his children. "I don't see a bright future for children by watching these serials. They will become real gangsters, thieves and murderers," he continued.

Nisarullah, a 12-year-old kid, told Pajhwok he was an avid watcher of those serials that had violent scenes. But insisted he only liked watching them and would not copy them.

Sayed Rahman complained that the Indian and Turkish serials showed obscene scenes that stood in sharp contrast to his traditional and religious values.

Provincial council member Mujib Rahman Salemozoy demanded the Ministry of Information and Culture to block such programmes. He also urged media to play a constructive role in reforming the society by teaching children indigent values. (Pajhwok)

### (14) IS Burns

bloody clashes broke out between Iraqi security forces and IS, an al-Qaida offshoot.

IS took control of the country's northern province of Nineveh, later seizing swathes of territories after Iraqi security forces abandoned their posts in other predominantly Sunni provinces. (Xinhua)

### (15) Poverty Rising

around 13 percent, with more people seeking help from charities such as Caritas.

"There is an increasing number of Italians who seek a meal a shelter... many of them are very young unfortunately. Some are in their 50s - too old to be reinserted in the labor force," Mario Urbinati from Caritas Italiana told Press TV, adding, "But what worries me the most is the fact that entire families often come to see us to get a meal." Maria Soldati, a veteran social worker in Rome, also noted that the situation in Italy has "worsened big time," expressing concern over the future of the country's younger generation.

Italy's national statistics agency Istat, meanwhile, in a separate study that is based on 2013 data warned that almost one in four Italian households is facing economic woes.

Over the past decade, Italy has been the slowest-growing economy in the eurozone as tough austerity measures, including spending cuts and pension reforms, have stirred serious concerns for many people in the country.

Italians have been staging protests against high unemployment, economic adversity and hardship over the government-imposed austerity packages in recent years. (press TV)

### (16) Rouhani's Brother,

world powers. "We will not have any two-phased agreement," Araqchi said on Friday.

He described the first day of two-day talks between the Iranian and US deputy foreign ministers in Geneva as "positive and serious", and said, "This doesn't mean that we have had extraordinary progress, but the discussions are pursued closely and intensively."

"We are after innovation and development in the method and form of negotiations to accelerate (settlement of) issues in talks," Araqchi said.

Noting that the Iranian delegation would have another day of meetings with the US team on Saturday, he said that the Iranian deputy foreign ministers would also hold a meeting with their counterparts in the G5+1 on Sunday followed by meetings between the Iranian and US foreign ministers on Sunday and Monday.

His remarks came after Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei underlined earlier this month that Iran would never accept a bad agreement with the world powers, adding that the country is in favor of a single-phase comprehensive

deal which would respect the Iranian nation's inalienable rights and entail all details.

"I agree with an agreement if it can be struck, but I disagree with a bad agreement," the Supreme Leader said in a meeting with the commanders and personnel of the Iranian Air Force and Air Defense in Tehran in February.

He pointed to the US officials' remarks that "disagreement is better than a bad agreement", and said, "We believe the same and we believe that not agreement is better than striking an agreement that would harm the national interests and pave the way for humiliating the great Iranian nation."

The Leader further stressed his opposition to striking a deal over general issues and leaving the details for some other time in future, saying that a final agreement should include all the general principles and all the details together and should not leave anything for future.

The Supreme Leader reiterated that the Iranian nation will not tolerate bullying, excessive demands and illogical behavior.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the general points and technical details of any accord need to be agreed upon simultaneously as the US has already proved that it tries to escape its undertakings under the pretext of different interpretations.

"The contents of such a contract should be transparent, clear and not open to interpretation. The contents of the agreement should not allow the other side which is used to bargaining to seek excuses on different issues," he added.

The 10th round of negotiations between Iran and the six world powers was held in Vienna from November 18 to 24, where the seven nations decided to extend the talks until July after they failed to strike an agreement.

The last round of the nuclear talks between Iran and the six world powers was held in February. (FNA)

### (17) Jihadists in

time to combat its spread there.

"The threat of Islamic State in Libya is set to increase exponentially," analyst Mohamed El-Jareh, from the Atlantic Council's Hariri Centre for the Middle East, said on Friday.

Since Kadhafi was killed, Libya's beleaguered authorities have been struggling to rein in powerful armed militias who are battling for power and the country's oil wealth.

