

(1) Decision on

earlier, the White House had indicated that the US President, could tailor his Afghan Policy in particular the drawdown of troops following recommendations from the commanders on the ground. (Pajhwok)

(2) 1 Released

said that the kidnapped passengers were refugees who returned from neighboring Iran. Mohammadullah, the district chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News that one of the kidnapped man had been released who was the resident of Maidan Wardak province. The man said that the kidnapers had kept them in Khak Afghan district. Police chief Mohammad Ullah said local elders were holding negotiations with militants to ensure early release of rests of captives. He added the passengers were abducted by a Taliban commander Mullah Mansoor Dadullah. But Taliban have not yet commented on the incident. (Pajhwok)

(3) AIHRC Urges

"We welcome peace, but it should not cost what we have achieved," Bedar said. "We want all of our achievements to be maintained." Meanwhile, the president's office stated that fundamental steps have been taken for the initiation of the peace talks. "Views are being collected and there have been significant progress in the start of peace talks because fundamental works have been done in this regard," Ghani's spokesman Ajmal Obaid Abidi said. Praising Pakistan's support to the Afghan reconciliation process, Abidi ensured that the government would conduct talks with transparency. "Nothing will be hidden from the people and it will be transparent," Abidi ensured. "Pakistan's actions are promising, really promising to Afghanistan." As the government increases talks about peace negotiations day by day, human rights activists continue mounting pressure on the government to avoid compromising on any and all achievements made in the past decade. (Tolonews)

(4) Kabul Must

in long-running proxy war in Afghanistan. Defending his country's role in supporting the Afghan anti-government armed militant groups Musharraf said his and Islamabad's role in supporting the Afghan insurgency was a legitimate counterweight against its rival India there. This is the second time Musharraf is admitting Islamabad's role in proxy war in Afghanistan. Earlier, Musharraf said the government of Pakistan sought to undermine the government of former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, accusing him of helping India stab Pakistan in the back. The remarks by Musharraf comes as the Afghan officials have long been accusing the Pakistani security institutions specifically the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) for supporting the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan. The US Department of Defense (DoD) said in November last year that Pakistan was using 'proxy forces' to carry out attacks in Afghanistan and India. In a report released earlier November last year, the US Department of Defense said the militant groups focused on Afghanistan and India continue to operate from Pakistan territory, accusing Islamabad for providing "sanctuary" to militants of the Haqqani network, a group reportedly considered by Pakistan to be part of a moderate faction of the Taliban. (KP)

(5) New Kabul

last year. Integrity Watch Afghanistan chief Syed Ikram Afzali told reporters in Kabul the government had failed to seriously take action against the individuals involved in the scandal. He said the unity government had so far done nothing special with regard to the bank scandal and had no strong intention to do so. Afzali said the government was yet to recover the stolen money in a transparent manner and was yet to inform people what it had done so far in this regard. He said the government could not punish some of the individuals involved in the scandal because they had strong political connections and judicial institutions were also rife with corruption. Afzali said their investigation showed the government had so far recovered \$228 million of the \$977 million stolen money over the past five years. The recovered money included \$179

million in cash and the rest in form of properties the government had seized from the accused, he said. He said the authorities concerned had not effectively implemented President Ghani's decree in the Kabul Bank scandal. Ghani announced on Oct. 1 that he would re-open the inquiry into the theft from the bank, fulfilling a campaign promise to make fighting corruption a priority. Afzali also said the New Kabul Bank faced losses amounting to \$50 million and the losses had been on the increase.

He urged the government to create an organized oversight system to monitor banks' activities, increase the capacity of bank officials and implement banking laws. He warned if such a system was not put in place, other private banks could meet the fate of the Kabul Bank. When contacted the Finance Ministry spokesman and the central bank acting head said they had nothing to do with the Kabul Bank issue. An official at the New Kabul Bank told Pajhwok Afghan the bank's chief was in a meeting and no other official was allowed to speak to the media. (Pajhwok)

(6) 72 Dead in

night, he said, adding 10 people of them were rescued in injured condition and the remaining five were still missing as of Wednesday afternoon. Another four people were killed when an avalanche hit a house in the Khanj area of the Hessa Awal district and two more were killed in the Safed Chahr area of the district. Seventeen people died in the Paryan district's Pas Mazar area after avalanches buried several homes, the governor said. Earlier, Kabiri told Pajhwok Afghan News the avalanches hit several villages and buried 60 homes. He said the one-metre snow had blocked all roads across the valley. The avalanches occurred in Paryan, Hessa Doyem and Awal districts and Parakh, the provincial capital. Thirty persons were missing in Raghach village of Hessa Doyem and Malsafa locality of Parakh, he confirmed. An avalanche hit a house in Malsafa area and left 12 members of a family dead, he said.

A resident of Abdullah Khel area, Gul Aqa, told Pajhwok over the telephone that avalanches buried five homes in the area last night and local residents came to know about it in the morning. He said he was living two kilometers away from the five homes and was moving to the scene since morning, but was yet to reach there as of 8am due to road blockades. Aqa said he could confirm the death of eight people in that incident.

The acting governor said security forces were assisting local residents in rescue works. He said telephonic service did not work in some areas and they were trying to collect more information about possible casualties in other areas. He said a detailed report about casualties and damages would be released later.

On Monday night, four members of a family were killed when an avalanche hit their house in the Yakawlang district of central Bamyan province. (Pajhwok)

(7) Japan Contributes

humanitarian assistance to refugees in southeastern Afghanistan. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - \$2,300,000, the funding contribution from the government of Japan will be able UNICEF in supporting life-saving therapeutic treatment of children under five years suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), with a particular focus on emergency-affected areas. United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) - \$2,000,000, funding from the Government of Japan will support demining activities in Bamyan, Faryab, Khost and Kunduz provinces, where many communities remain affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). The World Food Programme (WFP) - \$5,200,000, funding from the government of Japan will be utilized to directly address food insecurity and malnutrition in Afghanistan, as well as to provide Humanitarian Air Services. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) - \$2,575,000, the funding contribution from the government of Japan will be used to support a range of Afghan migration needs.

Japan has strongly supported Afghanistan's nation-building efforts in fields ranging from the security sector to economic and social development, providing assistance for agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, rural development, and human capacity development projects. Cumulative Japanese assistance

to Afghanistan since 2001 amounts to \$5.78 billion. (Pajhwok)

(8) US Embassy

over 200 Embassy staff members participated by giving their blood. (Pajhwok)

(9) KP Govt. to

government is taking a tough stand against registered and unregistered Afghans after the killing of 150 people, including 134 children, in the December 16 terrorist attack on Army Public School in Peshawar. There are fears that the KP government's approach to the Afghan refugee crisis will result in the harassment and exploitation of Afghan refugees at the hands of the police. Just this week, a New York Times report described the mistreatment meted out to Afghan refugees in Pakistani camps, with some forced out if they couldn't pay the police.

Currently, Pakistan hosts 1.6 million Afghan refugees, whom the government has issued the Proof of Registration cards through the National Database Registration Authority and thus, legalising their stay in the country until December 2015. The number of unregistered Afghan nationals is said to be between two and three million.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has spoken against the forceful return of Afghanistan refugees from Pakistan, reminding the government of their obligation to protect all Afghans in the country, including those not registered as refugees. (Agencies)

(10) IS Group

A majority of the group members are said to be residents of Farah, but they also include fighters from Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal region, Arabs and others. The foreigners are funding and training new recruits. Farah police chief Col. Dil Jan Khakrezi confirmed the IS had launched operations in the province. He said Daesh members received military training from 25 foreigners and from 100 to 500 Taliban militants had defected to the group.