Recent attacks in Libya claimed by IS have boosted concern that some militias have in fact pledged allegiance to the Sunni Muslim extremists. (AFP)

## 14 Policemen Held in Connection with Logar Attack

PUL-I-ALAM - Fourteen policemen have been detained in for quizzing in connection with the latest attack on police headquarters in central Logar province, officials said Saturday.

Maj. Gen. Abdul Hakim Ishqzai, police chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News that last week attack by a group of insurgents left 23 policemen and an employee of the education department dead and nine others wounded.

Some of those wounded transferred to Kabul for treatments were stated to be in critical condition.

Ishaqzai said the detained policemen have been introduced to Attorney General's Office for interrogations. The policemen were accused of in connivance with the insurgents during the attack, he added. (Pajhwok)

## 25 Militants Perished in Farah Offensive

FAH CITY - At least 25 insurgents have been killed during a clearing operation in the Bakwa district of western Farah province, an official said on Saturday.

Hanifullah Rezaee, spokesman of the 207th Zafar Military Corps, said the joint military offensive was spearheaded by the Afghan National Army (ANA) and concluded on Friday.

He added different brands of weapons, two cars and as many motorbikes have been destroyed during the clashes with rebels.

He said Afghan forces did not suffer casualties during the offensive. He said militants had carried the bodies of their colleagues to the

Balaboluk district.

Taliban have not yet commented on the offensive. (Pajhwok)

## Greece Says Heading to New Direction after Eurogroup Deal

ATHENS - Greece is heading toward a new direction after the Eurogroup agreement was reached in Brussels Friday on the post-bailout cooperation with international creditors, a Greek government spokesman said on Saturday.

After the marathon talks, Greece's creditors agreed to extend the country's loan agreement for another four months if they accept the list of reforms Athens will present on Monday, Gavriil Sakellariadis told Greek media.

If the process goes smoothly, Greece will be receiving further aid by lenders after the current four-year bailout expires on Feb. 28, the spokesman added.

He called on the main opposition New Democracy (ND) party, which was ruling the country until recently, and its socialist partner PASOK to "adopt to the new reality to help the country."

ND spokesman Kostas Karagounis commented that Friday's deal "leads to a new memorandum" after four months, while the previous government coalition had brought Greece to the brink of the exit from the bailout at the end of this February.

Friday's deal received with mixed responses from politicians, businessmen, analysts and ordinary Greeks in Anthen. On one hand, they welcomed the deal as an exit from the mounting uncertainty of the past few weeks which had increased fears of an imminent rift with creditors, a cash crunch in March. On the other hand, they noted that, besides the changing of terms used by the anti-bailout government, the conditions for the agreement were very strict, leaving small room to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to implement his policy program.

Greece agreed not to introduce any policies that could have a negative impact on fiscal goals without prior consultations with creditors. The 11 billion euros left in Greece's bank recapitalization fund were to return to the European Financial Stability Facility and will be disbursed only for the banking sector if needed.

The euro traded up 0.1 percent at 1.14 against the U.S. dollar on Friday. (Xinhua)

## Hamas Blasts Egypt Media over "Incitement" Against Islamist Group

GAZA - Islamist Hamas movement slammed on Saturday what it called a "campaign of incitement" by some Egyptian journalists against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."

Earlier, Egyptian media reports said that militants from the Gaza Strip crossed into Egypt and were involved in terrorist attacks in the country.

In an emailed press statement, Hamas spokesman in Gaza Sami Abu Zuhri denied these reports, saying that his movement condemns such claims.

"All the tunnels underneath the border with Egypt had been destroyed and there are both Palestinian and Egyptian security forces guarding the borders area," said Abu Zuhri.

Ties between Egypt and Hamas deteriorated after the military unseated Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013 after nationwide protests against his one-year rule.

Hamas is an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood, Morsi's power base.

Earlier, Egypt designated the armed wing of Hamas, al-Qasam Brigades, as a terrorist organization.

"Hamas calls on Arab states to bear their responsibilities towards this incitement not only on Hamas but also on the Palestinian people. We call for a large media campaign to unveil this conspiracy," said Abu Zuhri.

Egypt claimed that the weapons that the militant groups in the restive Sinai region are using in their fights against the government were smuggled from Gaza. The Hamas movement has been controlling the Gaza Strip since 2007, and has denied that it provides any logistical, military or other kind of assistance to militants fighting Egyptian troops. (Xinhua)