Khakrezi said he could not order action against the group on his own and high authorities should make a decision in this regard. Defence Ministry's deputy spokesman Gen. Daulat Waziri said security organs were preparing a joint plan to eliminate the threat posed by the group. (Pajhwok)

(11) Kabul Team

gathering that security in the province was not good. He said provincial departments were rife with corruption and the governance was plagued by numerous problems, which needed to be addressed. His colleague Haji Abdul Zahir Qadir said: "The (unity) government did not give representation to eastern provinces against their expectations. I hope this problem will be paid attention."

The lawmaker said the delegation from the Presidential Palace should investigate reasons behind insecurity in Nangarhar, but the probe should follow extensive reforms.

Tribal elder Haji Sohail Khan said the security situation in Nangarhar had deteriorated as compared to the past. He said large swaths of land had been grabbed in Nangarhar, where mafia gangs ruled amid increasing incidents of kidnappings for ransom. He urged the visiting delegation to seriously investigate into these issues and find solution to them on a permanent basis.

Another tribal elder Malak Jehanzeb Momand also said kidnappings had increased in Nangarhar and police had failed to prevent them. He said most of the district chiefs were illiterate and should be replaced. Interior Minister Noorul Haq Ulumi said all required measures would be taken to resolve the existing problems.

"We understand problems exist here, but you must trust the government. We will find solution to these problems and I hope people will cooperate with the government," the minister said.

After the gathering, the delegation visited several provincial departments and held meetings with officials, civil society activists and politicians. The delegation is expected to remain in Nangarhar for some days. (Pajhwok)

(12) UNAMA Welcomes

centers. "UNAMA welcomes the government's commitment to implement a new national plan on elimination of torture," said Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNAMA. "We support - and can assist as requested - this comprehensive approach to eliminate torture and ill-treatment in government of Afghanistan facilities."

According to the UNAMA report, the Afghan government has committed to improve the situation in different areas of concerns including the legislative reforms, medical treatment of tortured victims, education and capacity building programs, disrupting torture in public culture, preventive measures, consistently overseeing the implementation of the national plan and the ratification of the "Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture."

"The government of Afghanistan's efforts to prevent torture and ill-treatment have been encouraging and have shown some progress over the last two years," Haysom noted. "More remains to be done, however, and I welcome the new administration's immediate attention to the elimination of these practices."

The report that took almost two years to complete interviewed 790 conflict-related detainees in 28 provinces held in the facilities run by the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghan National Police (ANP), Afghan Local Police (ALP) and the Afghan National Army (ANA).

UNAMA observation found that 44 of the 105 under 18 detainees (42 percent) had experienced torture or ill-treatment.

It explained that severe beatings with pipes, cables and sticks, suspension, electric shocks and near-asphyxiation were described as methods used for interrogations to obtain a confession or information.

"UNAMA's finding that torture of conflict-related detainees persists in spite of government efforts over the 2013-14 to address it is a source of concern," UNAMA Human Rights Director Georgette Gagnon said. Furthermore, the UN mission disclosed that, "based on credible reports," the NDS and ANP held unofficial and alternative detention places in several regions. It urged the Afghan government to identify all places and close them immediately.

In response to UNAMA's report, the Afghan government acknowledged problems regarding the conflict-related detainees; however, the government expressed commitment to addressing the issues at the highest level.

UNAMA concluded its report with a number of recommendations to the Afghan government and its international allies in order to establish oversight and accountability for the torture of detainees. (Tolonews)

(13) Historic Opportunity

TOLONews reporter in Pakistan, the leader of Qaumi Watan Party noted great changes had occurred in the policies of Kabul and Islamabad to build trust between the neighboring countries.

"Currently the circumstances are quite good on both sides as you witnessed that our militaries made several trips to Kabul, and also President Ashraf Ghani visited GHQ [Islamabad], and your [Afghan] soldiers came to Pakistan and are currently receiving training," said Sherpao, the country's former interior minister. "We had discussed the issue in the past as well, but it didn't occur during Karzai's government."

Optimistic about China's cooperation in the Afghan peace process, Sherpao emphasized that Beijing could play an important role in the Afghan reconciliation process.

"China is interested in the region's progress," he said. "Because China is also dealing with problems it has with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement."

Expressing concerns about the emergence of new militant groups in the region, Sherpao called on both the countries to work on a joint plan to suppress the Daesh.

"There is a serious threat ahead of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and we can't ignore it because the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and other small militant groups have also joined them [Daesh]."

The new chapter of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan opened after Ghani, during his visit to China, asked the country for help in Afghanistan's peace efforts. Since then, several top Pakistan officials have been making frequent trips to Kabul as part of a joint counter-terrorism efforts and attempts for peace stability in both countries. (Tolonews)

(14) All Except Salang

road was closed after heavy snowfall continued to lash both northern and southern parts of the highway for the last two days, raising fears of avalanches. Mangal said the Public Works Ministry's job was keeping roads open, but sometimes natural disasters and reconstruction works led to closure of roads.

The Salang highway was closed on Monday morning, according to

Gen. Rajab Ali, the highway's maintenance commander, who said the road was expected to be reopened tomorrow.

Rajab Ali said efforts were underway to reopen the Salang highway and no passenger vehicle was stranded on the route.

The acting public works minister said they had learned lessons from past tragedies on the Salang Highway. He said a team, after receiving training in Italy, had been deputed at the Salang highway and modern equipment had been installed on the route to indicate possible avalanches.

About five years ago, a massive avalanche buried dozens of passenger vehicles on the Salang road, killing 170 people and injuring another nearly 100.

Mangal also said the sliding of a large block of rock last night closed the Kabul-Jalalabad road in the Mahipar pass and since then, Public Works Ministry officials had been working to remove the debris. The road was cleared before noon on Tuesday, he said.

He said there were more than 300 tunnels in Afghanistan and 32 of them were dangerous, urging passengers to be careful.

"We want passengers should avoid travelling on dangerous roads when flash floods or snow avalanches are feared. Commuters should listen to advices of our ministry workers." Last night, a toddler was among four people killed as a result of an avalanche in the Yakawlang district of central Parwan province.

Another child died after a snowstorm stranded vehicles in a tunnel in the Balkhab district of northern Sar-i-Pul province two days ago.

Moreover, one person was killed and four others wounded when the roof of their house collapsed in the Shindand district of western Herat province. (Pajhwok)

(15) Islamabad

and Pakistan to start living in peace and brotherhood," the nationalist leader told Pajhwok Afghan News during a visit to the agency's headquarters in Kabul.

He said Pakistan's situation had recently deteriorated and the Pakistan army had already the plan to improve relations and cooperation with Afghanistan after the new government's coming into power in Kabul. "(Pakistan) Army Chief Gen. Raheel Sharif had once made it clear in a meeting that a delegation should be sent to Afghanistan for talks in order to start a brotherly life with Afghans."

Bilour said it seemed the situation was heading to normalcy, if enemies of peace and the two countries did not succeed in derailing the process.

"Gen. Raheel and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif both have reached the conclusion that peace and stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan are inter-linked," said the seasoned politician. He said previously Taliban militants would freely move between Afghanistan and Pakistan for terrorist activities, but their cross-border movement had been curtailed as a result of improved cooperation between the two countries.

There had been wars in the Europe, rendering backward the European countries, but they soon realized that wars only offered destruction and thus they reconciled and made a union, recalled Bilour, saying the subcontinent was now reaping the fruits of peace.

He urged Pakistani and Afghan leaders to learn from Europeans and regional countries including India, Iran, Bangladesh and others should follow into Europeans' footsteps in developing the region.

"If the war in this region is brought to an end and peace and development is allowed to persist, it will enable us to eliminate poverty, boost trade and relieve our masses."

Bilour warned if regional countries did not learn from the past mistakes, they would continue to plunge into chaos and the worst sufferers would be Pashtuns.

"The days are gone when one nation would dream conquering the other. We are not living in the past; governments should sit together, set aside their differences and work for development."

To a question that if Pakistan was sincere this time in cooperation with Afghanistan, Haji Sahib said: "Pakistan is compelled to cooperate for the sake of improvement in the situation. Both the countries have suffered and cannot bear further sufferings."

"I am not a terrorist, I am the follower of the doctrine of non-violence, but anyone who insults our Prophet (PBUH), I cannot tolerate this." (Pajhwok)

(16) Land Allocated

listen. A number of teachers in Logar warned they would stage protests if

they were not given back their due right.

"I have not taken any arbitrary action rather I discussed the issue with former education minister Farooq Wardak. I told Wardak that I will allocate another area for teachers' township," Amiri said. (Pajhwok)

(17) Flash Floods,

from the past 30 hours in the provinces that could bring the death toll even higher.

Sarhadi Zwak, the governor's spokesman for Laghman province, told Pajhwok Afghan News based initial information, four people were died, a number of houses destroyed and hundreds of farmland damaged by the floods.

Lt. Gen. Mohammad Rajab, Salang maintenance head, promised that operations were underway to open Salang pass for traffic and said it would take at least two more days. (Pajhwok)

(18) Tainted Uruzgan

times the accused to appear before the court, hire defence lawyers and explain the allegations against them, but they are not turning up." The judge said they could not use force to drag them to the court because they continued to perform their job.

He said if the accused were arrested by security forces, they would be easily produced before the court.

The accused persons also confirmed they continued their jobs, but said they had appeared before the court.

He said if the accused officials were refusing to resign, the chief executive authority should suspend them and produce them before the court. (Pajhwok)

(19) ANA Rescues Badghis

survivors were initially transported to a military base after they were rescued by an ANA special unit.

"The roads remained block for several hours but the company which was responsible to reopen the roads have done nothing because it has no adequate personnel and resources," Angar said. (Tolonews)

(20) AP Correspondent

than "let some crazy gunman decide my future."

Previously, Gannon covered the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan, the U.S. invasion of the country and the ensuing war. (Agencies)

(21) 5 ANSF Soldiers

received three dead and two wounded personnel.

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

(22) Deh Sabz Residents

producing factory active near Tara Khel locality of Deh Sabz.

Tawab said the production of grapes also in their locality had drastically decreased. "If the government is not going to take action we have no choice but to protest." (Pajhwok)

(23) 2 Suicide Bombers

Rezaye further added that the suicide bombers were looking to carry out attacks on some military and government targets on airport road in Herat province.

Earlier, the Afghan Intelligence - National Directorate of Security (NDS) operatives arrested a Taliban militant who had disguised himself in women dress and was looking to carry out insurgency activities in Khanshin district of Helmand province. (KP)

(24) Netanyahu's

bipartisan support of Israel strong," Durbin said in a statement Tuesday. "His refusal to meet is disappointing to those of us who have stood by Israel for decades," he added.

Democratic Representatives James Clyburn of South Carolina, Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, John Lewis of Georgia, G.K. Butterfield of North Carolina, and Steve Cohen of Tennessee are among them. (Press TV)

(25) IS Seize 100

tants had on Wednesday blocked three main entrances to the south, west and north of Tikrit with 4-metre (12-foot) concrete blast walls. (Reuters)

(26) Continued Sanctions

day. He referred to the Geneva agreement inked between Iran and the world powers in November 2013 to settle the differences on Tehran's nuclear program, and said, "In light of the interim agreement, a part of sanctions were removed; sanction is oppression against people, and development is the inalienable right of the Iranian people. With God's help, we will continue the negotiations with logic and reasoning but the other side of the talks should know that the Iranian nation would never stop moving on the path of scientific development." (FNA)